STAFF EXPERIENCE OF BANK ROBBERY EVENTS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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The purpose of this study was to examine bank robbery events, based on first hand descriptions from robbed staff, through elaboration of in-depth, rich and detailed respondent narratives. Additional goals were to contribute to counselling theory by detailed exploration and development of the essential structure of the respondents' robbery experience at the foreshadowing/onset of the event, during the event, and after the event and to contribute to counselling practice by providing detailed exemplifications of what meaning these traumatic events had for the respondents. Phenomenological methodology was utilized for this study. The goal was to record in detail the robbery experiences, discover the respondent's most essential meanings of the robbery experience, and generate detailed specific and general findings that revealed the core structure of their experience. Eight respondents were selected, 6 women and 2 men, ranging in age from 25 to 51. Respondent length of time in banking ranged from 2½ to 26 years. Nine categories were developed from the narratives which reflected key features of the robbery experience. The study results validated, qualified, and departed from existing research in five important ways. First, the results indicated that bank robbery was experienced by robbed staff as a meaningful whole process rather than as one or more isolated symptoms or symptom clusters. Second, the findings indicated the effects, the experience of robbery, had a robust durational character rather than fitting the prevalent picture which portrays robbed staff as having symptoms which disappear, or are greatly reduced after several weeks or months. Third, the role of corporate empathic responding
following robbery events may be considerably more central to recovery than is currently thought. Fourth, robbed staff talked about "robbery time" as a qualitative, manifold experience rather than as "work time," which was perceived to be more quantitative, divisible, discrete. A great deal of respondent robbery remembrance was found to be embedded in the different temporal structures which differentiate quantitative/qualitative time. Fifth, contrary to the literature respondents did not ever refer to themselves as "victims." An important discrepancy may exist to the extent that theory and practice assume that "victim" is an apt descriptor for people experiencing bank robbery trauma. The results of this study also detailed a beginning guideline, or map, consisting of nine related categories which constitute the general structure of this study of bank robbery experience. These findings have implications for both theory and for counsellors who may work with clients that have experienced bank robbery trauma.
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Chapter I.
Introduction

The goal of the study was to obtain detailed descriptions of respondents' experience of robbery events, to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of their robbery experiences, to try to elaborate the articulated meaning within the context of research literature, theoretical formulations, and counselling practice and to communicate the results to readers interested in the phenomenon under study.

The study approach was phenomenological and was, therefore, intended to be descriptive, dialogue-based, qualitative, participative, and disciplined.

Overview

Towards the end of the Hundred Years’ War, Edward III besieged the small medieval town of Calais, in Northern France. From September 1346 to August 1347 the garrison in Calais put up a stubborn struggle but was finally forced to yield through shortage of provisions. The town was at King Edwards’ mercy. At the urging of his aides, Edward finally agreed to let the town survive if six burghers (full-fledged citizens) would come out of the town to face execution "With their heads and feet bare, halters around their necks and the keys of the town and castle in their hands. With these six I shall do as I please, and the rest I will spare" (Butler, 1993, p. 200). An emissary brought the message to Calais. Fourteenth-century chronicler Jean Froimart reports that there was weeping, then silence until
finally the wealthiest man in town, Eustache de Saint Pierre stepped forward: "I will strip to
my shirt... and deliver myself into the hands of the king of England" (Butler, 1993). One
by one five others followed.

Trauma research owes its theoretical currency to the study of extremes: war, natural
disaster, personal atrocities committed against victims, and dramatic moments in human
history. It is difficult to imagine what it must have been like in the town square in August
of 1347 as the six burghers moved unsteadily through the ramparts that had protected the
town so well, down into the enemy encampment. What might have been their individual
thoughts? How did their children and relatives stand this departure, so highly charged, as
it must have been - with drama, terror, loss, dignity, self-sacrifice and heroism? As the six
burghers covered the short distance together to Edward’s camp, what might their relationships
with one another have been like, in that final few minutes? What might their private
experiences have been?

The great sculptor Auguste Rodin was commissioned to tell the story of the burghers
of Calais - towards the end of the nineteenth-century. Rodin wanted to tell the story in
bronze. He wanted to attempt to capture the particular nature of the relationship of the six
figures as they stumbled towards the enemy camp to offer themselves up to Edward.

Traditionally, monuments in France at the time - as elsewhere, were based on a
single or a dominant figure, and sculptors revealed ideas through their handling of movement
and gesture, physiognomy and clothing (Rodin, 1905). Rodin’s monument would have six
figures of equal importance, and "their vitality would lie not only in their physiognomy and
gestures, but in their relationships to one another” (Butler, 1993, p. 201).

Rodin treated his subject as a story. His interests were in bringing out both the individual inner struggle and the social realities - the relationships, between each of the group members. Rodin, breaking with tradition, approached his subject as a present-day qualitative researcher might: with an interest in the socially co-constructed realities between the sculptor and his subjects, with a deep interest in the subjects providing the primary narrative; their experiences of the event as brought to Rodin through letters, documents of the event preserved in the Calais Archives, and the oral tradition handed down by ancestors from the countryside surrounding Calais. He even did field work to find relatives of Eustache - one of whom modeled for Rodin as the Eustache of the sculpture.

Polkinghorne (1988) suggested that qualitative work seeks "knowledge that deepens and enlarges... understanding" (p. 159). Rodin was impassioned by the desire to explore his own understanding of narrative. In a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, Rodin referred to the Burghers of Calais project as "my novel" (Butler, 1993, pp. 211-212).

This example is intended to bring out two points: 1) Human drama and trauma originate with real people experiencing and responding in ways that often involve suffering, loss, terror, and sometimes tremendous courage and, 2) the complexity of humans responding in moments of extreme danger and terror is monumental. The pertinent research question seems to be to find a descriptive, cleanly qualitative, effective way to bring out some aspect, or some part of the phenomenon under study - whether how to present the reality of the burghers of Calais, or how to present the reality of bank robbery experience. The task is to
generate vivid descriptions of experience and attempt to uncover their meaning.

Rodin's interpretation of the reality of the Burghers project did not go unchallenged. In an open letter, the Municipal Council was savagely critical of Rodin's scientific and technical approach ("All the figures are the same height, not pyramid shape as generally used for this type of monument... the group thus forms a cube, the effect of which is most graceless"). Rodin's interpretation was also intensively, critically assailed as plain wrong: "We want to see our ancestors walking towards death, not as criminals... but as martyrs" (Butler, 1993, p. 204). Rodin eventually convinced City Council through stating, and reformulating his hypothesis and allowing the politicians to quietly see they had misinterpreted the figure of Eustache. Far from humbling himself before the king of England, the burgher was "Leaving the city to descend toward the camp. It is this that gives the group the feeling of march, of movement" (Butler, 1993, p. 204). Questions of interpretation always constitute a central part of any creative process. This is no less true for the artist than the researcher.

Polkinghorne (1989) noted that phenomenological researchers can utilize three sources to generate descriptions of experiences: (1) the researchers' personal self-reflections on the aspects of the topic under investigation that they have experienced; (2) other respondents in the study, who describe the topic of interest either in written or verbal form; (3) other ideas about the topic of interest from outside sources: novelists, poets, artists, musicians, dramatists - as well as previous human science formal studies on the topic (p. 46).

At the heart of the present study is a highly complex human event - often presenting a life-threatening moment for those directly involved. The focus is the staff person's own
experience of 'being robbed.' How do staff experience the foreshadowing-onset of the robbery? What are their thoughts, feelings, behaviours during and following the robbery event? What meanings were created during and after these experiences? What constitutes the core structure of the experience of being robbed? Of interest is the complex process of being robbed and the entire ensemble of thoughts, feelings, behaviours and meanings that result.

**Researcher Presuppositions**

Although one of the research assumptions is that some robbery experiences may result in extreme distress or trauma, cases where descriptions and meanings suggest less pronounced impacts ('negative' instances) were sought for their possible contribution to existing trauma theory and for their possible value for illuminating current therapeutic practice. It is presumed that bank robbery events create an experience that is, and will be, part of the person's biography. Therefore, though thoughts, feelings, behaviours may ebb and flow, a statement like "duration of symptoms" is not particularly meaningful in and of itself.

This research does not accept the often implicit assumption that trauma theory - derived mainly from War and natural disaster experiences, is representative of robbery trauma.
Research Milieu

The present research project arose very much within the current research climate dominated by research trends in psychiatry. The clinical and research tendencies in the field of stress and trauma largely bear the stamp of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Its influence, often felt but not seen directly - like gravity, exerts a tremendous influence on much of the extant literature in the stress and trauma field. One clear example of this is the extent to which the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is used in the popular psychology literature and in the media.

Since the Vietnam War a striking amount of research has been produced on human bio-psycho-social trauma. A compelling benefit of the 'medicalization' of trauma (Eichelman, 1991) is the enormous amount of new knowledge in the areas of the psychobiology of learning, memory, and habituated (sometimes inextinguishable) fear. However, from the perspective of better understanding the experiencing person, a difficulty arises when the weight of the medical aspects of trauma shifts the focus more exclusively to the "biology of trauma." Both are important. The present study attempts to follow Husserl's (1970, Vol.1) definition of "phenomenology as a descriptive psychology" (p. 263) in which representing, judging, and taking an interest in - or valuing something, are primary focal points as an attempt at the uncovering of original experiences: "letting the manifest in itself be seen from itself" (Heidegger, 1985, p. 85). In addition to description, the various cannons of interpretive (hermeneutic) phenomenology are utilized (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990; Plager, 1994; Ashworth, 1996; Tymieniecka, 1997).
Trauma studies have, for the most part, been cast in a standard science framework with a resulting loss to the field of research findings informed by phenomenological psychological human science approaches. The voice of the individual has been assigned a less central place by procedures laden with 'confounding variable' protocols and over-reliance on single, or multiple independent variables and their clear effect on dependent measures. Theoretical distance from the 'subject,' control of 'confounding' variables, and quantification of results by mathematical formulae may lead to greater precision and exactitude when studying physical objects in the world. But, if 'experience' and 'meaning' are crucial, central dimensions of the context of human existence, then the application of standard science's techniques to questions of human meaning and experience eliminates the topic of most central importance and interest in psychological research in the first place: human experience. The goal of the present study is to attain "experience-near," "thick descriptions" from the respondents, to demarcate, sketch, and deepen understanding of, what for respondents, constitutes the core meanings of their bank robbery experience.

Utilizing standard science cause-effect methods, most of the seminal literature that prefigures current understanding in the field of stress and trauma (especially the psychobiology of trauma) is based on combat-related war trauma, and has burgeoned since the Vietnam War. However, war trauma is not the same as civilian trauma, even though there may be some similarities in the stress physiology. A bank teller experiencing her third armed robbery is in no way similar to the Civil War youth who reported in his journal that attacking columns were "torn and blasted" the result of which included soldiers mangled in
every conceivable manner, and "piles of wounded and slain thickly carpeted the battlefield" (Dean, 1991). This natural description, based on the youth's own experience, contains a rigor and full-blooded color, richness, and value that seems to have at least as much merit as the classic "irritable heart" trauma studies done by Meakins and Wilson (1918) which measured increase in pulse amplitude of World War I veterans based on their startle response to the experimental introduction into a darkened room of a two-foot high flame sparked by potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid. Ideally, both quantitative and qualitative approaches would be invited to help bring out the heart of the phenomenon under study, each adding a perspective.

The intensity, duration and kind of exposure, frequency and enormity of mind and body-numbing experiences that separate war trauma from other types of human trauma are legion. Their is a prevalent trend in the research which seems to blur the distinction between war and combat experiences and other types of situations of extreme stress, even though there exists a body of research literature on extreme stress (not full-blown PTSD) and the stress of everyday life (Weisaeth & Eitinger, 1993; Pilowsky, 1992).

The laboratory approach to studying human trauma has contributed enormously to increased knowledge about some of the cause-effect relationships involved at the molecular, cell, organ, and anatomical-physiological levels (van der Kolk, 1987; McGaugh, 1990; Kolb, 1987). Far less rigorously studied is the person's detailed story, fully and completely based on their experience and the meanings they construe from the experiences. Part of the discrepancy is epistemological: the research participant is a source of "errors" (standard
science) - the research participant is the primary, valid data source (human science view).

Part of the difficulty arises from a variety of different definitions of trauma.

**Defining Trauma**

Since PTSD is the standard used for defining trauma, it is worth citing the most relevant details of the criterion-based DSM IV (1994) definition. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder involves a variety of characteristic symptoms:

Following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member, or other close associate. The person’s response must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror. The characteristic symptoms resulting from the exposure to the traumatic event..., persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness, and persistent symptoms of increased arousal. The full symptom picture must be present for more than 1 month, and the disturbance must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning" (DSM IV, 1994, p. 424).

In this definition it is clear that the person’s defined experience is central. An event may be objectively traumatic but not experienced as such by one person while being traumatic for the next person. The "functionality" criterion is new with DSM IV and requires either an impairment in important functioning or the appearance of significant distress owing to the PTSD.

Individual differences, the person’s perception, appraisal of the of the situation, and
the event itself constituting something sudden, unexpected or non-normative constitutes a working definition of trauma for the present study. This definition is consistent with constructivist theory (McCann & Perlman, 1990; Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988) and emphasizes the person as a creative force in influencing how, and what experiences are generated, and combining important aspects of the outer and inner world.

Trauma experience often appears denuded or defiantly stubborn when rigid efforts are made to constrain it within the tension-reducing environment of a diagnostic category. There seems to result an important decrease, or loss, of meaning. That this point is beginning to be better understood may be seen in the updates and expansions to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual from 1980 (DSM III), 1987 (DSM III-R), and the most recent version, 1994 (DSM IV).

Human response to extreme danger has been documented in scientific reports from about four thousand years ago up to the intensive interest in human traumatic phenomenon of the present century. The earliest ancient Egyptian reports known document the relationship between biological and psychological factors. The principle biological regulatory agencies governing animals are the central nervous system and the endocrine system. The evolution of these systems is probably millions of years old and it is primarily within these systems that human physiologic and psychological responding to extreme stress occurs: the evolved ability to retreat from danger or approach danger in a state of increased alertness, readiness, and vigilance, in the service of survival (Cannon, 1914; Selye, 1956). But the experience goes beyond just sensory-experience (perception, imagining, remembering) to
include the human intellect which includes higher-order powers such as understanding, judging, reasoning: ultimately making meaning of the experience.

During the early history of human evolution extreme stress would more apparently be related to natural disasters, exposure to harsh environmental elements, hunger, and survival from other beasts of prey, both human and four-legged. With the gradual invention and development of mass gatherings of human populations into larger groups other forms of challenge and threat were introduced: crowding, wide-spread disease, crimes of violence, human confinement in stockades, prisons, and hospitals for the insane. Where the invention of rural and urban collectives brought many improvements, it also introduced and necessitated an enormous amount of constraint and constriction in human physical and psychological functioning. The advent of permanent human gatherings necessitated the invention of the "social contract" and set the stage for massed populations to function in a world of increased complexity, therefore requiring increased order. It also set the stage for both the development of - and opposition and manipulation of, coded laws. This represented an early staging-ground for wide-spread criminality by some and its counterpart - the advent of large scale disruption to, and traumatization of, others.

Over a century ago, with the emerging development of the American West, nomadic groups roamed from place to place invading newly developed townsites and practicing a variety of criminal activities: chief among them was bank robbery. These small, organized groups were a variant of the "cowboys." In the United States they preceded the more well known "organized crime" groups (the Mafia) by a considerable period of time.
From the early part of this century to the present time there have been waves of interest in psychological trauma: sexual and physical abuse, war trauma ("Man Made" acts), natural disasters ("Acts of God") and their impact on populations of people in towns and cities; impact of criminality on citizens and their families; grief and loss through death or loss of identity through personal or occupational upheavals; the experience of job loss and unemployment; large-scale job lay-offs and its various effects on individuals and communities; impact of widespread technological change ("necessity") on organizations and individuals; rapid, massive change requirements in corporate cultures; the list is almost endless - fixed mainly by how the definition of extreme stress, traumatization, or post-trauma response stress is drawn.

The term Post-traumatic Stress Disorder first appeared in the psychiatric literature in DSM III, published in 1980. The DSM III definition required the presence of the by now well known symptom "triad:" hyperexaggerated startle response, intrusive thoughts, and constriction of focus. It was required that the stressor be an event "outside the usual range of human experience." The more recent publication of DSM IV (1994) has eliminated the troublesome stressor criterion and has shifted the emphasis to the person's response to an event that is experienced as traumatic, even seemingly small stressors built up over time, or a seemingly neutral event that "tipped the scales." The focus has now shifted from the trauma being externally defined by the stressor (DSM III, 1980) to being internally defined based on the experiencing human being (DSM III-R, 1987; DSM IV, 1994). These recent changes suggest a change from more of an information-processing theory base seen in DSM III (1980)
to a shift more towards seeing the person in a wider context: more part of a larger system or "field" (DSM III-R, 1987; DSM IV, 1994).

The DSM IV (1994) conceptualization has formalized a feeling held over the past decade that many events, not just the obvious ones like war or natural disasters - are capable of sparking stressful or traumatic responding within many individuals: the emphasis currently being on the person's subjective response to the event, the nature of the stressor(s), past experience, personality characteristics, current level of functioning, and availability of resources. A new "functionality" criterion found throughout much of DSM IV (1994) has helped clarify PTSD diagnostically: it requires either an impairment in important areas of functioning (work, personal, social) or the appearance of significant distress owing to the PTSD. PTSD is still far from a well differentiated entity. Its validity as a syndrome is gaining currency but there are many areas of overlap with other diagnostic categories. For example, general anxiety disorder, borderline personality disorder, and some mood disorders - most notably true depression. The actual utility of the PTSD syndrome is not unshakeably established. Its primary usefulness is thought to be in defining and accounting for the complex mix of physiologic, psychological, and cognitive symptoms that comprise the core of traumatic responding over time (generally considered a minimum of thirty days with a variety of cardinal symptoms).

The study of extreme stress and trauma makes a number of contributions to increased human understanding. There are at least seven key knowledge areas to consider. They are: 1) effects of trauma on memory storage and recall; "engraved" memories; 2) new knowledge
about the brief and long-term effects of "fight-or-flight" physiology; 3) the reality of gross or fine-grained differences in response to traumatogenic events (individual differences); 4) differential effects of intensity, duration, and frequency of traumatization on human functioning; 5) clarification of existing - and development of new, models for pharmacologic and psychological interventions with traumatized people; 6) despite the damage caused by severe trauma there is sometimes a transformational aspect experienced as a result of event; and 7) the effects of trauma on sense of self and social relations overall.

The questions of interest for the present study are ones having to do with the lived and perceived experience of individuals who have experienced violent, often life-threatening work-place robberies. Of interest is how these experiences are perceived and experienced by staff and how these processes affect the individual person's sense of self and social relations with others.

The topic of trauma generated from this source (financial institution robbery) is of interest for several reasons. First, financial institutions are prevalent in most parts of the World. Between the years 1980 to 1996 there have been over 150,000 bank robberies in Canada and the United States alone. Second, it provides a unique area for study in that it is somewhat different from typical trauma studies which have focussed on war and disaster trauma or various aspects of abuse, terrorism, or other types of civilian trauma. Bank robbery trauma brings together some traditional and some unique aspects of the psychological trauma research, but it also provides a fresh context: the individual under life-threatening conditions in the work-place, where it is considered something of an occupational hazard.
Increased understanding of the complex experience of work-robbery stress may help illuminate other aspects of our understanding of human responding to frequently experienced traumatic events. Finally, very few studies have been done to date in this area. No published studies were found approaching the topic of bank robbery events from the perspective of the robbed staff.

Significance for Policy and Practice

Studying the phenomenon of bank robbery experiences may have an impact on policy at the institutional level. Significant expenditures are made each year by the Canadian Bankers Association to improve security measures in the branches and to support staff who have been through robbery trauma (van der Knaap, 1995). Production loss due to robberies (products not being marketed and sold to customers; not serving customers due to closures) may be far more damaging to the organization than dollar loss from robberies.

Staff experiencing robbery events may benefit from research of this kind by an increased understanding of human response process to trauma in their professional location: the bank branch site. The benefits would be those one might expect from reading or hearing about similar experiences (normalization) and from discerning stress and coping patterns that were useful to others coping with similar difficulties. Also, gaining a sense of lost community which is sometimes reported when staff have a negative experience with police investigating the robbery, or the judicial system, or empathic failures within their own organization. This aspect of "re-traumatization," or "second injuries" can be a central part
of the respondent's story as shown both in the pilot study and in the collected narratives constituting the data for the present research. In addition, the study could add to knowledge particularly in the area of private or public compensation cases. Insurance companies, as well as other organizations, must frequently assess PTSD cases. DSM IV (1994) is a primary source book for assisting in deciding which cases are valid. The study could help create increased understanding about the particular and general experiences which may at times fall below the threshold of DSM IV (1994) classification for PTSD - however, may be just as debilitating to bio-psycho-social functioning. Broadening the experience of trauma phenomenologically could provide a step towards more definitive recognition and treatment for those affected.

Robbed staff have access to normal life experiences following the traumatic event. Not only is the duration of the robbery event brief (sixty-seconds to seven minutes in the present study) but the person is in a social structure (corporate banking site) where the possibility for post-traumatic event stabilization may be more readily available than it is for those in war or natural disaster, or physical/sexual abuse situations.

Significance for Theory

Trauma theory has been largely based on the context of war or natural disasters. Findings from these contexts have been fashioned to fit sexual and physical trauma sufferers, and a variety of other less intensive traumatic events. Conceptually, someone in a war zone or buried underneath a landslide has a very different set of problems than someone in a 60
second bank robbery on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend.

Results from the present study cast different light on existing theory which may add something to the existing theoretical "maps" used by both researchers and counsellors. The present study brings out aspects of the robbery experience either not previously noted, or not fully elaborated. These include: the experience of vicarious robbery trauma; timing of onset of main impacts, such as, shock, disbelief, amazement; temporal experience: "robbery-time"; corporate and management empathic failures; durational aspects of robbery effects; coping patterns during and following the robbery; the development and current status of the legacy from the robbery event.

Events that are at the trauma, or sub-trauma level have not been phenomenologically investigated in financial institution settings. Contributions from research in this type of work environment where life-threatening events occur with some regularity, could contribute to an improved understanding of civilian, mild, moderate, to severe workplace traumatization. Study findings will be compared with existing trauma theories and published bank robbery research. Similarities would increase confidence in existing theories. Differences could point to gaps in present theory and suggest future research projects.

Summary

Three broad classes of trauma theory may be identified as important in the present study: (1) psychodynamic models; (2) information-processing models; (3) systems or field theories with particular emphasis on constructivist models. Trauma theories have
traditionally, for their articulation, depended on combat and natural disasters studies with more recent emphasis on cognitive processing models (Horowitz, 1986; 1993) based on civilian populations. Even though standard texts on trauma (DSM IV, 1994) have re-worked the topic of bio-psycho-social trauma and broadened its definition phenomenologically, experiences that may meet the cardinal symptoms of PTSD diagnostically have not been examined phenomenologically in financial institution settings utilizing the experiencing person as the vital data source.

Financial institution environments are substantially different from environments linked to traditional trauma studies and have very different implications both from the viewpoint of intensity, duration, and frequency of the trauma; the meanings created by the experiencing person, and from the point of view of the trauma milieu: potential to return to normal routines, available support, both in the immediate environment (branch-site) and in the larger community.

The present study asks the questions: What is the person's experience of the robbery event? What is the person thinking, feeling, doing at the robbery onset, during, and after the robbery experience? What might be learned about the person's sense of self, the meanings co-created within the robbery environment, and the social relations in the person's life? What constitutes the essential structure of the experience once the "given" or "obvious" is revealed, uncovered? What are the most essential parts, without which the event would not be the event?

Significance of the present study for policy, practice, and theory has been briefly
reviewed. The goal of the Introduction has been to provide a topic overview, outline the research milieu, define trauma, explicate the questions, focus the study, and suggest the literature to be discussed in the next section (Chapter II).
Psychophysical Trauma: Origins And Historical Markers

At the dawn of recorded interest in human behaviour there exists a recently unearthed ancient Egyptian medical text dating from 1900 B.C. (Vieth, 1965). This remarkable work contains eighty-four chapters of descriptions and cures for a variety of diseases. It is considered to be the earliest extant medical textbook. It includes detailed observations of hysterical symptoms (psychophysical trauma by modern descriptions) that were presented as "functional," thus not consisting of an entirely organic basis. The essential features of this condition were thought to involve an affliction of the nervous system, characterized by excitability and lack of emotional control. Symptoms of partial or complete paralysis were commonly noted. From these ancient texts to the present time this complex ensemble of features - whether by the name of hysteria, conversion neurosis, irritable heart syndrome, nostalgia (in Spanish - estar roto: "to be broken"), shell shock, combat fatigue, extreme stress response, or post-traumatic stress disorder, the essential presentation and its basic features have remained more or less unchanged.

Vieth (1965) makes the point that whenever this illness pattern makes its appearance throughout the millennia, it "takes on the colors of the ambient culture and mores; and thus throughout the ages it presents itself as a shifting, changing, mist-enshrouded phenomenon that must, nevertheless be dealt with as though it were tangible" (p. ix). This difficulty in defining the cluster of behaviours, physical features, mental and emotional maladies that
constitute psychophysical trauma can be seen in the various treatments the disorder has received just in the brief period of time from the publication of the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals (DSM) from 1968 DSM II to the most recent version DSM IV (1994). The various reformulations of the topic makes clear the absence of the application of human research methods which could help explicate the "shifting, changing, mist-enshrouded phenomenon..." This is precisely what a phenomenological approach to the understanding and explication of the experience of individual trauma would provide.

From about 1900 B.C. to about 700 B.C. there is a curious silence in recorded history regarding the specific topic of human trauma. It next appeared in richly articulated form in the Humanities in the Homeric Poem The Iliad.

The term post-traumatic stress disorder is a recent invention. The pattern of human suffering that it signifies is ancient. Symptoms such as re-living the trauma, disabling intrusiveness, blinding rage, loss of authority over mental function, persistent expectation of betrayal and exploitation may, for example, be found throughout Homer’s Iliad. These same symptoms will also be found in American Psychiatric Association’s DSM IV (1994): the passage of twenty-seven centuries has not changed the descriptive aspects of trauma experience and symptoms much (Shay, 1994). In a real sense, the articulation of what has recently come to be called the study of psychological trauma is more the offspring of the Humanities. Certainly methodology which highly values quantification, seeks immutable lawful and causally determined relationships among its components, demands exactitude and precision through careful observation and control of "error" (human subjective
experience/researcher subjective intuiting); seeks theoretical prominence and delimits or restricts experience - certainly a paradigm based on these assumptions would have a different purpose as its aim than increasing understanding and the full articulation of the meaning and experience of the personal experience of trauma. In historical perspective, scientific (experimental) psychology would need to be considered a latecomer. The Humanities has treated trauma topics since early civilization: numerous works of art throughout human history and literature from the time of Homer's Iliad to the present have explored human trauma creatively, historically, biographically, narratively.

The discipline of Traumatology is defined as "the investigation and application of knowledge about the immediate and long-term psychosocial consequences of highly stressful events and the factors which affect those consequences" (Figley, 1993, p. xvii). The present study is less concerned about the "consequences of highly stressful events" and more interested in the individual's experience of the event, the meanings the person creates, and the detailed explication of the core structure of the event-experience-meaning crucible.

The field of Traumatology has emerged only recently, in the last decade. Interest in the complex pattern constituting human trauma is ancient, punctuated by historical periods of intense activity and interest over time, distributed against a background long periods of silence.

Early Biological And Psychodynamic Perspectives

Interest in human trauma appears throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appearing under the heading of nostalgia, hysteria, irritable heart syndrome, railroad spine,
hysterical neurosis, and a variety of other names.

These views of trauma, despite their differences, are all based on an underlying neurological assumption: whatever the complete cause of human trauma symptoms it will always be based primarily on the human central nervous system. The scientific research into trauma has a specific history and clear lines of development starting from the latter part of the eighteenth century and progressing in fits and starts to the much more systematic investigations of the latter part of the present century.

Jean Charcot's observations about the etiology of hysteria during the latter part of the nineteenth century (Ellenberger, 1970), are central to the understanding of the history of the development of psychophysical trauma. One of his many contributions is simply that he put his considerable influence on the side of arguing that hysteria could not be entirely understood as solely an affliction of the nervous system; one had to appeal to psychology for a fuller grasp of the phenomenon. In 1859 the French psychiatrist Paul Briquet published a remarkable ten year study of over 400 hysterical patients. According to Sulloway (1979) Briquet not only provided clear, articulate clinical reports of the physical, mental, and emotional symptoms of the disorder, he convincing dismissed altogether the prevailing "fact" that hysteria was related to unsatisfied sexual impulses (he found that prostitutes suffered more than nuns). Briquet also provided considerable evidence that hysteria was not just a disorder that affected women (as was commonly held) but men were similarly affected at the ratio of about 1:20 (Ellenberger, 1970).

Charcot's most enduring legacy for the field of trauma studies was his seminal discovery of the hitherto hidden mechanism of hysterical phenomena. Charcot demonstrated -
during his famous Tuesday Lectures at the Salpetriere, that patients under hypnotic trance could be induced to simulate paralytic dysfunction. Charcot reasoned that the external suggestion had been replaced by self, or autosuggestion. These self-commands were dependent on an idea, or series of ideas, somehow psychically isolated from normal waking consciousness, yet firmly planted within a second region of the mind in what he described as "the fashion of parasites" (Sulloway, 1979, p. 34).

In 1893, on the occasion of Charcot's death, in reference to the psychogenic nature of hysterical symptoms, Freud testified: "M. Charcot was the first to teach us that to explain hysterical neurosis we must apply to psychology" (Freud, 1893, p. 114). Trauma researchers from that point to the present time are indebted to Charcot for discovering the notion of a hidden mechanism in the mind.

Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot's, saw the psychic disturbances so typical in hysterical patients as centrally mediated by vivid or "vehement" emotions. These were further prompted by traumatic memories and exerted a disintegrating effect on the mind, a cardinal symptom of hysteria referred to as commotio cerebri.

The term "psychic trauma" was first introduced by the German neurologist Albert Eulenberg in 1878. He believed that "psychic shock," in the form of sudden vehement emotions such as terror or anger, could more appropriately be called psychic trauma. Traumatologists van der Hart et al (1989) note that Eulenberg regarded the sudden action of vehement emotions as an actual molecular concussion of the brain, which he likened to the "cerebral commotion" postulated in psychic trauma. They believe Eulenberg's observation constituted a prescient moment in the history of psychiatry forming the basis of the now
widely divergent field of psychobiology: particularly current findings in research on trauma and neurotransmitters. To this could be added the earlier observations of Thomas Willis, M.D., from 1670 in which he states "that the Distemper named from the Womb [hysteria] is chiefly and primarily Convulsive, and chiefly depends on the Brain and the nervous stock [system] being affected" (Willis, 1684, p.61). These precursor insights as to the possible role of the brain in emotional, physical, and mental dysregulation have been described and detailed, in depth, in recent times, particularly with respect to recent research on memory and learning (McGaugh, 1989; McGaugh, 1990; van der Kolk, 1994).

Early and Current Formulations of Trauma

Although it may be difficult to reduce an entire system of psychoanalysis to a single theme, a central organizing construct, or focal idea for the Freudian system would be the idea of repression or, more broadly, the defense mechanisms. Freud confirmed the centrality of this idea: "The doctrine of repression is the foundation-stone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests" (Freud, 1949, p. 297). Repression leads to the view that certain ideas strive towards consciousness, are labelled as too disturbing by a censoring mechanism, and are therefore consigned to be locked out of consciousness, under "armed guard." Affect surrounding the disturbing idea might be converted into a symptom like a verbal slip, or a more catastrophic one like an hysterical seizure, as Freud observed originally while at the Salpetriere with Charcot. Only if the disturbing idea can be modified in some way, might it have the potential to come to preconsciousness and, ultimately, to enter conscious awareness. Freud’s discovered pathway from repression to revelation was clearly stated in
a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fliess: "Here, on July 24, 1895, the secret of the dream revealed itself to Dr. Sigmund Freud" (Mason, 1985, p. 417); he called the dream "the royal road to the unconscious... insight such as this falls to one's lot but once in a lifetime" (Freud, 1938, p. 181).

Unlike most of the defense mechanisms, the concept of repression was not original to Freud. J. F. Herbart had written extensively on repression of ideas in Psychology as a Science, in 1824 (Vaillant, 1992). Even before Herbart, Schopenhauer had noted that defensive forgetting had something to do with psychopathology. Schopenhauer wrote: "How unwillingly we think of things which powerfully injure our interests...In that resistance of the will to allowing what is contrary to it to come under the examination of our intellect lies the place at which madness can break in upon the mind: (Whyte, 1960, p. 140). Though Herbart and Schopenhauer both wrote in detail about repression of ideas, Freud originally wrote about the use of repression against ideas in order to manage affects. "The repressed ideas... form the nucleus of a second psychical group" (Freud, 1894, p. 154). In discussing the mechanism of psychological trauma, Freud wrote: "In the course of our therapeutic work, we have been led to the view that hysteria (trauma) originates through the repression of an incompatible idea from a motive of defence." Freud continues the development of his view of the mechanisms of hysteria: "... the repressed idea would persist as a memory trace that is weak [in intensity], while the affect that is torn from it would be used for somatic innervation." Thus, the symptom is "converted." This psychical mechanism became known as "defense hysteria" (Breuer & Freud, 1893, p. 285).

The late 19th century was extremely rich in the development of new understandings
of psychological trauma. Freud developed a hydraulic, stimulus-response formulation hypothesizing that the trauma caused increased excitation, leading to a breach in the "stimulus barrier" (Freud, 1920, p.86). He described the compulsion to repeat the trauma (in dreams and waking life) - which he viewed as an attempt of the organism to reduce excess energy and as a means to master the affect associated with the trauma.

In his repetition-compulsion formulation trauma is followed by two tendencies: (1) to repeat the trauma in an attempt to master it and, (2) to defend against the repetition in an attempt to avoid painful affect. Reexperiencing is a result of the inability of the organism to adapt to the trauma. The need to repeat is an immediate result of the trauma and regressive defensive functioning, for example numbing, is understood as a response to the reexperiencing activity. Traumatic memories, images lead to arousal of painful affect which triggers defense. Defending against painful affect leads to the activating principle, the repetition-compulsion. This represents an attempt by the mind to master the trauma.

Both Freud and his contemporary, Pierre Janet noted the impoverished mental life of trauma victims and ascribed those to the energy expended to ward off the impact of the traumatic experience. Janet wrote: "Stress is often experienced at later points in time much the same way as the actual earlier traumatic insult. The trauma remains isolated, more or less separated from all other ideas; it can envelop and suppress all else" (van der Kolk, 1987, p.4). The recognition of the danger of traumatic re-experiencing led Lindemann (1944) to advocate acute crisis intervention with trauma sufferers to prevent a "walling off" of the traumatic memories. Janet pointed out what modern therapists would refer to as delayed effects. Also, the above quotation from Janet suggests the phenomenon of dissociation in
which the traumatic experience remains apart from "all the other ideas." Freud (1920) related the defense mechanism of dissociation to fixation on the trauma and proposed that the repetition compulsion originated in repression of the trauma, which he described as dissociative phenomenon.

The three concepts of repression, isolation, and dissociation have been central to many of the influential trauma theories up to the present. In repression the idea is banished from consciousness while the affect associated with the idea is preserved. Isolation spares the idea but banishes the affect. Dissociation keeps both affect and idea in consciousness but the significance of such association is obscured through conversions or memory disruptions: the disruption being one of failure of associating and integrating information, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Putnam, 1992, p. 1). The experience of de-personalization or de-realization is commonly reported in traumatized people. In their bank robbery studies, Leymann & Lindell (1990), Endresen et al (1991), White (1990), and Manton & Talbot (1990) all use language reminiscent of mild dissociative phenomena.

From Charcot to Freud & Breuer, Janet, and up to recent researchers, it has been noted that behaviours or information learned or stored in one state may be reactivated or retrieved at a later time if the same arousal state occurs. In 1891 Ribot first proposed that effects similar to state-dependent learning were responsible for dissociative amnesias, stressing that "bodily sensations, physiologic states, and other cues were necessary to access certain memories in an individual" (Putnam, 1993, p. 9). Many of these observations provided a rich inheritance for later researchers such as Kardiner (1941), Lindemann (1944), Krystal (1978), and Horowitz (1976; 1993). Charcot, Freud, Janet, and Pavlov (1927)
proposed primarily psychological models. Kardiner (1941) coined the term "physioneurosis" when describing combat trauma to underscore his conviction that trauma had both psychological and physiological components. Selye (1956) and Kolb (1988) viewed trauma as a more strictly physiological disturbance. Pavlov (1927) coined the term "defensive reaction," to highlight the cluster of innate reflexive responses to environmental threat. He found that following repeated aversive stimulation, the cues associated with trauma (conditional stimuli) became capable of eliciting the defensive reaction by themselves (conditional response). For example, the robbed staff person who responds with alarm at the sight of someone wearing a ski-mask at a winter resort can still evoke the ensemble of thoughts, behaviours, feelings from a robbery ten years ago (where the robber wore a "balaclava"). This example illustrates not only a conditioned response, but also may reflect elements of state-dependent learning, or, if the traumatic moment was severe enough, may even suggest a dissociative amnesia based on the initial trauma.

The Coconut Grove Incident

November 28, 1942 - on a cold New England winter night, thousands of fans crowded together to watch the classic rivalry between Holy Cross and Boston College. After the football game, hundreds of College students went to celebrate at a popular night club in Boston called the Coconut Grove. As the night wore on, more and more celebrants crammed into the small club. A consuming fire broke out - probably in a storage room in the basement, nursed by Christmas decorations which the club had recently unpacked to inventory. By the time the fire exploded through the wooden dance floor above the
basement, the patrons had little chance of avoiding the panicked crowds trying to push their way out of newly installed turnstile-type doors designed to control the flow of traffic down to a trickle. By the end of that week, over 490 patrons were dead. The Coconut Grove tragedy led to massive changes in U.S. fire and safety codes; started the modern state-of-the-art care and treatment of burn victims, and provided one of the first large-scale treatments of psychological trauma, grief, and loss in a civilian population.

Erich Lindemann and his colleagues studied a number of direct survivors and family members of those who lost relatives in the fire. Using a quasi-qualitative approach, these investigators recorded the interviews and discussions and analyzed the audio-recorded data with particular attention to symptoms reported and changes in mental status over the course of several interviews. The interviewing psychiatrist attempted to avoid leading questions, suggestions, or interpretations "until the picture of symptomatology and spontaneous reaction tendencies of the patients had become clear from the record" (Lindemann, 1944, p. 141).

The study described four basic findings. First, acute grief was seen as a definite syndrome with somatic and psychological symptomatology. This is consistent with Kardiner's (1941) idea of trauma as "physio-neurosis." Second, the syndrome can present immediately or on both a short and very long-term delayed basis, or not at all. These observations are consistent with Janet's and Freud's ideas of dissociation, repression, and isolation of mental content. Horowitz (1976) has noted that dissociation of memories, alternating with uncontrollable actual or symbolic repetitions, are fundamental features of the trauma response. van der Kolk (1987) noted the remarkable case of a 55 year old woman who, when she was 19 years old, survived the Coconut Grove fire and did not develop symptoms
of reenactment of the trauma until 1981 - at which time disturbing life events presumably "released" the long-stored affects. This case represents an unusual instance of "amnesia, dissociation, and the return of the repressed" (van der Kolk, 1987, p. 173). Third, Lindemann’s study noted that distorted pictures of certain aspects of the trauma may replace the typical syndrome. Fourth, Lindemann’s study shows how distortions can be transformed into normal grief and resolved.

Lindemann proposed a five-phase model consisting of: 1) somatic distress, 2) preoccupation with the image of the deceased, 3) guilt, 4) hostile reaction, and 5) loss of patterns of conduct.

It is not necessary to think of Lindemann's phasic model of acute grief as representative of all sufferers. The main force of his study for the present review is: a) its direct use of qualitative data gathering techniques (although he was primarily interested in symptomatology) during the interview portion of the study, and b) it furnishes a crystallization point incorporating many of the earlier trauma constructs from leading thinkers such as Charot, Janet, Freud, Kardiner - applied under conditions of extreme stress in the domain of traumatic processes involving significant human grief and loss in a civilian population.

Humans have always striven to make sense of tragedy and loss and to seek transformative elements in adversity. In 1993, the Bay Village Neighbourhood Association commemorated the site of the Coconut Grove fire with the following plaque, embedded in concrete:

In memory of the more than 490 people who died as a result
of the Coconut Grove Fire on November 28, 1942. As a result of this terrible tragedy major changes were made in the fire codes and improvements in the treatment of burn victims not only in Boston but across the nation. "Phoenix out of the Ashes"

Plaque crafted by Anthony P. Marra. Youngest survivor of Coconut Grove Fire (Personal recording, June, 1994)

Psychobiologic Perspectives

The profusion of research in recent years on the biology of psychological trauma and extreme stress are of interest for the following three reasons. First, emotional patterns which occur under conditions of high physiological arousal (traumatic or high-stress states) may become neuro-chemically encoded with intrusive reoccurrences when arousal levels are re-activated by relatively non-threatening stimuli. Bank robbery staff may be particularly vulnerable to disrupted sympathetic nervous system functioning as a result of repeated shock from a stream of robberies. The hypothesis, presented by van der Kolk (1987) called "kindling" suggests that continued arousal causes the limbic system to become increasingly sensitized following exposure to trauma. Friedman (1991) states that "kindling can lead to profound central nervous system disruption as manifested by neurophysiological abnormalities, grand mal seizures, and aberrant behaviour" (p. 505). Second, Intrusive recollections of a traumatic event may become engraved or "etched" neuro-chemically and under conditions of decreased inhibitory control (drugs, alcohol, during sleep, with aging, or after exposure to reminders of the trauma) may return unbidden as affect states, visual
images, or somatic sensations that are "timeless and unmodified by further experience" (van der Kolk, 1994). According to these studies, these types of state-dependent learning may create a variety of hormonal and neuro-chemical dysregulation which can profoundly affect behaviour, emotions, and cognitive and memory processes. Third, The biological studies of trauma are principally based on laboratory studies with animals and caution is usually stated directly in these studies when applying these findings to humans.

These studies, taken as a whole, have created enormous new knowledge in the field of trauma studies. The focus has, understandably, been based on standard science models of cause-effect explanatory models. In what can only be described as a blizzard of activity, recent research seeks to discover new pharmacological and clinical treatments - as well as public policy interventions on behalf of those traumatized. Though, with the rate and pace of production of new research in the trauma field - the voice of the person with the problem has been near silenced. Therefore, the scientific gains in the trauma field based on biological and psychological laboratory work may benefit by being placed within a much broader phenomenological horizon, based specifically on the voice of the individual with the experience under exploration.

The simple idea of appealing to the sufferer for an authoritative account of the trauma experience has probably been historically hindered by vested interests.

During the Napoleonic Wars the condition known as nostalgie, or homesickness was described as an acute, short-term reaction to combat (Rosen, 1975). Soldiers who returned home, with symptoms of fever, exhaustion, and decreased will, were suspected of malingering. In the American Civil War (1861-1865) the main manifestation of stress was
termed "Irritable heart" (Dean, 1991) which, like nostalgie was considered to be a manifestation of stress (the chief complaints being shortness of breath, palpitation, precordial [chest] pain, dizziness and fatigue). These combat related symptoms were viewed with some scepticism by military commanders, and the association of nostalgie and "irritable heart" were commonly thought of as a form of malingering (Anderson, 1984). Psychiatric casualties in the Civil War were recognized by the Army, but were regarded with suspicion and it was demanded that the condition be "manifest," or "decided and pronounced," before discharge would be granted. Symptoms of stress short of a total breakdown were often viewed as cowardice or as an attempt to shirk duty (Wecter, 1944; Dean, 1991). Following the Civil War the pension crusade was long and hard with many obstacles, particularly for discharged veterans who were thought to have been released for "functional" (non-organic) reasons (Dearing, 1952). This crusade bears a striking resemblance to the PTSD crusade of Vietnam veterans, as both were motivated, in part, by a desire for recognition and appreciation, or at least some degree of understanding (Bentley, 1991).

Trauma became further interlinked with gain when, in 1879 the term "compensation neurosis" was created to account for the increase in invalidism reported after railway accidents. As increased use was made of rail transport systems for people the number of accidents increased and so did the claims for compensation. The term "railway spine" became part of the medical language and an energetic debate ensued based on malingering, which lasted well into the 1920's (Trimble, 1985). One of the leading neurologists of the time, Herbert Page, was unable to find any evidence that railway spine was, in the majority of cases, associated in any way with organic disease. He believed that the symptoms were
essentially psychological in origin (Trimble, 1985).

In the cases of Civil War and industrial accident compensation cases trauma emerged, at least to a large extent, as a debate between insurance company interests and the question of malingering on behalf of the sufferer. It was up to the complainant to convince the paying party (government or insurance company) that the case was "made." Under these circumstances it is not difficult to reason that there would be a rather a limited interest in the actual experience of the sufferer. Many trauma sufferers today express similar frustrations at 'not being believed' (Bentley, 1991, p. 14).

It is well known traumatized individuals have this and that "symptom" - and that on the basis of presenting these symptoms various diagnoses may be made. But not much, or very little understanding about what the symptoms mean to the sufferer; what the person's experience of himself, others, the community is in relation to his/her pre-trauma world, experience of the insult, and post-trauma experience of struggle: the trauma and its "wake" - as Figley (1986) would say.

All human behaviour centrally includes complex biologic and physiologic structures and functions. To treat human behaviour otherwise would be as futile as attempting to explain a whirlpool without taking into account the stream that gives rise to it. According to Monat & Lazarus (1991, p. 9) current interest and excitement in the study of stress and coping, cognition, perception, emotions, and rememberences is attributable to the richness and variety of interaction between biological, psychological, and sociological factors believed to contribute to the development of physical and mental disorders. Much of the advancement in understanding the physiology of stress and trauma is the result of recent advances in
molecular biology and physiologic, hormone, and receptor assay (test) technology. It is believed that neurobiologic technology currently in development in areas like brain imaging will better define acute and long-term changes in central and peripheral nervous system functioning that are believed to occur during states of physiological and psychological stress and trauma (Pinel, 1993; Southwick, et al, 1994). However, a thorough understanding at just the organic level seems unlikely. The human intellect - which gives rise to higher-order human phenomena such as understanding, judging, reasoning, creativity, sense of humanity - these will never be reduced to atoms - though many have tried. Brain scans are not meant to answer questions about the person's meaning of the event.

In recent studies of robbed bank staff, key symptoms experienced by some staff have been identified (Leymann, 1988; Leymann & Lindell, 1990; Endresen et al, 1991; Manton & Talbot, 1990). These include: somatic reactions (fainting, vomiting, gastrointestinal complaints), sleep disturbances, cognitive impairment (memory failure, concentration problems), and a variety of depressive symptoms (listlessness, despondency, weeping, nightmares, sense of fear); social adjustment and family-related disturbances.

Key areas related to the biology of response to distressing events may be summarized by three interconnected topics: a) the neurobiologic response to danger, b) fear conditioning, c) memory effects.

Neurobiologic Response To Danger

An organism under threat responds by activating multiple neurobiological and endocrine systems in the service of meeting the requirements in handling the immediate threat
and, later, returning the organism to a state of balance. This was the central insight detailed by Cannon (1914; 1935) and developed further by Selye (1956).

It has been hypothesized that parallel activation of various brain regions and neurotransmitter systems (for example, norepinephrine), hormones (for example, cortisol), and bodily produced opiates (for example, endogenous morphine: "endorphines") are important mediators in the development of anxiety and fear as well as the subsequent behavioral "fight or flight" response (Charney et al, 1993). More specifically, norepinephrine appears to play an important role in orienting to novel stimuli, selective attention, hypervigilence, autonomic arousal (for example, increased blood pressure and pulse), and fear (Ashton-Jones et al, 1994). Secretion of cortisol stimulates the activation of metabolic processes required for sustained physical demands and tissue repair. The release of opiates contributes to increased pain threshold, particularly when injury has occurred (Thomas, 1976; Pitman et al, 1990). It is thought that the consequent increase of the pain threshold allows the organism to focus its attention on a variety of behaviours that are necessary for survival. Norepinephrine and opiates also play a critical role in the encoding of memories that may help in recognition of, and responding to situations of danger in the future (McGaugh, 1990).

Current research also has produced a large and growing literature on other neurotransmitter systems, including the serotonergic, dopaminergic, and benzodiazepine systems - all of which play a critical role in the complexities of the fight-flight response (Bremmer et al, 1993). All biological systems are understood to be intimately interconnected. For example, the corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) and noradregenic
systems (neurons that release norepinephrine) are thought to modulate one another during acute stress. According to Valentino et al (1983) norepinephrine turnover is increased in several forebrain areas resulting from infusion of CRH. Thus, during acute stress the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) and norepinephrine systems may participate in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop. These types of fine-tuned systems interactions are basic and fundamental for stress physiology.

Although the immediate neurobiologic response to trauma generally serves a protective role, there may be a price to pay for some individuals, especially with chronic responses. Chronic responses, for some individuals may become maladaptive. For example, it has been suggested that PTSD-related symptoms such as chronic hyperarousal, recurrent intrusive memories, impulsivity, and numbing, develop in response to trauma-induced disruption (dysregulation) of multiple neurobiologic systems (Charney et al, 1993).

Fear Conditioning

It has been well documented that when an individual experiences a life-threatening trauma a wide variety of stimuli present at the onset of the trauma may become conditioned to the attendant feelings of terror and anxiety. Kardiner and Spiegel (1947) suggested that conditioning played a part in the hyper-exaggerated startle response (physioneurosis) of combat veterans. More recently numerous other investigations (Shalev et al, 1993; van der Kolk & Saporta, 1991) have articulated the role of classical conditioning in the development of symptoms related to extreme stress. Kolb (1987) has referred to this same phenomenon as the "conditioned emotional response" to trauma (p.989). As a result of this conditioning
previously neutral stimuli may become able to evoke the same feelings of fright, terror, or anxiety that belonged to the initial trauma situation. Southwick et al (1994) points out that both specific and non-specific cues (such as the location of the trauma or the time of day of the trauma or a sensory memory such as a particular smell associated with the trauma) that are associated with the traumatic event are all capable of becoming conditioned stimuli. It also appears that stimuli similar to those associated with the trauma (stimulus generalization) can at times become conditioned stimuli. An example of this is the report of a woman who was robbed and who, even after the passage of over ten years, still had a "wave of nausea" wash over her if she smelled a certain type of after shave lotion which she "noticed faintly" on the perpetrator during the robbery (Brown, 1994). Further, it has been established that it is possible for a conditioned stimulus to condition other neutral stimuli that are present when the conditioned stimuli evokes a state of terror or fear (higher order conditioning). The end result may be an individual who becomes fearful and anxious in response to a wide variety of stimuli (Keane et al, 1985). This response is in no way uniform. Shalev et al (1993) found no evidence of exaggerated startle response in Israeli combat veterans with PTSD. However, in Shalev's study, it is not clear whether alterations in startle amplitude might be controlled during baseline measures but surface during states of conditioned fear.

For this knowledge to emerge a qualitative methodology would need to be utilized in addition to strictly measurement methodology, in order to learn more detail about the experience directly from the person.

Much of the literature of fear conditioning in PTSD is related to war trauma. There is an emerging number of studies suggesting that relatively minor accidents or incidents may
leave the individual psychologically damaged or disabled due to the person's self-appraisal and subjective experience of the event. This includes relatively minor incidents and even vicarious effects of a "second-hand" nature on peripheral victims (Pilowsky, 1992; Dixon, 1991).

The literature of fear conditioning, taken as a whole, suggests that the nature of the stressor, the individual's subjective experience, and even who those affected might be all needs to be broadened phenomenologically to include not just overt life-threatening traumata, but a range of lessor stressors that may be perceived as, or associated with terror or extreme stress. The generalization of traumata to neutral stimuli is of particular importance and has not been conclusively demonstrated to be systematic. Many questions remain. Particularly absent in these studies is any mention of, or reference to, the sufferer's own story and experience including explication of complex and varied meanings of the experiencing person.

**Memory**

People who suffer from the effects of extreme stress often report vivid, painfully intrusive memories, that in some cases are so horrific that they become indelibly "etched," or engraved. In referring to his study of Holocaust survivors Langer (1991) referred to this as the "ruins of memory" (p. xiii). Most memory damage from trauma is not of the order of magnitude of Holocaust trauma. However, PTSD has come to be thought of, in large part, as a disorder of memory (Southwick, 1994). For over a century researchers have noted that the psychological effects of trauma are stored in somatic memory and expressed as changes in the biological stress response. In 1899 Pierre Janet proposed that intense
emotional reactions make events traumatic by interfering with the integration of the experience into existing memory schemas (van der Kolk, 1994; van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1989). Intense emotions, Janet thought, cause memories of particular events to become dissociated from consciousness and to be stored, instead, as "visceral sensations (anxiety and panic) or visceral images (nightmares and flashbacks) " (van der Kolk, 1994, p. 253). Janet also observed that traumatized individuals seem to react to reminders of the trauma with emergency response that had been associated with the initial trauma but bear no relation to the current requirement. The tenacity of trauma remembering has been the subject of a vast literature in recent years. McGaugh (1990), in an extensive body of animal studies has shown that epinephrine and endogenous opioids probably influence memory consolidation through their effects on norepinephrine. For example, if low dose adrenaline (norepinephrine) is administered to rats immediately after a training task, long-term memory or retention is enhanced. Partly as a result of animal studies, it is thought that in humans memory traces are engraved by a similar neurochemical process thereby "etching" the memory of traumatic experiences under conditions of stress chemical release. This may occur for single (or multiple) dramatic, traumatic events (child sexual abuse, natural disasters, accidents) or lower-level, chronic stressful situations (van der Kolk, 1994; Weisaeth & Eitinger, 1993; Southwick et al, 1994).

Summary

The biological response to danger, fear conditioning, and memory effects have been reviewed. Some researchers suggest that cardinal PTSD symptoms such as startling easily, agitation, and evoked fear responses by relatively neutral stimuli may be long-lasting or even
permanent, in some cases. Memory effects including state-dependent learning may cause untold suffering, particularly in trauma victims where repeated exposure to traumatic events occur. Literature from the 17th century to modern times suggest a definite - but not fully articulated, role for biology in traumatic responding. Direct research with bank robbery victims document widespread post-robbery symptoms such as shock and numbness (Gabor, 1989), sense of vulnerability, fear, loss of morale (White, 1990), degradation, humiliation, a variety of physical symptoms, memory loss, super-startle response, loss of confidence, loss of self worth, depression (Manton & Talbot, 1990), lowered immune system functioning, insufficient coping, attention-span decrease, anger and rage (Endersen, et al, 1991), vomiting and sleep loss, nightmares, chronic shaking and hand tremor (Haran & Martin, 1984). A link between biological symptoms and bank robbery stress would be expected - as with any traumatic sequence. Differences would focus on degree of intensity, duration and frequency of the trauma. A main difference is assumed to be in the meaning of the events and their subsequent path intrapersonally, interpersonally, and more broadly - socially. It is presumed that studies of trauma from war, natural disasters, and terrorism, along with animal studies (which collectively constitutes a large portion of the research on the biology of trauma) will be theoretically and therapeutically different from staff exposed to bank robbery events. The trauma source, meaning, experience, and post-trauma event milieu are tremendously different. Neurobiologic responses to traumatic life events have added to the stock of knowledge of human responding from a natural science, cause-effect point of view. Differences in findings between qualitative research efforts and standard science approaches must be viewed within the limitations set by the methods used to search for answers. It is
not the role of the standard science approach to increase knowledge of the individual's experience and the manifold meanings that are created by the experiencing person. This is perfectly consistent with the canons of standard science methodology. Persons would more likely be seen as "sources of error." Therefore, findings from the neurobiologic research are limited to what it investigates and interpretations must be made in the context of what the findings leave out. "Light waves impinging on the organ of sight is one definition of vision, but 'seeing' [and the meaning of what one sees] implies a particular form of dialogue with the world" (Kruger, 1985, p. 1). Laws of optics are better suited to reveal the physics of vision. A different method needs to be utilized to reveal the essential meanings for the person of what is seen.

Structural, Information-Processing, Field, and Constructivist Models

Structural Models

Proponents of the structural approach to trauma (Benyaker et al., 1989) were inspired by the belief that the time honoured concept of trauma, in its original connotation of disruption and discontinuity, has been severely diluted in the recent psychiatric literature, particularly DSM-III-R (1987). These authors trace the origin of the term trauma, which they state derived from a Greek verb for "wound" or "injury" (Benyaker, 1989, p. 432). This is consistent with Freud's (1920) early formulation of trauma as a "consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (p. 86).

A structure, according to Piaget (1970) represents a "system of transformations. In
as much as it is a system and not a mere collection of elements and their properties, transformations involve laws... In short, the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas: wholeness; the idea of transformation; the idea of self-regulation" (p. 172). In General Systems Theory, the three principles of wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation are considered essential for defining autonomy (Durkin, 1981, p. ix). In his groundbreaking work on general biological systems, von Bertalanffy (1968) noted that the three principles of wholeness, transformation, and self-regulatory functioning (organized complexity) apply to all biological systems. Benyaker et al (1989) have extended the idea of organized complexity to include social and psychological structures. Nobel Laureate Murray Gell-Mann describes complex adaptive systems as those "That learn or evolve in the way that living systems do. A child learning a language, bacteria developing resistance to antibiotics, and the human scientific enterprise are all examples of complex adaptive systems" (1994, p. x). It may be misleading, however, to assume that a child learning a language - who also is utilizing his/her intellect (judging, conceptualizing, reasoning) is equivalent with bacterial adaptation to antibiotics: the latter, where it may be an extremely sophisticated process, does not involve intellect.

The structural approach to trauma presupposes a continuous exchange of action between the structure and the environment so that a state of dynamic equilibrium is maintained with continuous interaction shaping both. Adaptability is related to the principle of transformation and implies a shift in equilibrium according to homeostatic mechanisms and goal directed development (Piaget, 1970; Benyaker et al, 1989). Closely related to this structural approach are some aspects of a field of inquiry that sees the growth of knowledge
as partly innate: evolutionary epistemology (Piaget, 1971; Popper & Eccles, 1977). Within an adaptive, or developmental perspective, "knowledge" becomes a biological as well as a psychological process. Cognitive developmental or constructivist approaches are based on the idea that humans actively create their own reality (Kelly, 1955; Guidano, 1987; Mahoney, 1991). Structural and cognitive-developmental, or "constructivist" approaches share a common interest in the importance of emotional attachments, affective cycles of disorganization, and self-organizing processes in individual psychological development.

The capacity for forming flexible patterns of proactive and reactive responding while maintaining wholeness is considered to be self-regulated. The structure is endowed with the capacity for self-reference and self-knowledge, allows recognition of information regarding external and internal change, and - within limits, may initiate or terminate adaptational responding. As Benyaker et al (1989) state "The structure moves along one of its optimal developmental courses, while continuously shaping and being shaped along the course of its life" (p. 134).

The structural approach to trauma (Benyaker, et al, 1989) is based on the maintenance and balance among four structural (relationship) and functional (action) planes: 1) The psychostructural plane - which relates to various intrapsychic elements such as id, ego or super ego. An example of a statement about the psychostructural plane would be: "the person's ego strength could not withstand the robbery assault"; 2) the psychofunctional plane refers to products of actions of specific psychic mechanisms such as anxiety, anger, or apathy. For example, the appearance of a forbidden feeling, or the eruption of emotions with unrecognized intensity as might result from responding to a robbery with overwhelming fear
or rage; 3) The sociostructural plane describes the relationship between members of a particular social unit - a couple, family, work group, etc. A threat along this plane would be the dispersion of cohesiveness and leadership for staff during a violent bank robbery event; 4) The sociofunctional plane encompasses prevailing attitudes or behaviours that are characteristic of the interactions within a particular social frame, such as power struggle within a group - or the inability to speak freely in a work group - that may pose a threat along this plane that may result in forbidden or despondent attitudes that could threaten the cohesiveness of the group.

A structural concept of adult psychic trauma is defined (Benyaker et al, 1989) as the "Collapse of the structure of self along all four referential planes resulting from an encounter of a catastrophic threat and a chaotic response. This occurs at a discrete point in time and results in the experience of loss of autonomy." If autonomy is considered to be the capacity to have a sense of identity, continuity and internal consistency in the face of stressful external and internal pressure, then "The experience of loss of autonomy is incompatible with former recognized relationships that define the sense of self" (p. 437). In this sense being "autonomous" and being "relational" are two sides of the same coin.

Both the structural and constructivist approaches would endeavour to stabilize at least one of the referential planes while trauma repair occurred on the other planes. Internal "deep oscillations" (Guidano, 1987) are perceived as having transformative, growth-producing prospects providing re-structuring following the trauma can occur in an environment that meets the needs of the individual: roughly speaking, in an environment where the self-other-community matrix fosters support, development, and sense of belonging.
Using an information-processing model (the Stress Response Syndrome), Horowitz (1976; 1993) proposed a state of mind and state transition theory for understanding traumatic impact and outcome. He proposes a prototypical set of phases, based on two predominant phases (the intrusive state and the denial state) that may follow a traumatic event. The phases describe a normal response and its pathological counterpart. The five phases following traumatic event are: 1) Outcry (fear, sadness, rage). If not resolved in the normal course of events, panic or exhaustion may result from escalated emotional reactions. 2) Denial (refusing to face the memory of the disaster). If unresolved, this could lead to extreme avoidance and lead to coping patterns such as drug use to deny the pain. 3) Intrusion (unbidden thoughts of the trauma or events related to it). If unresolved, this could lead to flooded states mediated by disturbing, persistent images and thoughts of the event. 4) Working through (facing the reality of what happened). If unresolved, psychosomatic responses may result. These could include a variety of bodily complaints and symptoms. 5) Completion (going on with life). If this phase is blocked, character disorders may develop in the form of long-term disorders affecting one's ability for love, work, creativity, capacity to feel emotions or positive states of mind (Horowitz, 1993, p. 51).

Trauma in Horowitz's model is similar in some ways to Freud's model. Horowitz (1986) has taken Freud's basic ideas and translated them into information-processing language. In his theory "intrusion," that is "repetition," and "denial," that is "defense," oscillate until the cognitive processing of the trauma can be completed. In both models the basic framework is that trauma-linked imagery and thoughts lead to painful affects, which
leads to defenses (Freud) or control (Horowitz). Each has defined a mechanism which governs this process: the repetition compulsion (Freud) or the completion tendency of cognitive processing (Horowitz). In each case reexperiencing provides the primary spark that activates the process.

Horowitz's approach to trauma has contributed in many ways to understanding possible sequential responding to human trauma and clarifying diagnostic criteria in assessing PTSD. He and his group are widely recognized for their output of "elegant work on trauma in the civilian population" (Tomb, 1994, p. 238). Nevertheless, the approach which may accurately define many trauma victims may not accurately define any one person's experience at all. The dedication and tremendous creative work done in Traumatology since Freud notwithstanding, there does not currently exist systematic, qualitatively derived trauma descriptions which may be compared and contrasted with the findings discussed above though

Field Models

Williams (1992) has recently synthesized trauma research based on a complex systems paradigm and notes that "the development of trauma theory parallels the development of contemporary systems theories" (p. 103). Gell-Mann (1994) stated that the criterion for complex adaptive systems is an ability of the organism for: (a) comparison of information; (b) development of schema (competing and evolving schemata); (c) chance variation; (d) selection, and; (e) the ability to learn more and more from successive experience (p. 71). In field models of traumatic stress, "the subjective reality or model of the world is given full consideration" (Simon, Stierlin, and Wynne, 1985, p.163). According to McWhinney
"field theory encompasses the sciences of the whole... and the position of maximum interdependence among elements" (p.39) in the bio-psycho-social field. The field system model of trauma is holistic, therefore the system parts are not directly or linearly causally related. The model examines "patterns and relations as opposed to objects affecting each other" (McWhinney, 1987, p. 44). Kurt Lewin's (1951) work in social field theory and human relations provide the foundations for the field models.

Cummings (1980) noted that field theories think in relationship terms with process oriented views. These models "veer away from analytical and causal models... because trauma victims have their own 'images of the world'" (pp. 8-9).

Considering some system as a "field," or in a larger field - the idea of interdependence means that a change in one part of a system will influence all other parts in some way. According to Papp (1983), the key concepts of field theory are wholeness, organization, and patterning viewed within the context in which they occur.

Field theory goes beyond strictly causal information-processing models in that it fully considers belief systems and subjective reality of trauma victims as moderators, as well as pre-trauma factors such as familial background, temperament, history and culture (Wolfe et al, 1987). "Stress reactions may be seen as due to a multiplicative function of situational and individual characteristics" (Lerman, 1972, as quoted in Appley and Trumbull, 1986, p. 12). Due to the complexity of the dynamics of the immediate, local, and regional field synergies, this paradigm does not focus on causal significance. The occasion of the stressor is not understood as a unitary entity as in stimulus-response and to less of an extent in cybernetic/information-processing models. In field theory the stressful event is represented
as a complex system of many related elements including the context (biological, social, environmental), the type, focus (self, other), predictability or suddenness of onset, controllability, likelihood of recurrence, threat to life through violence; natural or man-made; number of perpetrators; relationship of perpetrator to victim, and so on. In addition, as Hart (1975) notes, the array of complex elements that may lead to trauma have meaning only in so far as the person imbues the events with meaning. The key issue of a transactional model of stress is the appraised perception, and subjective evaluation of impact given of the trauma by the person as well as the coping and information processing of the stressor inputs (Bloom, 1985). Situational context may influence the coping process significantly. The coping process may become situationally defensive and emotion focused but would make sense given the context: "contextual comprehensibility" as R. D. Laing would say (1964).

Constructivist Models

McCann and Pearlman (1990) advance a constructivist self-development theory which they describe as a "bridge theory which integrates clinical insights from object relations theory and self psychology, and research in social cognition" (p. 154). As a part of the systems of field theories of trauma, this approach is important both because it is integrative and because it places greater focus on the shared and individual meanings of the social and cultural context - an area that is not well articulated in trauma literature.

For the purpose of the present study, the terms stress and trauma are taken to include stimulus-response/biological models, information-processing models, but are more firmly reflective of field, systems models, which place great emphasis on the historical and broad
contemporary context. Of greatest importance to the present study are constructivist models (McCann & Perlman, 1990; Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988; Mahoney, 1991) which emphasize an ensemble of the social/cultural context, personal history, and especially the self with its needs, schemas, capacities and resources. In the constructivist model self-capacities regulate self-esteem, ego resources regulate interactions with others, psychological needs motivate behaviour and cognitive schemas organize experience of self and world. Constructivist models emphasize the created representational model of the world which serves "like an experiential scaffolding of structural relations which in turn becomes a framework from which the individual orders and assigns meaning and new experience" (Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988, p. 200).

In constructivist theory psychological trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected - or expected but culturally unacceptable event, exceeds the individual's perceived ability to meet the demands presented by the event. The result is the disruptions of the person's overarching beliefs - frame of reference, and other central psychological needs and related schemas. A principle feature of constructivist theory is the individual's own determination as to whether an experience is traumatic. The individual's appraisal - or sense that an event is, or is not traumatic is related to self-capacities and ego resources which, respectively, regulate self-esteem and regulate interactions with others. An experience is traumatic in part because it in some manner threatens the psychological core of the individual. When traumatic memories - either verbal or imagery, are activated they may pose an intolerable threat to one's central beliefs (frame of reference) or to other psychological needs and related schemas. Avoidance and denial are posited as primary ways of defending against the pain of the eruption of
overwhelming affects. McCann & Perlman (1990) note that avoidance and denial may serve a self-protective function beyond affect regulation: "thus traumatic memory is potentially disruptive not only because of the fear of overwhelming affects...but because the disruption to the individual's frame of reference is perhaps the most central experience of trauma against which individual's defend" (p. 32). The activating principle in this model is not so much reexperiencing, as with Freud and Horowitz, but more emphasis is placed on adaptation - or failed adaptation to traumatic memories and the threat, disruption to overarching beliefs about the self and the world thus posed.

In the present research, the study premise is explicitly grounded in the phenomenological psychological tradition with its central focus on the experiencing, meaning-making person.

**Summary**

Psychodynamic and information-processing accounts of trauma are similar in that they both utilize a similar activating principle: reexperiencing. They differ in their explanatory schema. Horowitz (1986) posited the completion tendency of cognitive processing as the precipitant of the reexperiencing. Freud (1920) utilizes the repetition compulsion as the chief animator of the reexperiencing process. In Freud's model the return of traumatic memories leads to the arousal of painful affects which mobilizes defense. Horowitz (1986) utilizes the completion tendency of cognitive processing as the chief animator of the reexperiencing process. In Horowitz's model discrepant information (cognitions, thoughts) leads to the arousal of painful affects which the person struggles to control by the denial
process or, more adaptively, by efforts directed at assimilating or accommodating the painful thoughts and either integrating them into current beliefs or creating new schemas which will be capable of accommodating the new experiences. Constructivist theory, similar to information-processing theory, posits trauma as particularly disruptive to one's frame of reference, or primary outlook, belief about self and the world. However, constructivist theory goes beyond information-processing models in that what gets harmed in constructivist models is the more broadly defined "self" consisting of (a) self capacities which regulate self-esteem, (b) ego resources which regulate interpersonal relations, (c) psychological needs (such as safety, esteem, needs; trust/dependency needs; frame of reference) which serve to motivate behaviour, and (d) cognitive schemas which serve to organize experience of self and the world. Where the main activating principle in psychodynamic and information models is reexperiencing the main activating principle for traumatic experiencing in constructivist theory is failure or disruptions to adaptation of breached frameworks for understanding one's experience: preservation, repair of the person's frame of reference constitutes the chief goal of defense.

Structural and constructivist approaches represent a counter-movement to reductionist, rationalistic philosophies which posit that contact with reality is achieved by focusing on the individual's explicit thought processes which are thought to express adequate accounts of the relationships between thought, feeling and action. Structural and constructivist accounts, based originally on George Kelly's (1955) personal construct approach, emphasizes the proactive processes in adaptation and the importance of emotional attachments, affective oscillations creating disorganization, and self-organizing processes in
individual psychological development. Models of this type, as well as the cybernetic (Becvar and Becvar, 1988) or information-processing models (Horowitz, 1976) posit a highly stressful event or trauma as an insult that upsets the steady state and causes outputs that give feedback to the person to maintain stability or to seek change. Feedback may or may not result in a system (behavioural) change. The extent of a traumatic reaction depends, in part, on the perception, interpretations and attributions of meaning of that event. Key concepts for these theories include wholeness, transformative capacities, and self-regulating tendencies within the individual that contribute to one's sense of autonomy. Damage on the stress-trauma continuum occurs when these structures are significantly jolted into a state of disequilibrium. The inherent re-organizing capacities are capable of transforming upheavals into new growth and development, under optimal conditions.

Strictly (or moderately modified) behavioral and cognitive accounts of human stress (B. F. Skinner's work, Albert Ellis' rational-emotive body of knowledge) take a view that the emphasis falls heavily on the deed or the thought, not the doer. Epistemologically, reality may be attained by correcting a person's mistaken thoughts or behaviours. These views clearly assume that the deeds or the "thoughts" themselves constitute - in and of themselves, "that which" represents true knowledge whether "thoughts" or "deeds." Mental objects (thoughts, deeds) may also be understood as "that by which" humans understand their world. This is the basis for intersubjectivity. The difficulty with these approaches may be summed by two points: 1) since reality (truth) is external to the experiencing person it follows that reality is not co-created but is more "known" by the researcher, therapist; etc. These accounts also fail to say much about intersubjectivity; how is it possible for one person to
"know" another; and 2) rationalistic approaches have yet to account much for findings based on evolutionary epistemology, complex adaptive systems, or any approach which utilizes concepts of co-creation of reality - where human learning is - to some extent, directed by the individual who 'construes' meaning from the interaction between the self and the environment.

Structural and constructivist approaches offer increased understanding of human complexity but are themselves - like all theories, "unfinished." As Agnew and Brown (1989) point out, at any given point in time, "representations of reality could be functional though fallible" (p. 168).

Field, structural, and constructivist approaches to human stress and trauma intimately integrate intra-psychic, social, and environmental elements in a shared relationship. Sophisticated 'feed forward' mechanisms, thought by a number of authors (Agnew & Brown, 1989; Thompson, 1989) to be neurologically and culturally embedded - actively encourage the organism to be proactive. This complex adaptive systems approach has important implications for both theory and treatment of trauma victims. First, referential planes (psychostructural psychofunctional, sociostructural, sociofunctional) directly address the centrality of the psychological self, the social context, and the larger community. These planes can be used both diagnostically and therapeutically in formulating a comprehensive contextual treatment plan. Second, autonomy is seen as the capacity for wholeness, transformation, self-regulation as co-created within the social sphere. Therefore, injuries to self may result not just from experiencing direct trauma but, additionally, from loss of social relationships or loss of shared sense of community, or damage to, or loss of sense of self.
This point is dramatically demonstrated by the experiences of several of the research respondents in the present study who experienced vivid instances of failed corporate empathy following their personal robbery events.

These approaches, taken as a whole, offer a richness and texture which allows for enormous variation and unique responding while still maintaining conceptual cohesiveness.

**Bank Robbery Prevalence Data**

From 1962 to 1980 there was a four-fold increase in the per capita armed robbery rate in both Canada and the United States, in all categories (Gabor & Normandeau, 1989).

From 1980 through 1996 there have been over 150,000 chartered bank robberies in the United States (U.S. Bureau of The Census, 1995) and 22,534 in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1994; Canadian Bankers Association, 1996). The number of bank robbery incidents vary from year to year with an annual average of over 8500 in the United States (though just over 5000 in 1995), and over 1300 per year in Canada. Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia account for between 80% to 90% of annual Canadian bank robberies with the Western States the most prevalent targets in the U.S.

**Bank Robbery Definition**

A bank robbery is a theft with violence or the threat of violence. In Canada it is an indictable offense punishable by a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. It overlaps both assault and theft. "Robbery" resembles break and enter and these offenses are often confused by the general public. However, in break and enter, while there is usually a theft, there is
no violence against persons (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1992).

Determinants Of Bank Robbery

A number of factors are thought to contribute to the frequency of bank robbery events. First, a high percentage of bank robberies are drug related. Street prices for heroin and cocaine have remained surprisingly stable in the past fifteen years. Second, sentencing works out to be relatively brief for convicted robbers. This puts them back on the street at fairly regular intervals usually without increased prospects for gainful employment. Third, demographic factors including the baby boom contribute to the bank robbery cycle. More troublesome is the recent sharp increase in gang-related juvenile bank robbery, particularly in the United States. Fourth, economic factors such as changes in the level of unemployment, particularly amongst young males, affect the willingness and need for offenders to commit robbery. Fifth, "target hardening" initiatives have made financial institutions more secure but there may be a displacement to targets that aren't so hard to hit, such as convenience stores, service stations, jewellery stores, individual muggings, and so on. These "easier" targets may serve as a training ground for acquiring criminal skills which could rebound at some future time and serve to actually increase incidents of bank robbery. In the US in 1996 there was a significant decrease in numbers of chartered bank robberies coupled with a significant increase in violent and "take-over" type robberies.
Heroin And Cocaine Prices

It is estimated that 80% of bank robberies may be drug-related (Seibert, 1994). The street price of heroin and cocaine in Canada has changed very little in the past thirteen years. From 1981 to 1994 the price for heroin has been between $35 to $100 per capsule (smallest unit). Cocaine prices are between $70 to $300 per gram (smallest unit). Most of the variance in price is due to percentage of purity and point of origin.

Net dollar loss to bank robberies in 1993 was about $4 million. Average net loss per robbery was about $2900. The median net loss for the year was much lower at about $1500. In other words in 50% of all bank robberies the amount lost was less than $1500. In fact, 47% of bank robberies in 1993 yielded less than $1000 (Ballard, 1993). It is estimated that regular drug users may require from $500 to $800 per day to meet the needs of their addiction. On average, convenience store robberies yield about $100 per event. Individual armed robberies very often yield less than $100 per event (Canadian Crime Statistics, 1993). With a drug habit requirement running in the several hundreds of dollars per day, or even per week, bank robberies yielding about $1000 per robbery may provide the quickest, most certain source.

Recycling of Offenders

It is difficult to make much of a case relating jail terms to bank robbery events. There is a perception of three to four year jail terms awarded to armed robbery offenders, but terms can be adjusted or modified for a variety of reasons. In the four-year period 1991 to 1994 bank robberies in Canada averaged 1535 per year. For the period 1987 to 1990 the
average was 1270 per year. For the period 1983 to 1986 the average was 1174 per year. Since the Judiciary is getting progressively tougher on bank robbers you would expect to see somewhat fewer bank robberies, since more offenders are in jail. However, the numbers of robberies are increasing slightly, regardless of which four-year cycle. If more offenders are being incarcerated, more are coming into the ranks at the entry level. The idea of bank robbery occurrences rising and falling with sentencing cycles is, at best, a third order explanation of frequency of bank robberies.

**Demographic Factors**

Armed robbery, in general, is dominated by males under 30 years old. Beyond that they tend to move on (Gabor et al. 1987). Consequently, armed robbery rates and other crime rates are influenced by the proportion of under 30 year-old males in the total population. Gabor & Normandeau (1989) have done the most extensive Canadian study of armed robbery, including bank robberies. Their profiles on the offender, consisting of careful examination of 1266 cases, reveal a profile of a "typical" armed robber as being under 30 years of age, having no more than a secondary school education, coming from a blue collar background. Most of the offenders began their careers by committing burglaries, auto thefts, and drug trafficking before advancing to armed robbery. Some of the motives mentioned included feelings of euphoria and satisfaction; a quick way to get money; thrills, status, and feelings of power; difficulty in finding employment; the need to obtain drugs or other recreational needs; suggestions made by criminal associates. The younger offenders were more likely to spend their profits purchasing drugs and alcohol, going to clubs, and
taking trips. Those with more experience were more likely to use money acquired from robberies to pay debts and take care of daily expenses (Gabor & Normandeau, 1989, p. 278).

Recent research (Seibert, 1994) suggests that youth gangs are spreading to some 50 or 60 large cities in the United States. It is reported that gangs are recruiting and training juveniles to conduct "take-over robberies" that result in losses of $18,000 to $20,000 per incident and are far more violent than the average robbery, in which $2500 (US) is stolen.

Due to the known direct gang links between major U.S. and Canadian cities (Detroit and Toronto/Montreal; Seattle and Vancouver) a similar young-offender trend in "take-over" type bank robberies in Canada is anticipated in the future. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the highest ever cohort of teenagers (23% higher than the baby boom wave of teens) is expected within the next ten years. These points suggest bank robberies in Canada may not only increase in the future, but may become increasingly more violent.

Economic Factors

The Canadian economy experienced two recessions in the past fifteen years: 1981-1982 and 1990-1992 (Historical Labour Force Statistics, 1994). There were, on average, 1307 bank robberies per year from 1981 to 1982 and 1509 robberies per year from 1990 to 1992. The average bank robbery from the fifteen year segment 1980 to 1994 was 1326. There might be some relationship between unemployment and bank robbery frequency but, as with the re-cycling of offenders, the relationship does not seem compelling.
Target-Hardening

Target-hardening includes a variety of security measures such as pop-up teller windows, ATM's, surveillance cameras, cash-drawer limits, on-site security guards, higher counters, unbreakable glass shields, dye-spraying security packs (to render the money unusable), utilization of vaults with time-release mechanisms, and so on. The purpose is to obstruct the perpetrator from successfully gaining access to desired targets. In some areas these methods are reducing the number of robberies but it is unclear if there is a real increase in more violent, aggressive types of robberies as a result (in other words the perpetrators are getting "harder" in response).

The possibility of displacement is relevant. The offenders may just shift their activities to less fortified targets. As Gabor (1988) points out "If many stores adopt effective target-hardening measures, more offenders may choose to attack people rather than banks or stores: in the case of bank robberies, the inaccessibility of tellers may result in the taking of hostages" (p.63).

Summary

The preceding five factors, taken together, shed some light on some of the possible determinants of financial institution robberies. It is probably more accurate to say that adequately explaining the determinants of bank robbery would require a multi-causal, multi-theoretic causal chain which would include an elaboration of complex cognitive, emotional, biological, social, and cultural factors.

To summarize, bank robbery events fluctuate some year-by-year but average about
1300 per year in Canada and about 8500 per year in the U.S. over the past fifteen years (although just over 5500 in 1995). From 1980 through 1996 over 150,000 bank robberies have been committed in the U.S. and Canada. The average dollar loss is about $2900 per event in Canada and about $2450 in the U.S. Bank robbery is a young persons crime. In a landmark 12 year study on the profile of 500 urban armed bank robbers Haran and Martin (1984) report that the bulk of robbers (71%) were between 16 and 30 years of age; 56% were black, 43% white, 1% Puerto Rican; 49% did not complete high school, less than 1/2 of 1% were college graduates; the overall unemployment rate for robbers was 66% at the time of the robbery; 96% of the robbers were male - of the 18 convicted female bank robbers interviewed only two assumed a principle role: the others drove the getaway cars or provided ancillary services. Recent FBI Bulletins suggest an increase in female robbers and youth robbers. Possibly due to target-hardening procedures the National number of robbery events in the U.S. decreased in 1995. In Canada, some areas traditionally hard hit by robberies, for example Montreal, are reporting significant decreases in some locations (Mallet, 1994).

Robbed bank staff are subjected to a variety of experiences. In August 1994 the Los Angeles Times reported a robbery in nearby Costa Mesa in which the police shot and killed the robber in front of the bank staff: "The man, who has not been identified, died in a hail of gunfire after an armed confrontation with more than a dozen Costa Mesa officers" (Pinsky & Wilgoren, 1994); In July 1994 the L.A. Times reported a "take-over" bank robbery in San Pedro during which the female robber shot and killed the bank's security guard in the lobby of the branch. The reporter noted that the bank staff were "not available for comment" (Dillow, 1994). In December 1994 the Chicago Tribune reported a bank teller and mother
of two was taken hostage during a failed bank robbery attempt in Chicago (O'Connor, 1994). A security pack exploded spraying red dye all over the tellers money at the same time setting off a silent alarm. The female robber held a gun to the tellers head and said she was going to kill her. The incident ended after several shots were fired. The report states "no one was hurt".

In some cases, bank staff have the additional worry of over-eager customers or police. In February, 1990, customers at a Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce branch in Vancouver, B.C. attempted to disarm a robber. In the scuffle, a customer was shot in the throat. The branch lobby was full of customers and children. A bank official said "staff are shaken even though some of them are not strangers to bank robberies" (Ward, 1990). In September, 1995, customers and staff were held hostage at a Bank of Nova Scotia branch in Ottawa. Two robbers walked out of the branch and came face-to face with a police officer responding to the call. "They saw the police officer, did a U-turn and went back inside the bank where they held eleven hostages for 8 1/2 hours". Regional Police said the "Hostages were shaken but unharmed." They were taken to police headquarters for de-briefing following the surrender (Smith, 1995).

**Historical Overview of Bank Robbery Events**

On March 19, 1831 under the cover of night, Edward Smith, using a set of duplicate keys he had somehow obtained, entered the City Bank on Wall Street in New York City and stole $245,000 in what is considered the first bank robbery in North America (Sifakis, 1982). Smith was apprehended on May 11, 1831 due to his "free spending" and sentenced to five
years hard labour in Sing Sing Prison (a light sentence compared to the terms handed out to later bank thieves). It appears Smith was treated somewhat leniently because the crime was unique and the authorities were not prepared to deal with it from a judicial point of view.

In the years following Edward Smith’s night robbery (actually a burglary since there was no use or threat or violence) bank robberies became commonplace. Daylight robberies were the common mode in the American West with such legendary names as the Reno gang, the James gang, and the Younger Brothers leading the headlines in the press. Virtually nothing can be found in print that reflects the effects on bank clerks of these early, often very dramatic and violent robberies. Perhaps the psychological environment in the "Wild West" had such a highly emotionally-charged baseline that the plight of bank clerks would not be noticed. Nothing is heard about the bank clerks through the "Roaring Twenties," the 1930’s or the 1940’s with such legendary bank robbers as John Dillinger, the Barker Brothers, Bonnie Barker and Clyde Barrow, and Baby Face Nelson representing the prime quarry for the newly formed Federal Bureau of Investigation. In the past fifty years there has been an explosion of new bank openings, sparked by prosperity, opportunity, and relaxed regulatory legislation. There has been an astronomical increase in bank robbery frequency during this same time period. Still, nothing has been produced documenting the experience of bank staff, even though during the past fifty years victimology literature in general, increased steadily.

Finally, in 1982, the Swedish National Board of Occupational Health - (responding to the Swedish Work Environment Act which emphasized that an employee should be entitled to maintain both physical and mental health at work), at the urging of the Union of Bank
Employees a study was launched to investigate the effects of bank robberies of bank staff. The result produced the first publications from research addressing the neurophysiological and psychological symptoms after the experience of life-threatening bank robbery events (Leymann, 1985; Leymann, 1988).

**Bank Robbery Impacts on Staff**

Leymann’s (1985) study of bank clerks who had been robbed marks the first formal research in financial institution staff robbery. This ground-breaking research was initiated at the direct request of the Union of Bank Employees - which represents 90% of all Swedish bank employees. The specific concern was the mental health of its members (Leymann, 1985, p. 512).

Leymann generated a list of 39 non-specific, stress-related symptoms and analyzed these symptoms within a framework of five stress profiles: 1) a high proportion of positive answers to the list of 39 symptoms "during the robbery"; 2) highest percentage of positive answers "the rest of the day and the night after"; 3) this profile had the same shape as profiles 1 and 2, except that there was not even one positive answer for any of the 39 symptoms "during the robbery"; 4) similar profile to number 2, except there was a much higher percentage of positive answers for the time "within three weeks after the robbery"; 5) very low and variable rate of positive answers for all alternatives. Data were collected through structured interview questionnaires, self-rating scales, and a life event rating scale. The five profiles were subsequently labelled according to the configuration of patterns from the list of 39 symptoms. The ultimate selection of the non-specific symptoms was made by
the researcher and the physicians working for the National Board of Occupational Health (Leymann, 1985, p. 515).

The five symptoms-derived profiles were: 1) Stress Hormone Profile (heart palpitations, dry mouth, rush of blood, etc.; 2) Post-reaction Profile (difficulty concentrating, memory failure, despondency, isolation, aggressiveness, etc.); 3) Insomnia Profile (interrupted sleep, early awakening, loss of appetite); 4) Cognitive Profile (nightmares, fear, insecurity, headaches). In this profile, Leymann (1985) reasoned that "Prolonged headaches could be due to the fact that cognitive pre-occupation may very well produce muscular tension" (p. 520); 5) Psychosomatic Stress Profile (fainting, vision problems, stomach pains, diarrhea, downheartedness, etc.). The research is structured so as to test Leymann's hypothesis: "my hypothesis is that these curves will show the developments typical of groups of stress symptoms following sudden frightening events (often wrongly called traumatic events - wrongly because there are no 'traumatic' events per se)" (p. 524).

A main finding in the Leymann (1985) study was that "A minority of these employees develop persistent anxieties while the majority are free of symptoms after three weeks" (p. 513).

Frequency scores led Leymann to the conclusion that staff in more than three robberies show a much higher incidence of certain stress symptoms than staff who have experienced one or two robberies. Seligman's (1975) concept of learned helplessness is invoked to explain victim exhaustion and feelings of helplessness.

Leymann states that staff in several robberies seem to find their situation more
hopeless, more out of their control where "they are victimized without being able to do anything else but quit their jobs" (p. 529). Sex differences are cited by Leymann (1985) to include his view that "women seem more preoccupied by a sinister event, and for a longer period of time than is the case for a man" (p. 531). Citing Eysenck (1956) Leymann (1985) agrees that "Women do develop a state of anxiety more easily than men; women are more dependent on social relations and social support than men" (p. 534).

Leymann's studies introduced the experience of the bank robbery staff effects into the professional literature. Whatever its quantitative merits in verifying a symptom list, generating profiles, and creating suggestions for predicting and controlling symptom clusters, the study leaves the door open for qualitative research aimed specifically at the experience of the robbed staff-person, and the impact of the robberies on the person's sense of self, self-other relations, and broader social context.

In 1988, Leymann re-interpreted his 1985 data and added a factor analysis procedure to study the relationship and possible differences in memory in relation to lapsed time since the robbery. Leymann's 1988 findings suggest that "women tend to re-examine their experiences more than men and for longer periods of time" (p. 131). The results of the memory analysis indicate that bank employees interviewed about robberies they had experienced from four years earlier "did not recall stress symptoms significantly less frequently than those interviewed only a year or so after the robbery" (p. 125). This suggested that the memory traces were still available after four years but, unfortunately, there is little in the study from the robbed person that might help us understand just what the retained memory of the robbery might mean. It is also interesting that robbed staff, "the
majority of whom are "symptom free after three weeks" (Leymann, 1985, p. 513) have such clarity of recall after four years.

Finally, Leymann & Lindell (1990) researched the impact of social support on bank employees after armed robberies. Frequencies were used to create four separate factor analyses to analyze various types of contact after the robbery. The results highlighted trends in the way different groups clustered together, based on their occupational or social role. The findings conclude that: 1) groups of people around the victim have criteria which separates them from each other, for example, primary groups (supervisors, co-workers, friends, family); public authorities (police); professional providers (personnel officers); 2) these different occupational groups provide different kinds of support to the victim; 3) two groups created negative support: journalists talking with victims, and customers who were considered "rude or bothersome" with their questions about the robbery (p. 303); 4) Women had fewer formal but more supporting contacts than men; married women had more supporting contacts than men; differences in offered support were shown regarding the brutality of the robbery - they got more support if the robbery was more violent (p. 303).

This study by Leymann & Lindell (1990) provides an important link between the person and the social context and provides a solid basis for a qualitative study specifically focussed on better understanding the complex robbery event from the person's perspective.

From more of a biological perspective, Endresen et al (1991) researched immunological correlates of stress and work in a population of Norwegian female bank employees. Anxiety and depression scales were chosen to reflect helplessness and hopelessness; egó-strength scales were used to tap defensiveness and coping. Immunological
data reflected decreased cellular immunity: lowered T-cell activity and number. The hypothesis was that psychological stress may suppress T-cell proliferation rates, thus lowering immunity - a hypothesis that had been confirmed earlier by immunological studies in the mid-seventies of stress through grief (Bartrop, et al, 1977). Workload, communications, leadership, and relocation were all systematically measured using inventories and questionnaires. The most pronounced source of stress was high workload, including time pressure and work-related strain in relation to private life.

One very valuable aspect of the Endresen et al (1991) study was that it provided a detailed description of the rigors of the contemporary Western World banking environment. Leymann’s studies (1985; 1988; Leymann & Lindell, 1990) were concurrent with global trend-changes in the banking industry from what was before a strictly service industry to what, in the last ten years has become a fast-paced intensely competitive retail occupation. As one bank analyst put it, "Banking is no longer 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. It’s any time, any place" (Bryant, 1995). The baseline strain on bank staff has increased enormously in recent years. As staff scramble to increase their technical skills and product knowledge in order to survive in an intensely competitive retail sales-driven environment, stress levels increase accordingly. This creates what could be a very different starting point for bank robbery events and their impact on staff when compared to a much more passive, service-driven banking industry of the recent past.

In an article on work trauma, White (1990) reviewed the problem of bank robbery trauma. In addition to usual post-robbery reactions (tearfulness, shaking, agitation), he found that shock and disbelief are common immediately following robbery events. White
emphasized that robberies of the "take-over" type are becoming common. In a take-over robbery, "Two or more suspects enter the branch, usually armed with shotguns. They yell commands... and threaten to kill anyone who fails to follow orders... It is not uncommon for robbers to have physical contact with employees, any of whom may be held with a gun to their head, pushed, or hit" (p.3). White cites a long list of symptoms similar to those reported by Leymann (1985), but White adds "refusal or reluctance to work the teller window"; "extreme fear returning to the branch"; "distorted memory of the event"; and "a desire to contact close relatives and withdraw to home" (p. 4). White takes a more informal approach compared with Leymann (1985; 1988) and Leymann & Lindell (1990). White's observation about the shift to more violent robberies, taken in the context of study on work stress in the everyday life of bank staff - sketch a disturbing picture of higher stressed, more over-worked bank staff facing intensely competitive day-to-day retail pressure, coupled with rapid technological change punctuated by frequent increasingly violent bank robbery events. White (1990) places considerable weight on the external stressor for determining the impact of the trauma on the individual: "Thus we see that the type of robbery can obviously effect the nature or extent of the traumatic reactions" (p. 4). Like the Leymann studies, White (1990) concludes that "Symptoms last from 1 to 3 days, to several weeks...rarely longer than 6 months" (p. 3).

Chartered banks are a major employer of young adults, many single working parents, and mid-age range adults (mostly female) returning to the work force following years of childrearing responsibilities at home.

Haran & Martin (1984), in a detailed profile of the bank robber, pointed out the
traumatic effect for staff of facing "Verbally aggressive, frequently masked, armed male perpetrators [is] beyond a doubt a harrowing experience and certainly would be classified a psychological assault upon the victims" (p. 50). In an earlier study of Canadian bank robbery professionals, Letkemann (1973) documented that bank robbers "Deliberately tried to create a heightened psychological fear in the bank personnel and customers during a robbery so that their theft would not be interfered with" (p. 107). Gabor et al. (1987) in a large scale Canadian study of 1722 robbery incidents found that over 90% of those robbed (bank robbery, home robbery, muggings) cited a variety of emotional and attitudinal changes including increased fear and distrust, growing aggressiveness, frequent changes in mood, depression, fear of another hold-up, loss of control (p.113). Symptoms in bank robbery staff have, until recent years, largely been left up to the employee to mend.

The idea of structured, early, appropriate interventions for trauma victims received formal recognition as a "debriefing process" in the early 1980's (Mitchell, 1983). Manton & Talbot (1990) modified the debriefing process to the banking industry in Australia in an attempt to provide services to traumatized bank staff following robbery events. A number of authors have noted the weakened defense structure under the impact following a trauma (Krupnick & Horowitz, 1981; Bard & Sangrey, 1980; Horowitz, 1993). Debriefings within 72 hours of the bank robbery were found by Manton & Talbot (1990) to be effective in "Reducing long-term stress, sick leave... and led to fewer insurance claims for work based injuries (as hold-ups are considered)" (p. 510). Like White (1990) and Leymann (1985), Manton & Talbot (1990) view staff reactions as typically short-lived: "After the first and second fortnight there may be very little for us to do...at the seven week follow-up 95% of
people are back to work and functioning well" (p. 516).

Recent research on the positive benefits of psychosocial support (Spiegel et al, 1989) suggests an important underlying need (belonging) may be met by the group debriefing process described by Manton & Talbot (1990). Research which seeks "knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human experience" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 159) - in other words qualitative research, has not been conducted yet with bank robbery staff. That is the purpose of the present study.
Phenomenology

The term 'phenomenology' has two components, 'phenomenon' and '-logy'. The latter phrase is familiar from such usages as theology, biology, and is commonly translated as 'science of': theology, science of God; biology, science of life. Accordingly, phenomenology is the science of phenomena. Phenomenon derives from a Greek expression which means to show itself. The various forms include bringing something to light, to make it visible, to put in a bright light. Phenomenon, in this sense, is a mode of encounter of entities in themselves such that they show themselves. Science is understood as an interconnection of propositions and assertions about the unity of a domain of subject matter. Heidegger (1985) points to the original Greek sense of '-logy' which "does not actually mean science...but it means discourse, discourse about something... not merely to recite words, but rather making manifest" (p. 84).

Phenomenology is "letting the manifest in itself be seen from itself" (p. 85), and requires removal of concealments, obstructions, "at-first" appearances. Phenomenology is primarily a methodology. It involves the directing of consciousness towards objects under investigation by use of disciplined imagination in order to make manifest their essential parts, their distinct features.
"Los Desastres" de la Guerre

Artistic endeavours, like human science endeavours, attempt to find a way back to something elemental, essential, fundamentally revealing about an object of interest. Both have "unconcealment" as their aim.

Artists have long expressed their vision of human experience through various medium. Michelangelo captured something powerfully "true" about the human experience of "crisis of belief" with his unfinished form of St. Matthew emerging from the confines of the marble in which his writhing form struggles to free itself. Maximum expressive power is achieved by the tension created between emerging and sub-merging forces. Oscar Wilde used the occasion of his incarceration at Reading Goal to tell us something powerfully moving about the difference between self-pity and true suffering. Artistic productions are intended to make the participant contend, in some way, with the theme or themes being depicted. Human suffering, human trauma - has been a rich wellspring for the artistic imagination. Interpretation is derived from understanding. Understanding is based on the "circle of understanding" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 195) which consists of practical familiarity based of background, a point of view based on background beliefs, and some expectations of what might be anticipated in an interpretation. Understanding projects itself forward as "possibility" and on its return arc brings new interpretations for consideration which may alter or increase understanding. Artistic productions provide one rich source for the projecting of possibilities which link understanding with interpretation.
One of the most vivid commentaries on the experience of human trauma is handed down from Francisco Goya. Goya wanted to denounce war by making a telling visual report on the Spanish nationalist insurrection against the French King, Joseph Bonaparte, in what became known as the Peninsular War (1808-1814). Drawing on direct experience, eyewitness accounts, and his imagination Goya created a suite of 83 aquetint plates, roughly six by eight inches in oblong format entitled *Los Desastres de la Guerre* (The Disasters of War).

These haunting, chilling, and sometimes humorous etchings - "filtered through the complexity of Goya’s vision" (Hunter, 1995), capture the horror through specific, focussed incidents. No epic battles are seen. Each image is restricted to the relationships of figures in small groups. Each image brings forth the distinct features and expressions of the subjects. Each separate "study" may be compared with the procession of sketches surrounding it. Each represents a different aspect, or property - of the more substantive category of war trauma.

Art historian Jakob Rosenberg remarked that "These sharply drawn scenes must be essentially true; for Goya, in his art, records like a seismograph the deep revolution in philosophic, social, and political concepts that shook the western European world in his time" (Hofer, 1967, p. i).

For the viewer there is no escaping to the safety of large scale, panoramic formats where the activity is noted but the actors become remote, safely distanced from the senses. The renderings are "experience near." Goya’s focus is the "fate of individuals on the edge
of the de-humanizing exchange of large scale conflict - Goya wants the viewer to see faces, close up, of suffering" (Hunter, 1995).

Human science and natural science both have in common dimensions of organization of data based on intentional creation of contrasting conditions in order to make findings stand out in relief: "Both procedures are interested in...convergence and divergence, which in a certain sense encompasses a dialectic, that is, setting up a tension within the data between clustering and spreading in order to get it to yield more" (Giorgi, 1975a, p. 76). This dialogue, or dialectic - whether created by the artist, or natural or human scientist, has as its fundamental aim revealing something, getting the object to "yield more," getting the topic to "show itself."

One important difference between art and human science lies in the relation to the subject. In one case the experience is filtered through the artists 'vision and imagination.' Human science attempts something similar, but is required to go beyond one's own vision and imagination to directly encounter, and engage, the respondent in the process of the creation of the work. This includes directly requesting the respondent to comment explicitly on the extent to which the rendered account accurately represents the phenomenon being examined. This effort is based on the desire to reveal the most basic parts of the topic being studied.

In phenomenology "making manifest" is a disclosing or uncovering which determines the basic sense of truth to be the "unconcealment" by which all things show themselves. Heidegger, in his introduction to Being and Time (1962) stated that "truth" is
neither the "correctness" or "correspondence" of assertions with regard to states of affairs nor the "agreement" of subject and objects of assertions. It is rather the "self showing that allows beings to be objects of assertions in the first place" (p. 18).

The question of how I come to know myself; how I come to know the Other - the question of intersubjectivity, occupies a crucial place at the heart of the human sciences. Humans are seen as different from natural objects specifically because of their unique ability for construing and co-creating meaning in the life-world. The understanding of the meaning an event has for an actor (the object in the mind) is "that by which" we can apprehend and understand knowledge in the human sphere. In reviewing the literature on "other minds" Goldstein (1996) noted that "To use language a person must be subject to checks that originate from other people. Checks that originate from projections from [a singular] mind [in isolation] would not suffice. Hence, there can be no forever-solitary person of the sort the sceptic imagines he might be" (pp. 145-146).

Phenomenology is usually associated with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who developed it initially as a philosophy and later applied it to create phenomenological psychology.

The tradition of phenomenology has its origins long before Husserl. Writers often cite St Augustine's (354-430) Confessions as an early example. In the Confessions, written in the form of an autobiography, St Augustine gives a deep and richly detailed account of his experiences, memories, emotions, desires, feelings and thoughts, as noted in van Manen (1990), who states that "phenomenology describes how one orients to lived
experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the "texts" of life" (p. 4).

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Giorgi (1992), in discussing the differences between descriptive and interpretive approaches stated that: "Description is the clarification of the meaning of the objects of experience precisely as experienced. Interpretation would be the clarification of the meaning of experienced objects in terms of a plausible but contingently adopted theoretical perspective, assumption, hypothesis" (p. 122). Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology is based on several assumptions. These are described in detail by a number of authors (Giorgi, 1992; 1994; Heidegger, 1962; Plager, 1994; Balan, 1996; Mueller-Vollmer, 1989; Stroud, 1996; Marcus, 1994; Polt, 1996). These authors seem in general agreement on several broad assumptions based on often widely divergent themes in hermeneutic Phenemonology. First, human beings are social, dialogical beings. Second, understanding is always before us in the shared background practices; in the human community, in the language, skills, activities, and in our intersubjective and common meanings (Plager, 1994, p. 71). Third, human beings are always in the world in a way that presupposes understanding. Our world is always already meaningful and intelligible, and our activities are constituted by, and make sense in the world. This represents what Heidigger (1962) called the "circle of understanding" (p. 195). In the circle we understand and interpret something as something due to the background of shared human practices. This allows involvement with others. Interpretation is a derivative of
understanding and allows us to bring out, or experience and communicate something as something. Understanding is enriched by "the working out of possibilities projected in understanding" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 195). Being in the hermeneutic circle is not a matter of choice. Without understanding meaning would dissolve. In referring to the reflexive character of social research, recognizing researchers are part of the social world they study, Marcus (1994) notes that "essential reflexivity is an integral feature of all discourse (as in the indexical function of speech acts); one cannot choose to be reflexive or not in an essential sense - it is always a part of language use" (p.568). Fourth, interpretation presupposes a shared understanding and therefore has a specific structure: (a) people approach a situation with a practical familiarity, that is, with a background that makes interpretation possible; (b) one's background provides a point of view from which interpretations are made; (c) one's background provides the springboard for expectations of what might be anticipated in an interpretation: what Heidegger (1962) called "that which is taken for granted" (p. 192). Plager (1994) notes that familiarity, background and experience which lead to interpretations, and the realization of some expectations constitutes a kind of "forestructure [which] links understanding with interpretation" (p. 72). Finally, interpretation involves both the interpreter and the interpreted in a dialogical relationship (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990; Marcus, 1994; Giorgi, 1994; 1985b; 1979; Colaizzi, 1978a; 1978b; Ashworth, 1996; Tymieniecka, 1997).

The review that follows outlines the main assumptions of phenomenological research, data gathering strategies, selection of respondents, the analysis of data and the
essential structures of the topic under investigation.

**Researcher's Perspective**

The writer of the present report is the sole researcher and analyzer of the data. My aim in this section is to state my own biases in order to attempt clarity of understanding and to make explicit the influences my biases may have on the present report. I adopt the phenomenological approach and particularly the version presented by Giorgi (1971; 1975b; 1985a). For me, this means I have tried to encourage respondents to generate "thick descriptions" of their robbery experiences. I have tried to read the descriptions of bank robbery events without prejudice. I have tried to develop themes and categories based on the respondent narratives that are *interpreted* but faithful to, and grounded in, the respondent texts. In the data gathering and meaning unit transformation stages I have tried to be aware of my own presuppositions about the topic and I have tried not to let my preconceptions cloud what I reported. The examination that provided the transformations from verbatim respondent text to meaning units A and B proceeded with the same phenomenological perspective. For me, this means there were certain kinds of meaning that I allowed to emerge, and that I expressed these in the language of phenomenological psychology (lived experience, type, level, structure, encounter, reduction, imaginative variation, fidelity to the data, meaning, and so on). All the nuances implied by this language in the particular context of the present research represent particular viewpoints. These factors set limits on, and establish the context in which the
present findings may be evaluated and understood. The data were subjected to the
scrutiny of two independent raters to ensure trustworthy, faithful transformations and
renderings from the audio-taped and the verbatim transcribed respondent narratives to the
interpretive event structures which constituted the essential summary findings of each
robbery event.

Data Collection, Selection, and Interview

Data Collection

The usual purpose of data gathering is to collect naive descriptions of a particular
topic of interest. Descriptions provide specific instances of the area for investigation and
enable the researcher to distil and reduce the descriptions to obtain the core structure of
the experience. These reports require that respondents direct awareness towards their own
experiencing. Polkinghorne (1988) cites three sources researchers can use to generate
descriptions: (a) researchers' self reports to identify presuppositions, biases, ideas about
the topic; (b) other study respondents' reports; (c) outside descriptions based on sources
such as fine arts, novelists, poets, performing arts, music and so on.

The data gathering approach is characterized by an attitude of openness for the
phenomenon under study. The respondent is required to concentrate on the experience of
robbery exactly as it is given and not pre-judge it or see it through any specific
perspective simply due to previous knowledge of the event. Giorgi (1971) states that due
to the attitude of openness, the following aims emerge: (1) the apprehension as completely
as possible of the structure of the phenomenon which appears; (2) a concern for the 
origins or foundations of the phenomena; (3) an emphasis on perspectivity through which 
all phenomenon are known (p. 8). "Perspectivity" meaning that the researcher has values 
which affect the interpretation: observations are not "neutral."

Selection of Respondents

Research participants were selected on the basis of several criteria. First, the 
person interviewed must have had the experience that was under investigation. Second, 
the person must have the capacity to provide a full and rich verbal description. It is 
noteworthy that van Kaam (1969) identifies several related requirements including "ability 
to sense and express inner feelings and emotions without inhibition and shame" (p. 328). 
Third, the group of respondents were selected with the goal of generating wide variation 
in the range of experiences. Such selection is considered to be appropriate for 
phenomenological research. Polkinghorne (1989) notes that phenomenological researchers 
"use subjects to generate a fund of possible elements and relationships that can be used in 
determining the essential structure of the phenomena" (p. 48).

Interested respondents were invited to participate through widely distributed 
internal banking memoranda outlining the research project. The study Participant Consent 
Form and the Initial Contact Letter may be found in Appendix A and B.

Respondents most suitable for this research were those who had the experience
relating to the phenomenon to be researched: single or multiple bank robbery occurrences. Those selected were verbally fluent in the English language and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in relation to the researched phenomenon. Selected respondents expressed a willingness to be open and forthright with the researcher about their experiences of bank robbery events, had the time available for two separate interviews of about 60-90 minutes each, and could make the time to read transcribed texts and researcher transformations prior to the second, and final, interview. Respondents who seemed to be able to manage life stress reasonably well were preferred. An attempt was made to select respondents who had not been involved in a robbery event for at least three months prior to the first interview.

Eight respondents were selected from persons responding to internal banking memos in several organizations which explained the project and invited interested persons to contact the researcher. Fourteen people responded. Six were not suitable for reasons of uncertain availability to meet twice over a period of time, due to the recency of their last robbery, or because it was determined that participation in the present research would exacerbate other life stress. The eight who were selected agreed to meet for two interviews of about sixty to ninety-minutes each. The respondents consisted of two males and six females ranging in age from twenty-five to fifty-one years old. Their banking experience ranged from two and one-half years to twenty-six years. The elapsed time from their reported robbery experience to the present research interviews ranged from six months to eight years.
Phenomenological Interview

In phenomenological psychological research the epistemological strategy is the phenomenological reduction. First introduced by Husserl (1970), this procedure was utilized to focus away from the natural concern about an independent existence of what appears in experience, to an exclusive focus on that which gives rise to the appearance itself. The data are descriptions of experience as they present themselves, not descriptions of objects, actions, events as they are assumed to exist outside of experience. "Appearance" is referential, that is, it always refers back to something. The thing it refers back to is the aim, target of the methodology. The respondents' descriptions of the meanings assigned to their robbery experiences provided the raw material for the research endeavour.

The phenomenological interview is conceived as a discourse or conversation (Mishler, 1986). It involves interpersonal engagement which allows respondents to share their experiences with the researcher. The researcher's behaviour is present with the respondent, but disciplined. The task of the researcher is to seek clarification and eventually obtain findings which reflect the essential structure of the experience being investigated. In addition to the specific details of each individual story the essential structure consists of elements that are necessary for an experience to present itself as what it is. Giorgi (1985b) calls this finding a "general description of situated structure of learning" (p. 20). For example, in Giorgi's (1985b) study on what constitutes verbal learning he gives the following general description analyzed from his research interviews:
Learning is the awareness that communications are received according to their total expression and not just their manifest intent. With the help of a significant other, S was able to interrogate her real feelings, choose a course of action, and genuinely communicate her decision to others in an adequate way (p.64).

Giorgi's general description of a situated (individual) structure of learning was utilized to see if other descriptions of verbal learning contain some of the core features of the above example. The phenomenological procedure of "imaginative variation" requires the researcher to vary the constituents, or meaning units derived from the original verbatim, transcribed text - as a way to distil the most essential features "without which the event would not be the event" (Giorgi, 1985a, p. 18).

The Phenomenological Method

Heidegger (1985) states that "each lived experience directs itself towards something in a way which varies according to the distinctive character of the experience" (p. 21). The phenomenological method involves an attempt to reach the life-world of the experiencing person. Three aspects ("attitudes") of this method are described: (1) open description, (2) "imaginative" or free variation, (3) the phenomenological reduction. These steps involve the processes of intuition, reflection, and description. The focus is first on what is being given or experienced. The present study limits attention to the thoughts, feelings, behaviours that are illustrative of the experience of bank robbery. Within the general limits of the robbery focus, the phenomena were allowed to emerge
rather than be selected by the researcher.

**Open Description**

This method is described by Spiegelberg (1960) as the utilization of metaphors such as: "seeing and listening," "not think, but see." The phenomenological maxim was phrased by Edmund Husserl: "back to the matters themselves" (Husserl, 1970). What counts is to describe and to put aside the creation of explanation and analyses. The method represents the direct attempt at description of experience without concern for its causes or origin. For example, an object described as possessing the properties of a continuous surface, infolded on itself, having five out-pouchings, of smooth texture - may represent a fair open description of a glove. The content of phenomenology is comprised of the data of experience, its meaning for the respondent, and the essence of the phenomena which may be based on both its structure and its meanings for the respondent. Knowledge is deepened by this, "laying bare" of taken-for-granted experiences in daily life.

**Imaginative Variation**

This involves the transition from the description of separate phenomena to a search for its common essence. Husserl (1970) termed this method "free variation in fantasy." This amounts to freely varying a phenomenon in all its possible forms and that which remains constant through the different variations represents the essence of the
phenomenon. For example, if one were to follow a U.S. one-dollar bill on a journey through Canada, England, France, and Italy, it would take on enormously different forms and values (rates of exchange) but what remains constant is its property as a means of exchange for goods or services: its bare essence. Colaizzi (1978a), Polkinghorne (1988) and Giorgi (1985a) refer to this process as finding the essential structure of the experience being investigated. In the present study, nine categories have been delineated from the respondent narrative accounts as exemplifying the essential general structure, which might be thought of as a preliminary sketch of the experience of bank robbery trauma.

**Phenomenological Reduction**

What gets "reduced" in this process is one's presuppositions and biases and thoughts of theoretical concerns, pre-analyzing the interviews, prejudging either from a personal or theoretical perspective. A willful attempt to "bracket" is primarily a method for becoming aware of one's own presuppositions so that they may be made explicit and set aside while the phenomenon being researched is able to emerge in itself - untainted, to the extent possible, by apriori beliefs. It is a way to make explicit what in positivist science would be called error. The method of suspension of judgement works in conjunction with understanding the essence of a phenomenon by attempting to place the common sense and scientific foreknowledge about a phenomenon into parentheses in order to arrive at its essence. Consciousness of - and explicitly stating, one's own presuppositions is the key point. "Bracketing," in the context of its founder, Husserl
(1977) - had required a turning away from the world and a concentration on detached consciousness. The intent was the pursuit of a distinct realm of phenomenological research: pure consciousness. As it is more commonly and currently employed in phenomenological psychological research its purpose is more to "the resolve to set aside theories, research presuppositions, ready-made interpretations, in order to reveal engaged, lived experience" (Ashworth, 1996, p. 1).

A main aim of the phenomenological method is to investigate the foundational aspects of phenomena (Giorgi, 1971, p. 11). Natural science and human science methods are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Quantity and quality stand in reciprocal relation to one another. Giorgi (1975b) states that when "One of them is being considered thematically, the other is instrumentally present in a more hidden way" (p. 73). Measuring phenomena may be more appropriate at times, for example, investigating brain 'readiness potential' - but for other phenomena the determination of its meaning might be more appropriate, for example, shame, feelings of betrayal, insecurity, self-doubt.

**The Researcher-Researched Relation**

The researcher constitutes an indissoluble part of the world he/she investigates. Hammersley & Atkinson (1993) noted that "This is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact" (pp. 14-15). Personal experience, knowledge of the researched topic through relevant literature, the arts, music, poetry bearing on the topic -
these activities are part of reflective inquiry that interact with the object of the research: the respondent. Hammersley (1992) states that "Reflection does not necessarily require the systematic collection and recording of first-hand data. It may simply draw on experience, background knowledge and perhaps the reading of relevant literature, including, but not exclusively, the research literature" (p. 142). The idea that social research cannot be 'value free' is not recent, but recognition of the role of values appears to have had little impact (Hammersely, 1992, p. 198).

Research Procedures

van Manen (1990) offered an in-depth discussion of six research activities that apply to hermeneutic phenomenology for education and other human sciences. They are (1) turning to a phenomenon, which seriously interests us and commits us to the world; (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; (3) reflecting on the essential themes, which characterize the phenomenon; (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting; (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (pp. 30-31). These activities seem very compatible with the phenomenological methods utilized in the present study (Giorgi, 1984; 1985a,b; Colazzi, 1978a,b).

The basic question for respondents' was "What were your thoughts, feelings, behaviours regarding your robbery experience"? Interviews were audio-taped and
and Colaizzi (1978) twelve steps were set out and followed in the present research (see Figure 1). All texts were read to acquire a feeling for them as a whole. Once the sense of the whole was grasped, sentences or phrases that were pertinent to the study topic were identified and used to constitute shifts in meaning. Shifts in meaning were derived both by stated shifts made in the text and by the researcher's sense of movement found in the story as the respondent deepened, expanded, or changed various themes and topics. Each resulting "meaning unit" was demarcated and presented verbatim and labelled "meaning unit A." These represented the delineated meaning units, based on shifts or changes in respondent meaning, for the entire interview. The original meaning units were then reviewed and expressed - transformed, to derive the psychological meaning that could fairly be distilled from the respondent's meaning. The meaning of each statement was extracted and cast in more psychological language based on the robbery experience. The result was a list of "meaning" or "significant" statements reflecting the essential point of each original statement. This created "Meaning Unit B." Colaizzi (1978) warns that this step "is a precarious leap... [and] should not sever all connection with the protocol statement" (p. 59). The transformed meaning units B were synthesized into a consistent statement faithful to the respondent's experience. These were summarized as the Structure of Event and are presented in full in Chapter IV. The summarized, synthesized Structure of Event, along with the complete verbatim transcript, and the Meaning Unit A and Meaning Unit B section was then given to the respondent - in its entirety - a minimum of one-week before the second interview. All respondents studied the material
in preparation for the second interview. The second interview was intended for the respondent to correct for errors, misstatements, inaccuracies, omissions. The question was asked: "How do my descriptive results, my interpretations, compare with your experiences"? "Have any aspects of your experience been omitted"? Are any not accurate"? "Are any not consistent with your experience"? Corrections from the second interview were incorporated into the final version of the Structure of Event summaries.

Next, an assessment of the integrity of the transition from Meaning Unit A to Meaning Unit B was performed. Two independent raters checked the transcripts for accuracy and to determine the integrity of the meaning units as accurate reflections of the audio-tapes and researcher transformations from Meaning Units A to B.

The final Structure of Event summaries, along with constant cycling from the parts to the whole of the entire set of respondent verbatim transcripts was used to derive the overall results for the study (Chapter IV). The summaries of the transcripts were generally perceived as accurate by the respondents. Corrections often amounted to matters of degree. For example, "I was more angry than hostile," or "He dragged me a few yards, not fifteen or twenty feet."

Figure 1 on the following page summarizes the sequence of steps utilized for the research procedures.
Figure 1. Outline of Research Procedures
Transcript and Meaning Unit Independent Raters

Trustworthiness of narrative account researcher transformations is crucial. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that research findings based on qualitative inquiry need to be both credible and dependable. Credibility may be attained by external checks on the inquiry process from peers, by confirming the raw data is grounded in the respondents' texts (an external check), and by presenting findings and transformations - in their entirety, directly to the respondents for their blunt criticism. In leaving the way clear for further methodological developments Giorgi (1985a) remarked that: "more remains to be developed than has been achieved, but the point here is merely to demonstrate that the qualitative method being developed can, in principle, meet both scientific and phenomenological criteria" (p. 21). Lincoln & Guba (1985) recommend an "inquiry team" of at least two persons who may deal with the data source separately. This idea is combined with their procedure of an "audit team," whereby "authentication" of texts and transformations are examined to ensure both the dependability of the researcher's interpretations and the general soundness and confirmability - intersubjective agreement, of the inquiry (pp. 317-318). These concepts have been brought into the present study, and modified to fit the present study. Measurement of external raters reports is based partly on Giorgi's (1975) comments that both quantitative and qualitative data have in common "dimensions of organization of data that are sought - convergence and divergence, which in a certain sense encompasses a certain dialectic, that is, setting up a tension within the data between clustering and spreading in order to get it to yield more"
Giorgi (1994) recently discussed the relation between quantitative and qualitative methods and cautioned that quantitative methods should be based on quantitative questions, not "simply used because it is there" (p. 197). The raters in the present study were not asked to count meanings but were asked to estimate the fidelity with which the researcher took the step from the respondent narrative to the interpreted Meaning Unit B. A Likert-type scale was utilized for this task. This decision was based on the more quantitative question: "Do you agree or disagree that the researcher remained faithful to the respondent verbatim text (Meaning Units A) while moving from the text to the interpreted units (Meaning Units B)?"

Two local college natural science instructors (rater 1, a geneticist; rater 2, a biochemist) assessed the integrity and accuracy of transformations from Meaning Units A to Meaning Units B. A five-point Likert-scale was used with "1" indicating "Strongly Disagree" and "5" indicating "Strongly Agree."

Rater number 1 rated 100% of Meaning Units A (integrity from the audio-tape to the text to Meaning Unit A) for respondents 1 and 3. The result was an average of 4.7 (out of a possible 5). Rater number 1 rated 100% of Meaning Unit B for respondent interviews 1, 2, and 3. These were rated with respect to the extent to which Meaning Unit B fairly represented, was trustworthy with, the comments extracted from Meaning Unit A. About 35% of meaning units were rated for respondents 4 through 8. The average rating was 4.6 (out of 5). The range was between 4.2 and 4.8.

Rater number 2 rated between 11% and 13% of all eight respondent interviews
(Meaning Units B). Her average was 4.4 (out of 5). The range was between 3.7 and 5.0. The instructions for the independent raters, and their evaluation results, may be found in Appendix C and D, respectively.

Summary

Traditions in psychology place a central emphasis on the investigation of conscious experience. Phenomenological psychology emphasizes descriptions of some aspect of experience, as communicated by the respondent - thereby placing primary emphasis on the person's lived experience (Giorgi, 1985a; 1994). The raw data, instead of numbers, consists of meanings. The process begins with naive descriptions which requires a disciplined analysis of what has been described. Description, or language, is the path of access to the world of the describer. The task of the researcher was to let the world of the describer reveal itself in an unbiased way. What resulted was the meaning of the situation for the respondent based on his/her description.

Emphasis is placed on utilizing distinct data gathering procedures which are capable of leading to clear general descriptions of the research-focused area of interest. The aim is to attain a depth of understanding that surpasses common-sense views. In order to achieve knowledge in-depth, the researcher focuses on the person's self-report - not what he thinks about some event, but how he actually experiences the event. The data is the respondent's descriptions of his/her lived experiences and their meanings. The chief method is the interview (Giorgi, 1975a) which results in natural language
descriptions of the phenomenon of interest. The method is effective to the extent that it is able to lift out and articulate the core meanings of the person's lived experience related to a particular question, to present the structure of the event as the perceived whole of the person's experience, to have the respondents say of the summary: "Yes, that is what that experience was like for me."

Polkinghorne (1989) reviewed some of the key concepts of phenomenological research. These are incorporated in the present study. First, the inquiry is descriptive and qualitative, with the focus on the structures that produce meaning. Second, the focus is directed to the respondent's experienced meaning, not on description of their observable behaviours or actions. Third, phenomenology places critical importance on discerning between what presents itself as part of the person's experience and what might exist as a reality outside of the person's experience. Fourth, from a qualitative perspective the rigor and depth of human reality is seen as closely related to the structures and meanings of natural language. The data in qualitative research are natural language descriptions based on disciplined interviews, using open-ended questions and always returning to the person's felt sense of the experience of interest. Results are usually reported in natural language rather than the language of statistics. Fifth, the exclusive focus is on experience. The present research focussed on the respondents thoughts, feelings, behaviours relating to their experience of bank robbery. The assumption is that ultimately, all knowledge is grounded in human experience. Sixth, experience is meaningfully ordered but the structure and order of meaning is difficult to describe (pp. 44-45).
Kruger (1985) notes that psychology can be defined as the "nature of our presence to the world [thus] it is apt that the senses should be approached in a way which explicates this presence rather than treating the senses simply as passive links in information processing... Seeing for instance, involves much more than light waves impinging upon the sense organ of vision - seeing means a particular form of dialogue with the world" (p.1). The "dialogue" implies that consciousness is not an object but an activity, and therefore not easily grasped. Perceiving, remembering, imagining represent "integrated modes of presentation... we have direct access to the finished product of our consciousness yet we are not aware of the operations that make up the integrated flux of experience" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45). Reflecting on experience alters awareness - which makes access to consciousness problematic. Polkinghorne (1989) notes that the data the researcher collects are "several times removed from the actual flow of experience" (pp. 45-46).

The difficulties inherent in attempting to explicate the lived-experience of the respondent may be approached using the general format outlined by Giorgi (1971; 1985a) Colaizzi (1978) and Polkinghorne (1989), which includes gathering naive descriptions from respondents with the experience of interest, analyzing the descriptions so that the essential elements that constitute the experience are recreated, and communicating the findings such that readers have the feeling that "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p.46).
Chapter IV

Analysis Of Results:
Structure Of Events

It was like a big crash down. I mean, it’s like you’re driving along the highway passing guys, and great day and all of a sudden going around the corner and seeing a whole family of cars wiped out, and bodies all over the place. Boom! The whole thing changes…and brings everything into perspective and what’s important in life and what isn’t and you know who cares you can have all the rules and regulations you want, but not all people are going to follow them, and you could be vulnerable. And I think that probably there was a crashing down of so many things. My other half of my world. My work world. It just sort of stopped.

(Respondent Joe describing his experience immediately following his robbery [R7, B/370-381]).

Overview and Purpose

The data provided here were derived from the oral reports of the respondents thoughts, feelings, actions during and following their robbery experiences. A three-part framework is utilized to present study results: foreshadowing and onset, the robbery event itself, and the experience of respondents after the robberies. The purpose of this chapter is to utilize the core findings of each of the eight narratives to bring out those aspects that appear to be most descriptive of, and to most accurately typify, bank robbery experience.

These stories were originally gathered during interviews in a "back-and-forth" cyclical fashion. For example, each respondent started the story with a review of the robbery experience itself. Then progressed variously to details about how they were.
treated after at work, how the robbery affected them in other areas of their life - then returned to the robbery event to deepen and colour parts of their narrative. This process occurred many times throughout the course of each interview. Material about the robbery experience itself - and many robbery-related aspects meaningful for the respondents - was found to be embedded, layered in memory. Cycling from the present to the past back to the present - occasionally to the future, provided a naturally occurring process which helped to bring out more whole, complete remembrances. This part-whole cycling process was also utilized for the analysis.

The Respondents

Eight bank staff, currently working in banking, comprised the study group. All respondents (R) had been involved in one or more bank robbery events. The group consisted of six females and two males ranging in age from twenty-four to fifty-one years old. Their banking experience ranged from two and one-half years to twenty-six years. The essential thoughts, behaviours, feelings of each individual respondent narrative is provided, in detail, following the respondent introductions. Table 1 reviews the respondents, banking history, and number of robberies experienced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Name And History</th>
<th>Number Of Robberies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gwen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 years old, grown daughter, in banking 18 years.</td>
<td>(all within sixty days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32, single, in banking 10 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43, single mother of teenage daughter, in banking 15 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 years old, married, two teenage daughters, in banking 26 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years old, recently married, in banking 2½ years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 years old, grown daughter, in banking 22 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 years old, married, two grown children, in banking 22 years.</td>
<td>(both within three weeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24, single, in banking 5 years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Respondent Name And History And Number Of Robberies Experienced:
Gwen (R1)

Gwen is forty-seven years old, married with a grown daughter, and has been in banking eighteen years. She is senior administrator in a small branch. She has been involved in three robbery events in the past one-year. The robbery incident she described in the present study was a violent take-over type robbery in which the robber broke into the staff work area. He presented a gun and pressed it menacingly to one staffperson’s body. The core feature of the event for Gwen was her sense of outrage and her shifting between aggressively defying the robber (when the two of then were alone) and submitting to his wishes (when other staff were present). A legacy of fear, guilt, and feelings of lack of safety remain in present time - over one-year from the robbery. Gwen is currently trying to find work outside of branch banking. Her robbery lasted two minutes. Compliance with robber demands was minimal.

June (R2)

June is thirty-two years old and has been in banking ten years. She has been involved in four robberies. The incident she described in the present study involved a violent take-over type robbery in which she was the principal hostage. The core features of her experience were her negation of an immediate impulse to hide when the robber entered her field of vision and a decision to allow him to approach her and take her hostage. This was based on her sense of safety for others as she determined she would be most able to handle the hostage role. Her several transitions between "detachment and
presence" was a key feature of her experience as was experiencing herself "as an object" and her detached wondering if it would "hurt to be shot" as she was dragged through the branch by the gunman. She experienced a corporate empathic failure in attempting to get transferred from the robbery branch after the robbery. She eventually was able to arrange for a transfer and currently, ten months after her robbery, she feels the incident has "changed me for who I am" and states that "it takes time to deal with it but you never get over it." Her robbery lasted seven minutes. Compliance with robber demands was complete.

Alice (R3)

Alice is forty-three years old, divorced with a teenage daughter. Alice has been in banking for fifteen years. She holds a junior position in a large branch. She has been involved in four robbery events. The robbery she described in the present study occurred eight years ago. The event featured a very loud, aggressive lone robber. Alice was at her desk separated from the main lobby by a partition. She saw nothing but could clearly register each sound. Her main concern was concealment. While the event was raging she huddled under her desk, certain the robber would find her and harm or kill her. During the research interview for the present study, eight years after the event, she became very confused as to why she would be "crying, shaking, flushed-feeling" as she spoke in-depth about her experience. Her robbery lasted a little less than two minutes. Her complete compliance was assured by the maintenance of her chief aim which was concealment from
the event.

**Catherine (R4)**

Catherine is forty-nine years old, married with two teenage children. Catherine has been in banking for twenty-six years. She holds a senior position in her branch and describes herself as a career banker. She has been involved in three robbery events, two in the past several years, one when she was twenty-six years old. The robbery incident was a violent take-over type robbery. The core feature of event for Catherine was the suppression of an immediate urge to hide and her movement across the work space to support the new cash teller who would, momentarily, be at the centre of the drama. Staff were ordered "on the ground" during which she had images of being shot. She saw vivid images of her own blood sprayed on the far wall. A sense of feeling unsafe at times remains in present time - over eight months from the robbery. Catherine also has a sense of having validated her competence as a result of her actions and conduct during the robbery. Her robbery lasted five minutes. Compliance with robber demands was complete.

**George (R5)**

George is twenty-five years old. He has recently married. His family all live in the Lower Mainland area. George has been in banking for two and one-half years. He had been involved in three robberies. The core feature of the event he detailed for the
present research sharply focussed the disjunction between his sensitivity to expecting respectful treatment from others against his complete surprise, disbelief that he was actually being robbed. He had to ask the robber if he was "really robbing me" even after reading the robbery note. George entered the event with a strong belief that robbers were drug addicts. This, coupled with his violated expectation of respectful treatment from others combined and he began to defy the robber during the event. Following the robbery George got "discredited" at the court case which left him "humiliated feeling." His robbery lasted one-minute. Compliance with the robber's demands was partial.

**Jenny (R6)**

Jenny is forty-four years old. She has a grown daughter who is away at college. Jenny has been in banking twenty-two years. She is in management and describes herself as a career banker. She has been involved in three robberies in the past one and one-half years. The core feature of her described robbery was her "monumental" effort at containing her own feelings so she would not escalate the highly agitated gun-waiving robber who had taken over their branch and invaded their work area. The legacy from the event, eleven months after, is occasional feelings of unsafety, and a sense of more widespread vulnerability, loss of control - based on her post-robbery realization that "anyone with a gun can do what they want to you." Her robbery lasted exactly sixty-seconds - the second member of the robbery-team was shouting out the elapsed time from sixty down to zero - in fifteen-second intervals. Jenny's compliance was exact and
"literal" - based precisely on what the robber asked for. A still unresolved aspect of the event is the question of what the robber would have done to her if the accomplice had not called him away as he demanded access to the locked cash drawer three times and three times Jenny had to refuse, explaining repeatedly there was no way to get into it. She still wonders about the effect the confrontation over the locked cash drawer has had on her over time. "What if the accomplice didn’t yell 'time' to him"?

Joe (R7)

Joe is fifty-one years old. He is married with two children in their twenties. Joe is in management, has been in banking twenty-two years, and considers himself a career banker. He has been involved in two robberies, both within the past year. The core feature of Joe’s robbery was his "agonizing dilemma" regarding being caught in his office as the violent take-over team commanded his branch. He had not ever had a robbery and never thought it would happen to him. He forced himself to remain behind closed doors while he could hear his staff being threatened and abused. "Impotent" feeling, he feared he would spark a shooting incident if he entered the drama. He was left with a legacy that "no one understood." Following the robbery there was a massive corporate empathic failure as Head Office staff arrived at the branch and blamed branch staff for not being better prepared for a robbery. The robbery event lasted between forty and sixty seconds. Complete compliance was maintained by Joe’s decision to sit behind his desk - hands in the open, and be "the target" if the robbery team burst into his office. Four other staff
were pressed against the wall in the corner of the office seeking safety from the violent commotion just a few feet away.

Carrie (8)

Carrie is twenty-four. She lives with her roommate. Her family all live in the same area. Except for a brief stint in retail sales Carrie has been in banking for six years "right out of high school." She plans to make a career in financial services in some capacity. Carrie has been involved in two robberies, both within the past fifteen months. The core feature of her robbery was having to return to her wicket on two occasions: once to retrieve her cash machine access card, once to get a withdrawal slip required to activate the cash machine for the robber. She received death threats on both occasions and had to reassure the robber she "wasn't playing games with him." At the mid point of her robbery she had the chance to slip into an adjacent room - get away from the robber, but dismissed the idea for fear that he would harm others. Following the robbery she experienced a bewildering, continuous corporate empathic failure - during which she was constantly criticized for "her attitude." The critical management behaviour lasted almost one year, at which point she could not stand anymore and quit. She joined another bank and has been promoted twice in the past eight months. She came away from the robbery and the "constant criticism" with a sense of "violation of the mind" which has left her unsafe feeling when out in her community, often very wary of others. She feels proud of how she handled herself during her robbery and feels no one could have done any better.
Carrie complied completely with the robber’s demands. Her robbery took three to four minutes. This was a conventional one-on-one type robbery in which the robber, with a gun, stayed on the lobby side of the counter and did not penetrate the staff work area.

**Structure of Event**

The robbery event structures represent the network of relations that was lived through by the respondents. Merleau-Ponty noted that structures are "transposable wholes" or "total processes" which may be indiscernible from each other while "their parts, compared to each other differ in absolute size" (1963, p. 47). Merleau-Ponty made it clear that structures could not be defined as things of the physical world, but as "perceived wholes" that one must "take up, assume, and discover its immanent significance" (1962, p. 258). Thus, to be aware of a structure is to be "present to the very organization of the world as one lives it" (Giorgi, 1979, p. 87).

The event structures that are presented below provide detailed information about the respondents experiences of their robberies from the onset of the event to the present time. They represent different types of experiences each of which belongs to, but does not exhaust, the category 'robbery experience'. The process of defining structures is described by Giorgi (1979) as requiring a "dialectics of level" in which the higher level of consciousness, reflecting on what is given to it on the lower level of consciousness, "discovers aspects that the presentative or perceptual level only adumbrates, but could not clarify." The "adumbration" or faintly sketched awareness, provides the basis for the
ensuing clarification. The relationship is one of implicit-explicit, which could not "be sustained unless structure transcended levels" (p. 88). Structures are considered as valid for a given type of event at a given level, rather than representing something universal. For example, the "dialectic" between the implicit-explicit cycling that eventually clarifies June’s hostage-taking robbery is different from the same process applied to Carrie’s one-on-one robbery experience. Giorgi (1979) noted that regardless of the kind or complexity on an event "Structure is the network of relations, both temporal and spatial, that provides the ground against which variations in type and level can emerge" (p. 88).

The following eight respondent detailed event structure of events contain two numbering procedures. All text number references are in brackets [ ]. All numbers in brackets refer directly to the verbatim, transcribed interview line-numbers to be found in the original texts. Numbers preceded by a 1 through 8 refer to the individual respondents: (R1), (R2), (R3) and so on. Some numbers in brackets are followed by the letter "B": this indicates quoted material may be found in interview B, or the second interview. All citations not preceded by the letter B are taken from the first respondent interview.

Gwen (R1)

The central organizing principle for this two-minute take-over robbery was the struggle, back-and-forth, for control between Gwen and the robber [403-404]. The overriding sense of dynamic movement entailed a fluid shifting of spatial relations; the sense of balance and imbalance, of riotous complexity moving swiftly within the basic
unity of the robbery event itself. These emblematic event dynamics find their most
colourful, robust expression at points where Gwen and the robber were alone. During
these moments Gwen displayed aggression, glaring contempt, and verbal and behavioral
defiance. At moments when others become pressed into the drama she shifted more to an
attitude of surrender, submission, willing compliance in the service of meeting a felt need
for being responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of staff [498; 505; 302-
303; 323; 369; IB/261-264].

Four enduring legacies from Gwen’s robbery may be cited: (1) lasting feelings of
being unsafe; (2) fear; (3) both the insecure and fearful feelings may be easily triggered
[1189-1190] by a variety of precipitants: voice-tone, movement, a customer’s profile, loud
noise, and many aspects of the branch environment and the immediate neighbourhood
surrounding the branch [102-129]; (4) an over-arching sense of anger at the duration of
the effects: "I feel helpless around it...to feel this fear, and to feel unsafe...there’s nothing
I seem to do that’s working" [1B/707-716] "...How can such a little man have this much,
a stranger, you know, have this much influence and trigger feelings in me...it’s not
fair"[1197-1199]. Over this past year Gwen has realized, gradually, that she very likely
will not be able to remain at her job, which she likes [1B/202] and which "has taken a lot
of work" [1B/437]. Her experience - particularly at the branch location, has become
increasingly marked with anxiety: "He’s in my thoughts every day" [1B/330]. She feels
like there is always a menacing "presence...almost as if there is a shadow...that only
seems to be in that [work] area..." [1B/359-363]. She feels constantly fatigued,
undecided, not focussed [1B/464-466]; jumpy, exhausted, and "just wiped out feeling" [1B/381]. She is constantly sleep-deprived. She is constantly anxious - especially at work. She sums up the experience of the past eighteen months by stating simply: "I never felt this bad before" [1B/404]. This complex, life-altering legacy was experienced as resoundingly unfair to her as she realizes she has not gotten past these feelings; that these feelings have density and duration far beyond what she could have anticipated at the onset of the robberies [1188-1197; 1B/220-222].

In a significant encounter with the bank robber in a small room at the back of the branch the respondent was first alerted to the event in progress by the hauntingly familiar sound of the robber's voice: this was the third time he had robbed them in less than six weeks.

Gwen experienced what may best be called a somatic memory which she responded to instantly, with rage - without really making a conscious connection as to why: "The voice did something to me, it triggered something" [32-33; 288-289]; "I didn't make the connection immediately. Even though my body did, my brain didn't. I reacted to the voice, to the sound, and until after I was face to face with him I didn't really make the connection" [1B/138-141]. In an instant of rage Gwen "literally jumped out of her chair..." [36], raced around the corner and came face to face with the robber. The robber commanded one of the staff to go to the front and fill the plastic bag he had given her with money and traveller's cheques. At that moment Gwen engaged the robber with a defiant glare. This represented the first of several episodes of shifting control, based on
intensive eye-contact, between Gwen and the robber, punctuated by instances of lessening of intensity and increased compliance by her - especially at times when other staff entered into the drama. When alone with the robber her anger had an aggressive, defiant quality [559]. For example, she recalls she just "stared at him, and he said 'get up front,' I said no!" [46-47]. When he insisted, she just kept staring at him and defying him with repeated 'no's'" [49]. When other staff entered the drama she became submissive, compliant, not wanting to ignite him to retaliate against other staff [80; 89-90; 560].

At times of seclusion with the robber Gwen engaged in a push-pull dynamic with him [1B/307]. She felt she powerfully intimidated him [90] by her fearless, defiant staring, daring, glare. For example, when he broke off eye-contact with her and backed into a side room fumbling for his gun [312-320]. At other times she surrendered to him [498; 507], just did what he said [491-492], for instance, when he held his gun threateningly to one staff member's leg [75-92]. At that point the "tug-of-war" [505] shifted from directly between the robber and her to more of an internal conflict based on two oppositional forces. First, a compelling urge to defy the robber and second, a felt need to be a "mother [to staff], like with my kids" [487] - to be able to take responsible care of the staff and protect them from this "rodent, weasel, rat" [762; 786-789] who caused "all of this because of drugs" [791]. The respondent's contempt for the robber vied for ascendancy with her strongly developed sense of urgency to shield, protect staff and customer's from this unpredictable, desperate, dangerous threat which had choreographed itself into their workplace.
Gwen’s thoughts during this event represented another aspect of the tug-of-war between herself and the robber: the longer she could keep him in the back room the better because other staff were safe while he was isolated [59-61]. She thought she might be able to provoke him to do whatever he was going to do - with her, which might lessen the physical and emotional risk to others. But as the drama shifted to, at one moment, include others - then back to the two of them alone, her experience shifted from submission, compliance - carefully not wanting to agitate him in the presence of others - [90-92] to open defiance [47] and patently provocative behaviour when the two of them were alone [559-560]. Underlying these complex dynamics was a sense of outrage that he had, yet again - returned to "violate" them once more. She felt defeated when another staff person entered their initial, isolated drama. She felt like she had to surrender [498] or he might take his rage out on staff. The rope to the "tug-of-war" [505] "broke" [506] when another staff-member entered the drama [505-507].

In the weeks and months following the robbery, the respondent struggled to come to grips with her feelings of anger, her guilt at a felt sense of letting staff down as she was advised, encouraged, to take time off work (which eventually she agreed to do). She also encountered an initial period of sleep disruption, memory and concentration difficulties, and a serious threat to her sense of confidence and competence. For example, she attempted to use her phone as a calculator; she was unable to key-in her password at work; she became inexplicably tearful at work [998-1011]. Gwen is "still carrying this idiot around." He shows up in her bedroom (for the better part of a year afterwards), in
her thoughts, "he's an intruder...he just won't go away" [678-680]. The character of his presence has shifted in recent times (about fifteen months after the robbery). Now, instead of him being present as more "part of [my] dreams" he is more consciously present as she is "getting ready for work in the morning...at my dressing table in the bedroom...I'm already starting my daily routine in my head...and he's always there" [1B/330-338]. This triggers worry for her - not that this guy is going to come in, but more will there be another robbery today - and if so "how am I going to react"? [1B/341]. Gwen continues to experience feelings of guilt, fear, anger, unsafety, especially at work and in the surrounding neighbourhood. She experiences these feelings as she drives into the underground parking area at work. This routine generally invokes anxiety, agitation, shortness of breath, adrenaline. To combat these feelings as she walks through the underground parking area she arranges her keys so that one sticks out - spike-like, through her clenched fist. If she needs it - she has a defensive weapon. Not knowing the status of the robber’s jail term fuels this daily ritual of discomfort, unease.

Visual imagery of the "kangaroo-hooded, rodent, weasel-like robber," is a daily occurrence - embedded in her mind from the lengthy police photo line-up session (two months after the robbery) and the intense study of the robbers face, lasting several hours, during the session with the police sketch artist one day after the robbery. During the meeting with the police sketch artist composite drawing session, which lasted over three hours, Gwen constantly squeezed her eyes shut to "bring him up in my mind" [666-681]. These two experiences combined seem to have almost indelibly etched a visual-somatic
memory that is experienced as intrusive, capable of arousing shaking anger, feelings of unsafety, shortness of breath, heart palpitations - continuing in the present time. Though she recalls no fear during the robbery she does feel fearful at present, in an overall way, when near her work location. This seems due to her afterthought that because she intimidated him so frequently during the robbery he might want to come back to get even with her [634-636]. She feels very doubtful that he will serve his full year in jail - which adds to the uncertainty, contributes to keeping her off guard. She has made it plain that "...it's a continuous thing...the chapter hasn't closed" [751-752]. She coped by talking to herself reassuringly, talking with others, and re-focussing on her life - as best she could, with the daily intrusions of his presence into her daily routines, starting at her dressing table each morning. She credits counselling, the time off work (one month), massage therapy, support from her spouse and friends, and the acquisition of a "recovery dog" - she cites these things as having contributed positively to her getting by day-by-day.

The experience has left her with a pervasive sense of a "presence...almost as if there was a shadow" [1B/359-360] that still haunts her daily life at times. Gwen confides that she is taking steps to leave her job. She sees this move as "inevitable" which is very painful as she has put a lot into her work and likes her job [1B/202]. She states with some anger, frustration - but a sense of resignation: " it's a shame...but I need to go now" [1B/435-448].

The uniqueness of this turn of events, her daily wrestling with his "presence," and her altered feelings of safety and security all have an abiding, durational quality. Even
with the passage of chronological time this experience functions almost autonomously at times. It has left her "different" from the way she was before [1189-1197; 1B/113-129].

The violation of her strongly defined sense of right and wrong, the riotous shifting between submission, aggressive defiance, fear for the safety of others, the robbers lasting presence, and her increasing unease at being at, and around work - all these things are hers alone. She remains extremely fearful of what would happen if he, or another robber came into their branch. She worries about doing something that might put other staff at risk: "I think it would be a lot safer if I was terrified of him...fear will give me respect for that gun...fear will drive me...anger is different. With fear you still have control. With anger I feel I don't have the control I should have" [386-404]. To some extent Gwen bears these feelings alone. And to the extent she is isolated she is cut off from others. Even the support and understanding from her spouse and friends has not restored her equanimity: she lives a co-existence with life as usual intrusively shared with the presence, "shadow," of her memory of the robber and all of the daily disturbances that entrains. She’s just not like she was before. The role others have taken to provide compassionate understanding and empathy seems to have contributed to helping her feel a sense of belonging. But in many ways the efforts, support, understanding from others falls short of helping her restore her cleaved sense of self. The passage of time has fallen short of "healing all wounds." Her experience seems caught in an adjacent strata where time, empathy, and understanding lose their usual potency and vigour to synthesize, heal. Co-temporality becomes a controlling principle of Gwen’s narrative as she attempts to
struggle with the task of making her memories and experiences of the three closely unified robbery events coalesce with the rest of her life. It remains to be seen how such efforts will develop.

**June (R2)**

In an abrupt, violent seven-minute encounter with an armed robber the respondent was put in a choke hold and wrenched across the work area to where the cash drawers were located. Later it would be discovered the choke hold was vicious enough to rotate two vertebrae out of position [308-311] - the injury would take three months to heal [309-311]. The robber shoved the gun into her head, behind her right ear [848]. Then he pressed the gun into her side. She could smell alcohol on him. She could feel the roughness of the sleeve of his hooded kangaroo jacket as he twisted her neck backwards and towards the ceiling. He became increasingly agitated as other staff were unable to locate the keys to the cash drawers. The robber removed the gun from the respondent’s side and shoved it into the back of the right side of her head. As the staff fumbled with the keys he shouted to "Give me the money or the bitch is dead" [86-87]. Finally, the staff were able to locate the keys, open the drawer, and shove the money into the bag the robber had given them. There was a slight de-escalation of tension as the first crisis resolved with his cash request met. He loosened his choke hold on her. He shouted for the traveller’s cheques and a second escalation ignited as the respondent instinctively started to move towards another drawer containing the traveller’s cheques. The robber
violently yanked her back. Another staff member got the traveller’s cheques and put them in the bag as the second flare-up decreased momentarily.

During these two confrontations - attempting to comply with the cash drawer and traveller’s cheque demands, the respondent wondered - in a somewhat detached way - if it would hurt to be shot: "How much it would hurt" [97-98]. She felt removed, detached from her feelings [643]. As the robber dragged her towards the front door - presumably in preparation for his exit, she still had the gun to her head, could see part of his left arm that had her in the choke hold. As he dragged her toward the door she could see the other staff around her. She saw one staff person huddled under a desk - terror, uncertainty plainly etched onto her face [641-644].

June’s sense of the robbery was like a feeling of unreality - like floating, being detached from the present, not connected to her own body. Her feelings were dulled and she was experiencing things initially in a more detached, disembodied way. At one point, towards the end of the robbery, she did experience fear as the robber took her a couple of steps towards the door [2B/78], she can recall thinking to herself: "Don’t take me with you" [100-102]. That represented her singular memory of experiencing her feelings during the actual robbery drama. During this moment the respondent felt the gun pressed to her head, she felt his arm around her neck. She could not see him. As she was dragged to the door - in an ethereal, detached mode, she observed - as if through the lens of a camera moving across the branch lobby mounted on tracks - she took in the look of fear on the face of one of her colleagues huddled underneath a desk [641-645]. At that
moment she was seeing her colleague's fear but was not experiencing it herself [651-652] - she was not aware of any sensation of fear within herself. She was able to separate, detach herself from herself in order to mute, or nullify the depth of fear the violation brought about by the violent insult, assault. She felt like she was in a cloud [927], a sense of removal, detachment, separation [158; 436; 581; 612; 626; 643] - "Almost like I had really left myself, like I wasn't there" [583]. When he was leaving and she realized he could take her with him - that an already ugly situation could quickly worsen. The fear, realization of the possible loss of the safety of the branch overwhelmed her detached state and she was momentarily flooded by a sensation of dread: the prospect of increased, new dangers pierced the protection of the barrier of the detachment and provided an entry-point for the momentary experiencing of terror, dread, panic [442]. A tremendous sense of relief accompanied her release as he let her go and disappeared into the night, on his own. June stood there stunned, frozen at what had taken place the last few minutes. She experienced a transition from "feeling like I was looking through a tunnel" [157], separated, detached from the terror - to experiencing relief as the numbness wore off a little - then experiencing the onset of a sense of panic [435-442]. She wandered over towards her desk, still somewhat in shock, looking for a routine that could get her re-integrated, grounded again. As some staff were filling out the obligatory post-robbery tear sheets she asked why she didn't have one, still somewhat in a disembodied, badly shaken state. She was given a police report to fill out which helped her focus on something and she reports being fine until someone asked her if she was okay. That point
of human contact seemed to break the spell - seemed to signal she could loosen her grip on the detachment that served her well throughout the violence - where "I had really left myself, like I wasn’t there" [583]. She began to thaw-out emotionally: her feelings started to emerge as she physically shook - released contained tensions; she became tearful - tears of relief/release. She began to allow herself to feel the overall impact of the event. In the post-robbery environment what sparked this cascade - this outpouring of emotions, was someone asking her if she was okay: a human voice, expressing some warmth, concern, sense of caring [133-135]. Being present to her colleague’s caring emotions signalled the presence of felt empathy - which opposed the detachment: the tacit realization of the need for belonging. It amounts to what might be thought of as the respondent returning to herself after a leavetaking in the service of evading what was experienced as an overwhelming, life-threatening act of violence in which she was dragged around like a non-being, a rag doll: "I don’t think I was actually a person to him at that time. I was more I guess a tool - or something to get what he wanted" [868-870].

Her main concern became balancing her cash, which she did in spite of a request to fill out a detailed police report. The cash balancing gave her a focus [916], a sense of returning mastery, competence and a corresponding lessening of dis-integration, being out of control - at the mercy of some menacing presence. It served to create a soothing routine and return a sense of normalcy, belonging. "...trying to organize my thoughts and just start doing something…repetitious [900-901]...something familiar [909]."

The event dynamics thus far may be summarized as follows: First, initial
emotional detachment, separation in the face of overwhelming terror; second, two crisis
definitions. Two crisis peaks in the first few minutes: (a) the escalation and reduction of terror, threat-level as
staff could not find the cash drawer keys while she was being held hostage, strangulated
in a choke hold - threatened with death. This resolved when the drawer keys were finally
located and money was put in the robber's bag; (b) the drama escalated again when she
instinctively moved away from the robber to get the traveller's cheques he had demanded
- as she did this he yanked her back, re-established the choke hold. This crisis resolved
when one of the other staff retrieved and handed him the traveller's cheques. Third,
during this time she wondered how much it would hurt to be shot [97-98; 586-587].
Though her mind was clear she was fairly thoroughly emotionally detached, disembodied,
separated - during most of the robbery. Fourth, the exception to this was when the
robber dragged her towards the door - she could see the fear on the face of a colleague
huddled under a desk - but she was not experiencing fear herself. This shifted when she
realized he could drag her outside the branch with him - and this aspect of the event also
represented her most virulent memories: "...when he had the gun to my head...just
before - he left...Wondering how much it would hurt to be shot and then realizing that he
could take me out the door...I didn't know whether or not the police were out
there...that's the part I remember the most" [833-839]. As this thought struck her the
protective detachment was breached and she did experience a chilling fear [609] that he
might "drag me out the door with him...that was the only time during the robbery that I
actually had a feeling or an emotion" [609-612]. This represented not just a sense of
unknown danger, but the loss of the familiarity, connection with others, protection of the branch environment. Next, June experienced a sense of release, relief when he pushed her away and fled the branch. As if in a cloud [927] - in a mode of stunned disbelief she slowly made her way to her work area, feeling very dazed, in a fog. Picking up on her colleague’s emotions seemed to thaw out her own emotions as the shock, disbelief, numbness began to retreat and the experience began to coalesce and become more deeply-felt. She experienced a kaleidoscope of mixed feelings: the relief of surviving the hostage-taking alive, the sound of a concerned voice - the reciprocity with another’s feelings, emotions - re-engagement with a felt sense of belonging, being part of the community of branch staff, finally, an outpouring of stored physical and emotional energy as the experience of shock, numbing detachment subsided and re-integration was sparked. She re-emerged as if from the far away end of a long tunnel into the present moment, the here-and-now. She returned to herself exhausted, injured, but in present time, alive.

On reflection, after the robbery June felt guilt at having to request participation from other staff during the robbery: having to ask a colleague to get the robber money, bringing her out from behind the safety of the desk; being yanked back by the robber while attempting to get the traveller’s cheques thus causing another staff member to be recruited into the process [652-657]. She realizes she had no choice [658], in the interest of not escalating the drama, but she still experienced guilt at having some staff brought into the focus, line of fire - of the robber.

June speculated she could have initially ducked, avoided the robber when he first
entered the branch, but that action would have most certainly put someone else at risk [670-672]. The respondent looked upon what happened as the best thing - that he came over to her and that being able to separate herself, to detach, keep calm, and comply - that this course of action likely protected other people from being hurt.

During the robbery two strategies helped June cope: first, creating a detached, separated emotional state [158; 581; 612; 626; 643] and, second willful compliance with the robber's demands. After the robbery two things helped her cope: first, her stubbornness; second, strong support from her mother [551-552].

One aspect of the post-robbery experience that equalled - or surpassed, the jolt of the robbery was what she considered a stinging failure of empathy from her father - who appeared more immediately concerned with her getting back to work fast so as not to jeopardize her job [552-578]. June experienced this as sharply painful, more disturbing than her hostage-taking ordeal. She was keenly disappointed, hurt - that her father seemed to have missed - or at least could not express - his understanding, acknowledgement of the reality the she came within a flicker of being killed. There is a massive amount of realized, lived human frailty, vulnerability embedded in the exposure she took during the robbery that was not acknowledged by her father. There was equally tremendous strength and courage shown by June in the face of grave danger: this too seems to have been lost on her father. That he could allow her vulnerability and her strength in this incident to go unremarked constituted a profound source of confusion for the respondent - one that carried with it a sting worse than the massive insult at the hands
of a stranger...an "intimate" stranger. For June, this "was the hardest thing - I think more than the robbery itself..." [565-566]. "I mean he doesn't understand that I came within a hairs breadth or a twitchy finger of not being his daughter anymore" [563-565].

Following the robbery event June persisted in her effort to transfer from the robbery branch [378-384] but encountered what seemed like organizational disinterest, unfairness, inertia, criticism - in her wish to be transferred [714-716]. She observed someone in her branch get promoted without the position even being posted - which seemed to her preferential treatment yet she was told she couldn't be transferred as that might appear preferential: this did not ring true to her. She at least felt that what she had experienced warranted some consideration, some demonstration of support and understanding from the organization. She felt their seeming lack of willingness to help a staff person who was competent and had experienced a genuine ordeal contradicted their much touted public persona of their stated high value for treating staff well. June felt there was an element of hypocrisy in posing as a caring employer and behaving in opposing ways. She experienced this as being cast adrift and expected to find her own way. The product of this experience was frustration, lowered self-worth, sense of abandonment, lasting resentment [507-540]. She applied for "about fifteen applications for all different types of jobs. And I was unable to obtain a full-time position with the company that I'd been in for ten years...I didn't feel I should have gone through all these rejections" [2B/220-227].

June viewed the hostage-taking robbery event as one she would not want others to
experience. It has had an enduring effect on her life, on how she views people. She is more wary, sensitive to the presence of others around especially if she does not know them. She has put a decade into her job and perceives herself as good at her work but now questions her sense of professional competence [1031-1032] - does not consider herself as effective professionally as compared with the pre-robbery period. She wonders if she should move to some other type of work. She frequently is aware of having to push herself to go to work: "A lot of times I don’t even want to be there anymore" [1032-1033]. June has difficulty summarizing the incident and experiences it as not discrete, or well encapsulated, but more pervasive, systemic: it has profoundly changed how she sees things, how she feels, who she is. This incident is not something she thinks she will ever get over: "it takes time to deal with it but I don’t think you ever get over it" [1037-1039; 1052-1053]. In some ways the robbery trauma has served to make her stronger [1046]. Surviving the ordeal has served as evidence she can both withstand and live through life-threatening trauma. On the other hand it has made her exquisitely sensitive, vigilant in some ways [1050]: this represents more of the undesirable part of the lived legacy in that it thematically affects her awareness, level of tension, comfort zone when she finds herself in public places or around people she doesn’t know. There is a sense in which the experience seems indelibly etched in memory, at times situationally re-activated with accompanying autonomic nervous system arousal - startle response, anxious feelings. She also experiences the event and its aftermath as something becoming incorporated as a layer of experience with an indeterminate course at the present time - now ten months
after the seven minute robbery assault. Her stubbornness, support from key others, and realization of having acquitted herself well in a life-and-death drama all serve to provide her with a basis for continuing to move forward - more wary, to an extent disappointed with her organization, but nonetheless - alive. Still, June expresses a deep sense of the enduring, durational aspects of the take-over, hostage-taking event: "It’s changed me for who I am" [1045]. Referring to her experience of reading the transcripts for the present research she notes: "I find though when I read the transcripts I still get really emotional about it. Like I can talk about it, but when I really think about it, when I read it and picture it, I still get emotional, the tears go into my eyes" [2B/112-118].

Alice (R3)

The respondent’s core robbery experience involved about four minutes of increasing levels of intensity as she progressively shifted from initially sensing a disturbance to a lived feeling that if she was discovered underneath her desk she would be attacked, possibly killed - by this abusive-sounding, violent man. Three aspects of this event constitute the core features of the vicariously experienced robbery event and the immediate impact: "It’s the rough voice, the violence, and especially something I don’t see - I hear it, I don’t see it" [770-772].

The respondent experienced the few minutes of the event, which originated eight years ago, as if it took much longer: "It felt like it could be a year within that three or four minutes...it’s still in me, it’s still in my mind" [965-967]. The most prominent
feature of the event was the terrifying, fear-invoking sounds of violence: harsh, abusive language, the crash of the cash box hitting the tile floor [56], the rough, violent edge of the robber's voice as he screamed and commanded staff [3B/699-705], and the sound of footfall approaching her work area - as she huddled underneath her desk - hiding, waiting for him to discover her and attack her [80; 85]; Alice thought "that's the end of my life" [72]; "I felt like I'm going to be killed" [398]. All those thoughts and feelings seemed to be etched indelibly in her mind and later re-emerged with the energy of a disease, seven years later - when another, recent robbery event unleashed them. The body kept score in this case as evidenced by her experiencing of many of the physical sensations associated with the original robbery as she worked her way through the process of the research interview. Several aspects of the experience stand out: the initial alert, the struggle to comprehend - to better understand what happened, the process of working through several hypotheses about what the disturbance could represent, the various types and levels of responding. For example, not realizing it was a robbery until the event was over. Of note was the sheer duration of the experience, which evolved from intense - poorly understood feelings from the past to the present time, where it seems much better understood, but also very much vividly etched in her brain [1729-1730], still very much with her.

The initial alert came as the respondent's typical, routine functioning at work was pierced by the sound of a loud, rough, violent voice which penetrated the partition separating her from the main lobby area where the disturbance was located. Cut off
visually by the partition the respondent sensed, but could not articulate, a situation of danger: "It didn’t click that it was a robbery...I thought it was an earthquake, or something violent" [60-62]. As the sounds of the disturbance persisted the respondent struggled to make sense of what was occurring: shouting, violent threats, coin tray crashing onto the tile floor. She thought the commotion might be an altercation with an angry member. In a state of extreme vigilance the respondent experienced intense activity at several levels: she sensed the escalation of danger but could not identify its source. As the tension mounted she crouched down underneath her desk to protect herself and huddled there clenching her fists and squinting her eyes - as if to shut out the threat. The sounds of the aggressive disturbance continued and increased as the respondent began to realize the focal point of the disturbance was the disembodied voice. This person's violent behaviour - it struck her, could not be contained by the staff: it was going way beyond what might be expected from an angry customer - the situation could not be contained - it was now out of control [195]. She began to experience terror. She imagined he would discover she was there and attack, harm, kill her. The respondent felt vulnerable - like when she was a little girl [281]: confusion, terror, bodily tremors, her hands became cold, numb [260-261]. She struggled to make sense out of the violent behaviour that felt so chilling. She continued to be flooded with fear of discovery, harm. She clenched her fists tighter, her breathing became laboured. She imagined that he would not hesitate to harm her since he was being so violent with others [237-239]. At this moment she heard footsteps running towards her, imagined the worst, crunched herself
down more and tried to shut out impending disaster by squinting her eyes. Alice thought to herself: "Oh my god! That's the end, he's coming to get me" [375-376]..."I'm going to be killed" [396]. As a form passed her she heard a familiar voice: it was the assistant manager running to the large window at the back of the branch, yelling "Where did he go?" [346]. At that moment she realized that the drama she had struggled with those long few minutes was, in fact - a robbery. Still panicky, numb the respondent unfolded herself from underneath the desk and moved towards the back window - where she found herself in the company of the assistant manager and several other staff: all were observing the scene taking place outside in the branch parking lot.

The scene the respondent witnessed in the parking lot left her shocked and terrified. A police officer was poised a few feet away from the driver of a vehicle. "Then the trunk popped open and this [second] police officer was pointing the gun, demanding he get out of the trunk" [3B/835-837]. Stunned, the respondent realized from what her co-workers were saying that he was the one in the branch - the one in the trunk was the one who robbed them. The second officer took the rifle, hand-cuffed the two robbers and, after a few minutes - they all drove away. The scene created a jarring wave of feelings for the respondent: from the raw, wrenching, sickening experience of her own impending death a few minutes earlier in the branch to the mix of shock and revulsion of witnessing what could have been the shooting death of one - or both robbers, or the injury of police officers at the hands of criminals: "I felt frightened. I felt like I would be seeing...death, I would see some death there" [610-611]. At the same time
there was a sense of relief at the termination of the upheaval and satisfaction, justice in knowing both robbers were captured. Of central importance was the respondent's increased understanding of what the event actually was - a robbery and, finally - an end to the agony of not knowing what the nature of the danger was that lurked, exploded just a few feet away from her desk on the other side of the partition.

Moving from the observation window, the respondent tried to make sense out of what had occurred as the robbery took place inside the branch. The three or four minute robbery was experienced as if a time warp occurred: as feeling like it took a year. After attempting to create some sense of normalcy through serving others tea and after going over and over what happened with the other staff the respondent returned to her desk to try to clear up some of the work she was engaged in prior to the robbery. Central to her experience at this point was finding out what happened by multiple discussions with other staff: where he went, exactly what happened, the sequence, the details: "Everybody exchanging ideas." This process served a dual purpose: to fill in the missing gaps in her own story - her imaginings based initially on sound only as compared with the shared observations of those others who actually saw, eye-witnessed what happened; it also served the purpose of soothing her own agitation - settling her own feelings through powerfully showing concern for others by encouraging them to tell their stories and listening to their experiences and showing sympathy and empathy for their shock, terror, agitation. The respondent has an acknowledged felt need to be concerned about others: to ask others to talk about what happened, to encourage
them to tell their story, describe the robber, recall the situation. Essential to her experience was that she also had a need to feel secure within herself. She wanted to know she was safe, secure. She went home that evening feeling numb, unsettled. The night passed with sleep coming in fits and starts.

The next morning the respondent struggled with thoughts of having to go back into the branch - return to the scene of danger, violence, breached sense of security, trust, safety of her work environment [1142]. The respondent forced herself out of her house not wanting to go through the entrance to that branch, but knowing she had to. She arrived at the branch one hour before her starting time and decided to go for tea and try to calm herself down before returning to the branch. Part of her wanted the reassuring effects of work routines. Part of her did not want to go through those doors again: "I wanted to work, but I could not enter the branch" [1155-1156]. The thought of returning re-evoked all the fear, terror, shock of the previous afternoon. The feelings of violence, violation, welled-up within her. Feelings of exposure, vulnerability, helplessness, confusion and inability to understand what was developing moment-by-moment; rage at the massive rejection and disrespect this incident represented to her were all just beneath the surface - felt, sensed - if not entirely within conscious awareness [1163-1196]. This was her stance towards her experience of the day before as she readied herself to return to the scene of this unique wounding, insult.

The respondent felt anger and shame at such an overwhelming disrespect of her being - at having her sense of dignity so bluntly stripped away, violated: the frank
disavowal, rejection of her expectation of decent, respectful, safe treatment. All these feelings were largely pre-reflective: as the respondent entered the branch that next morning she just sensed the presence of all these underlying thoughts and feelings but was not fully consciously aware in any detail yet [1216-1223]. The respondent desired the reassurance of engaging in normal routines, which held for her the promise of a return to calmness, normalcy.

The respondent restates that it was of value to talk about the robbery immediately following the event. This helped in the process of identifying themes, feelings, building and expanding the robbery event knowledge-base, and to both express and listen as others express: to show concern for self and others [890-892]. This process helped to move, to expand and amplify pre-articulate, pre-reflective thoughts and feeling-states. The process enabled her felt, but out-of-awareness sensations, feelings, thoughts to become a little more illuminated, more available to conscious reflection - though still far from in full awareness. This represented her struggle to acquire understanding and to more fully become aware of what meaning the event had for her. It helped her strive for higher levels of integration, organization, understanding of this powerfully disturbing event. Pre-conscious thoughts [1213-1223] and feelings pressed out (ex-pressed) and elevated to the level of reflective consciousness would slowly emerge, but not be fully in awareness until she reviewed the entire research process, over eight years after the original event: "It’s a release you know [the research process]... I didn’t understand certain feelings...Now I understand why, I know why I felt that way, that’s the key point"
Much of the emotional and physical components from this event remained stored - retreating to some inner darkness, until another robbery - over seven years later, revived these powerful memory and somatic traces. The second robbery left her initially feeling that more contemporary personal problems were inflamed, but as she discussed more of her experience she made a direct link with unfinished feelings from the original robbery.

Asked about how she was able to cope, to contend with the damage and injured feelings, the respondent invoked a story of a recent robbery, with some similar features - and indicated that the recent robbery served as a kind of newly created pathway for the return of thoughts and feelings from the original robbery over seven years earlier.

The recent robbery brought back, full force, stored feelings from the first robbery as well as highly-charged - but more recent, material: a painful divorce, difficulties adjusting to single parenting an active teenager. The recent robbery was similar in that the respondent did not initially realize the robbery was occurring, the robbers had difficulty getting out of the branch and became loud, verbally violent and rough.

Compared to the robbery seven years earlier, staff were more unified after the recent robbery - went out together afterwards to commiserate with one another. The respondent received a call of support the next day from her manager which she appreciated as very supportive and caring.

By contrast this brought out certain aspects of the first robbery that the respondent now could more firmly, authoritatively grasp as missing: the necessity for her of a
supportive post-robbery environment that includes comradeship, verbal processing and re-processing all aspects of the event (up to a point), and the healing that comes about from shared experiences with a focus on progressing from collision to recovery - possibly coming closer together as a group [1392-1397; 1424-1426]. She was attempting to confirm the security of the work environment and the re-constitution of her sense of belonging by talking with others, by showing concern for others and receiving support, reassurance herself in the process.

Apparently, the effects from the first robbery were in no way adequately processed, much less surpassed. All that passed was time. This recent event revealed that the experience of the first robbery was largely buried, pushed down. Her responses from the recent robbery, from the staff de-briefing one-week after the recent robbery and, especially from her powerful physical and emotional reactions during the research interview - these three incidents point directly towards the virility of the traumatic material from the robbery eight years ago - re-experienced, and in some ways - experienced anew, in present time: "It brought everything back" [1452-1453]...And this robbery came and everything came back to me" [1468-1496]. The respondent expressed amazement that the images and force of feelings were still so vividly with her in the present, eight years after the event. This came through full-force as, on four separate occasions while responding during the interview - she felt powerful physical and emotional sensations stemming from the robbery event eight years ago.

First, as the respondent discussed her crouching underneath her desk and hearing
footfall she thought was the violent person - on his way to discover her. She became aware - as she was verbalizing this part of her part of the story, that she was crying, that tears were welling-up in her eyes, that her hands were shaking, and that she was flushed, feeling very hot. The second occurrence of re-experiencing stored feelings came as the respondent was describing the police apprehension as she witnessed their capture and removal from their escape vehicle. Again the respondent responded with surprise that she had "little tears coming out of my eyes" [437-438; 734-737]; "I feel this way now" [1052-1054]. She thought this might be because she was expressing herself in more depth, detail. The respondent made the observation that the event was still within her. She was flushed, sweating, hands shaking [894-896], tearful but her thinking - in the moment, was focussed, clear. A few minutes later, the respondent has another reaction. Talking about the stark terror of the felt, but unseen threat - finally confirming it was actually a robbery, piecing together what happened. The respondent became aware that she was sweating profusely, as if the telling was a return to, rather than just a telling of, thoughts and feelings that had been stored, trapped within - now seeking more direct expression.

The final instance of her powerful physical response to the re-telling of the story followed the respondent's account and summary of the centrality of piecing together what had happened, where the robber went, what he did. This she did in many brief discussions with other staff as she also attempted to show concern for, to care for, the other staff. She also linked the expression of her present emotions to recalling her more recent, abiding personal problems (divorce, career development, difficulties as a as single
parent of a teenage daughter). At this point during the research interview the respondent noticed her own powerful physical response: her hands became cold, she noticed the blood being shunted away from her hands - experiences she had during the robbery event. The recurrence of these present-time reactions were surprising, sometimes puzzling to the respondent. She attributed them to talking so candidly about her experience of the robbery - the depth of which is new to her, even though she did talk some about them to family, friends following the event eight years ago [3B/69-99].

The research interview concluded with the respondent feeling emotionally, physically exhausted. She was deeply shaken at the animation, robustness, vigour of the return of her robbery-related feelings and thoughts from eight years ago. Her quietly haunting realization, awe of the tenacity of these submerged feelings, memories - re-lived during the research interview - was perhaps best captured by her simple utterance: "It’s still in me...it’s still in me" [760].

The legacy in this event persisted over an eight year course. During the initial robbery Alice felt "like I’m at the end of the world" [793], "I feel like I could die from this" [795]. In reflecting on the course of these experiences Alice revealed how it is for her at present: "It’s still there. That incident is still there. It carries with me" [818-819]. That this event has coalesced as part of awareness, at times almost as if etched in her mind, is captured by a comment near the end of our long interview: "It’s still in me...the picture in my brain, it’s still there" [1729-1730]. This is not a surpassed event. It is not a dim memory. It is more like a temperate virus that emerges energetically under certain
conditions of stress - only to retreat once again within: "It was a life-and-death matter"
[3B/1349].

Catherine (R4)

The robbery event consisted of five core - and two secondary features that constituted a main part of Catherine’s experience of this seven minute branch take-over robbery.

First, her initial awareness, gut feeling - of danger in the making. This was sensed as much as observed, although she did observe a somewhat off-kilter interaction at the door with a man seeming to jostle a pregnant staff-member away from the door. Second, she realized this was a robbery and decided to go to support the new cash teller who she thought would need help during the robbery: "My first thing is, 'where am I going to go'? And I knew it was going to be somewhere down on the floor. So I just calmly turned around and looked, I saw a new girl with cash and I thought, 'I'm senior...I scooted over as fast as I could and told her to get down' " [57-63].

She worried she might be needed out in the main area, that maybe she would be more help: "You know you have those guilt feelings, maybe I should be out there" [67-68]. She rejected the thought in favour of assisting the new cash teller who wound up being in the centre of the robbery as the drama progressed. Third, there was a lot of fumbling for the cash drawer keys and the robber was becoming increasingly more
threatening. Catherine was sure she was going to be shot and killed during these tense few moments. She became angry as the staff security officer stepped over her to try to get the robber cash. A fourth feature that ran through the entire experience was her willful decision not to make any eye-contact with the robber at any time during the six or seven minute event. This aspect of her response to the robbery had historical roots going back over twenty years to a time when - as a young woman, she was present for an attempted robbery. A fifth (and guiding) feature for her conduct during the robbery, consisted of a "bits-and-pieces" file in her mind containing things she had heard about safe conduct during - plus her own experience with, robbery events. A great deal of her responding during the event was based on activation of these filed-away guidance principles for surviving a robbery: "It just sort of comes ...it seemed to correspond with whatever is happening at that particular time" [4B/122-125]. In addition to accessing this "file" it should be noted that the file contents were activated discriminately and sequentially - based on situation-specific requirements. Not all the file contents were utilized. Nor was utilization random. Nor was Catherine aware of using her stored knowledge and experience in a uniquely "guiding" manner until well after the robbery. These five interwoven themes represent core features of the structure of her robbery experience.

Two post-robbery events are noteworthy. First, several days after the robbery she was made aware that senior management saw the in-branch Frisco Bay photographs of the robbery in progress - showing clearly the terror on the faces of many of the staff as they
lived the robbery. This felt like a violation to her though staff were quickly assured these photographs would not be circulated but were viewed more to help senior management understand what they had experienced. Second, she was angry that one of the managers (who was not present during the robbery event) seemed to take a proprietary role in trying to coach the staff through "how they should respond" post-robbery. Catherine felt this was an event outside of the manager's lived experience and she did not have the right to tell them how they should be responding: "She never bothered to phone us the whole time she was on holidays, but then she would kind of take over the meetings and say 'you gotta do this and that' " [120-124]. This was compounded by the fact that - during a previous robbery event, the manager refused to give a robber money - it was felt the non-compliance could have put staff at risk through provoking robber agitation or outrage.

Her initial awareness of the robbery event was foreshadowed by the sound of a scream from a colleague: "I heard her scream. It never even dawned on me to think it might have been a hoax or wasn't real. Just a gut reaction" [50-53]. She immediately sensed the danger - even though the robber had not explicitly declared himself at that point. Catherine's thought process at that moment entailed a judgement that she was more qualified than the security officer, she was calmer, and more in control under pressure.

The thought also occurred to her that if she entered the drama in its initial formation stage she might escalate the threat level. She quickly determined the most useful place to be was with the new cash teller [60-65]. Catherine moved across to the teller, reassured her, told her to keep calm. The robber - now fully declared with a gun in hand, approached
the cash teller demanding money. There was some nerve-wracking fumbling with the cash keys. The respondent’s sense was that she was going to get shot by the robber who was becoming increasingly outraged at the delay as staff tried to locate the cash-drawer keys. She recalled being angry with the staff security officer for moving so slowly. During these tense moments she kept reassuring the new teller that it would be okay. She recalled feeling slightly reassured that she was positioned on the floor with the safes between her and the robber, so that if shots were fired she would have some physical protection.

Time slowed to a crawl and the physical space felt compressed, confined to Catherine. She was aware of not wanting to make eye contact with the robber. With the delay in finding the cash drawer keys and the increasing agitation of the robber, she thought she very well could be killed by this blatantly outraged man: "I really thought that I was going to die" [93]. She picked a spot on the wall and just focussed on that. She recalls finding the anticipation of possible death "enlightening" in that she realized she could face death calmly, with no regrets about her life. The earlier sense of fear had subsided somewhat as she seemed to have accepted the situation as being out of her control for the moment. The urgency of the moment resolved as the robber withdrew towards the door - having finally been given the cash and traveller’s cheques - and exited the branch. She began to formulate what she would do next. The theme of guilt emerged again as she thought to herself that, though she wasn’t there to directly give the robber the cash, she would now take a lead hand in helping the teller’s move through the post-
robbery steps.

After the robbery Catherine realized she was more calm than shaken or fearful. She realized she could meet her end at any time, that she had just come through a life-threatening event intact, and seemed able to utilize these realizations to calm herself and assist more fully in the post-robbery environment. This "reasoned" approach to the robbery experience seemed to help her not only feel more calm immediately, but seemed also to extend to a fairly calm level of functioning afterwards. She recalls no particular post-robbery "bad feelings" - with the exception of a sense of increased caution, being a little more alert when entering or exiting the branch. She recalls that others coming in after the robbery from the regional office contributed a lot by providing extra help with the administrative duties and providing general support. The organizational support was well received and appreciated by the respondent.

Reflecting upon an earlier robbery as a young woman Catherine noted that when she was in her twenties she had an experience that helped shape her decision not to make eye-contact during the present robbery event. When - over twenty years ago, she was leaving the bank branch where she worked she came upon three people emerging from a van - in front of the bank. They all had ski masks. The three saw Catherine and scrambled back into the van and fled. They saw her clearly. She saw three people with masks on. She was exposed to future identification. They were anonymous. She felt that those three might have been customers of the bank - who both recognized her and whom she could recognize: when they saw her they fled. She will never know whether
they just panicked and fled when they saw "a person" or whether they fled when they saw a bank staff-member whom they recognized as a staff member.

The thought of who those three might be stayed with her a long time as she served customer after customer in the future without ever really knowing if one of the customer's was one of the potential robbers from the van. She believes that could have been a very violent robbery as no one could identify their faces so they would have "nothing to lose." For a long time she was haunted by those masked figures - it could be anybody. Whoever it was could come get her anytime - if they thought that she knew who they were: she didn't, but they did not know that.

A core feature of the present event was her concern with making eye-contact with the robber. Catherine's sole source of intelligence during this event was what she could hear the robber - and other staff, saying. Two aspects of the choice of eye-contact avoidance emerge. First, avoidance due to the possibility of the robber getting a snapshot of what she looks like: later he might recognize her somewhere and feel threatened by her knowledge, recognize-ability - of him. Second, she might recognize the robber as someone she knows: two aspects of this possibility emerge: (a) she would feel horrible knowing the person committing the crime; (b) someone might think she could be linked to the robbery if it could be shown she knew the person.

One central feature of this event is the underlying theme of worrying and thinking about the welfare of other staff. Catherine had defined herself such that "Anything extra beyond them, they would refer to me...which is why they always rely on me" [870-871];
"I knew they were going to rely on me. I knew that it was going to be my step to do this to help them" [361-362]. She takes her status with staff seriously: "You know like you want to take it all on your shoulders but you can't, you're only one person" [566-567]. She thinks of herself as a supportive authority figure ("mother") to staff: indeed her children are close in age to some of the staff so it would be quite natural for her to provide motherly support / guidance - as well as a mentoring role, to many of the younger staff. This whole underlying caretaking responsibility was evident as she struggled with where she should place herself during the robbery, who she should attend: whether she should take over from the security officer at a critical point in the robbery, and once she committed herself to the new cash teller - she had a dilemma as to whether she should stay with her or provide more general, calm support/ direction to more of the staff a few feet away. Her determination to stick with the one who seemed to need her most, plus the desire to avoid eye-contact/exposure to the violent robber - combined to determine her choice to stay on the ground with the new staff-member.

A main characteristic of this robbery is the dilemma of choice: initially to hide or to become involved; compliance-noncompliance; make eye-contact or not; take over from the security at a critical point or not.

Contrasting with her wish to embrace and provide support for staff was the countervailing theme of annoyance she experienced with staff at their post-event tendencies to keep going on and on about the event. Her point was that it was over - let us move on. She felt somewhat intolerant of the tendency for staff to keep dredging-up
the robbery [612-623]. On the other hand she tried to be very open about how other people reacted, and not expect them to react the same as she did [674-676].

A guiding theme which Catherine drew upon to determine her robbery behaviour was her "bits-and-pieces" file [1016-1024]. This file consisted of bits and pieces she stored over the years relating to conduct during a robbery. For example, she should hide behind the desk; not get smart with the robber; not push or make contact with the robber. All "these little sections" would be stored and available if she ever did get involved directly in a robbery. This file would help her determine what to do, where to go during the robbery, what to tell other staff during and after. She felt having added to this file over the years and having it to draw on during the robbery helped her remain calm. It guided her behaviour by directing her to drop down on the floor; do not look at the robber; if they want cash give it to them [1057-1081]. This "robbery conduct" information file also contains limits: for example, you need to give the robber something to get rid of them but not so much they will come back or tell others in the robber community where they got a large amount. Compliance is desirable - but limited compliance. After the event, the information file contains data bits on locking the door immediately after, make sure everyone is doing their job, fill out the event fact sheets for the police reports. All these pieces of information were slotted in "certain sections" and assigned a status by her brain as "important information" [1075-1077] and available - as needed, based partly on her recognition of the event as not only a robbery, but a highly dangerous potentially violent robbery. As soon as she defined the event as a robbery she
was surveying her "file": she was going through that file and thinking, "this is where I want to be," "this is what I want to tell the people," "this is what I'm going to do afterwards." She had all that to fall back on. Her "file" contained directions which advised her to hide when the robber's came in, drop down on the floor, don't look directly at the robbers. Comply with the cash request. Don't touch anything that might damage forensic evidence. She experienced it like her brain had decided those events were important and deserved to be retained. This represented her filing system: information that was vital to her surviving a robbery event - which is always a real possibility, an occupational hazard.

She experienced a flood, a profusion of thoughts initially as she first realized this was a very dangerous, violent robbery in the making. She organized her thought process to serve the end of a calm, safe robbery outcome with as little possibility of escalation of threat, violence as possible.

Catherine was aware of scanning a lot of information as the adrenaline from the robbery flushed through her - searching through her categories of what needed to be done in this particular set of circumstances. Her conflict was that she felt she should be the one that's out there. She was aware of some uncertainty in herself: "Why wasn't I there and not helping the front tellers? Whether you know if I'd taken over from the [security officer] whether she would've had her feelings hurt because she's really the security officer and I was sort of thinking and do I do it for her, and do I let her do it?" She let this thought go partly because her ability to give
accurate descriptions is poor. She considers herself to have little ability to accurately recall descriptive details. Therefore, she would be of less use post-robbery for the police investigation.

She recalled being thankful that organizational support was available after the robbery to help with practical matters. She was angry at people that wanted to know, over and over again what happened - people that she thought wanted to get on the bandwagon of the event - perhaps a kind of morbid curiosity from other branch staff. Perhaps, she thought, this is their own way of making their own file - getting as much survival information as they could - "perhaps without being aware they are even doing this - getting information to fall back on if ever they have the need" [1235-1239].

Following the robbery the group support of the debriefing was of value to Catherine in reassuring that her feelings were valid.

The respondent notes that "time" takes on a curious property during a robbery event: "It makes you wonder about time. You know like time goes by, it seems it can go so fast, but in a split second or in a few seconds it seems like you can fit so much in" [4B/228-231]. "It's like we can stop it, slow it down, you know our thought processes. We're on a different time" [4B/237-240]. "You're not even there. It's like you're in a different plane altogether. You're day to day goes along...but when something like that happens, it's like all of a sudden you've been put somewhere else and things move at a different pace. And things take on a different perspective" 4B/247-253]. "Time slows down. You don't have this feeling of weight or anything. You're separated from your
She felt good that she was a calm influence during and after the robbery. She felt
good that she could act well — rely on her “file” of stored bits and pieces, exercise sound
judgment, and remain calm. She felt she made the best judgment she could in staying
with the cash teller during the robbery. Catherine realized that if something happened to
her tomorrow her life is in order. She knows these events continue to be a part of her
profession. She came away from this violent event strengthened in her belief in herself;
in her ability to demonstrate leadership, support and direction for staff. She experienced
increased feelings of self-reliance [1279-1280].

George (R5)

The respondent’s robbery represented a violent breach of his right to work in a
safe environment while preserving his sense of self respect and dignity, his intact sense of
how he is perceived by others: these crucial elements were damaged by the intrusive
robbery event mediated by the momentary loss of personal control and dignity, and
leveraged by the imposition of a gun - which shattered the rules of conduct the respondent
expected to operate at work. Four key features converged to define the respondent’s
experience of his bank robbery event: (1) a conflict between duty and emotions:
complying with the robbery request in order to preserve everyone’s safety [328] versus
struggling to tame emotions to defeat the robber in his attempt; (2) attempts at redemption
at the violation; (3) the impact of management’s response to the respondent following the
robbery [561-563] and, (4) feelings of shame/humiliation/discreditation mainly related to 
the court appearance and, to a lesser extent - related to the robbery event itself.

The respondent initially experienced the onset of the robbery with surprise,
disbelief [26; 33; 35; 60]. He slowly realized it was a robbery and forced himself to 
comply while resisting an urge to defeat the robber in his attempt. The respondent 
carefully handed over several hundred dollars while intentionally withholding the marked 
bundle (two hundred and fifty dollars) used for police evidence. He defied the robber’s 
command to keep his eyes down, averted. He continued to look at the robber anyway 
wanting partly to defy him and partly in anticipation of being able to provide a thorough 
description after. At this point he had determined the robber probably represented a 
minimal threat and could be pushed a little. The possibility of the robber having a gun, 
along with possible harm to others combined to hold him within the attitude of 
compliance. In a disillusioning moment the respondent was aware during the robbery that 
none of the other staff around him seemed even remotely aware that the robbery was 
taking place [285-294]. He was both angry and disappointed at this and felt that - if the 
situation were reversed he would likely be more vigilant - he would "do a better job of 
covering their backs." As the robbery approached completion the robber left the branch 
and the respondent hesitated a moment to allow the robber time to clear the premises. He 
quickly followed out onto the street and made a quick, hectic search but the robber had 
disappeared. As his initial highly-charged physical and emotional feelings subsided a little 
the respondent returned to the branch feeling a small sense of redemption that he had
handled the robbery in a way that preserved staff and customer safety and that he had at least not given the robber the marked money - which the respondent felt sure the robber would spend long before the police found him. The respondent felt he had missed the much more satisfying sense of redemption [329-330; 449-450] that would have followed either capturing the robber on the street or at least getting the license plate of the get-away vehicle.

Arriving back in the branch a few minutes after the search the respondent was met with a blizzard of requests to balance his cash, talk with a police officer over the phone regarding a detailed description, and prepare to open back up to business as usual. He was aware of just wanting a few minutes to himself and wanting to get some indication of support, validation from management. He experienced a deep sense of disappointment as this did not occur [561-563]. As he knew he would be, he was censured by police for not giving the robber the marked bills. For him, this represented a small act of defiance against the robber violating his right to work - with the threat of violence. Maintaining his gaze at the robber against the robber’s request represented a similar feature of his responding: two small protests against the insult while not increasing the level of protest so high as to tip the balance of safety. Management seemed more concerned with the revenue loss - and other business matters, than with how he was feeling.

After the prescribed post-robbery police and bank requirements the respondent returned to his duties for the remainder of the working day. He felt disappointed his efforts to both protect and serve seemed largely not understood, appreciated, or
acknowledged by any of the management team [597-598]. It took a while for one of the management staff to ask him how he was doing: this represented the singular initiative on the part of management personnel to provide direct support and ask him how he was - what he needed. The end of the working day left him with a mix of articulated and unarticulated thoughts and feelings: "Why did the robber come to my wicket"? [901-902] "Did I acquit myself well in how I handled the situation"? "Was I able to redeem the situation in any particular way? What to make of management's seemingly cool response? How will I now be perceived by both staff and customer’s"? [262-318]. With the adrenaline and excitement of the day still flowing these vague thoughts and feelings were experienced, felt, sensed as more preconscious, roughly sketched, they did not shift to more conscious clarity until a later time.

About two months after the robbery the respondent was called to attend at court regarding the robbery. He reviewed his photo line-up choice and degree of certainty, and his testimony - with the Crown prosecutor one week prior to the court case. He felt unshaken in his absolute certainty in his identification of the robber. His experience of the court process constituted not only a shattering of his idea of justice but left him feeling like the "bad guy." He came away from his day in court feeling humiliated, embarrassed, "discredited." The defense lawyer drew the respondent into making a statement of his certainty that all the pictures in the photo line-up contained men who wore glasses - including the accused. This turned out to be incorrect. The result was a serious weakening of the expected force of the respondent's testimony: the question of absolute
certainty of identification being the key point in a robbery trial. He remembers feeling discredited on the witness stand and embarrassed when he saw the look on the Crown prosecutor's face - which the respondent took to reflect her disapproval, disappointment, perhaps being let down. He states: "It's not fair. It's not right. You feel you've become the culprit, like the person that did the crime...you're being interrogated and questioned" [1015-1026].

He never heard from the Crown again about the trial outcome and - to the present time, does not know the outcome. In this sense the respondent felt he left the court "devastated." He learned what he refers to as the "supermarket" nature of the court system: criminals in and out in a revolving-door fashion. He became more aware of the vast numbers of bank robbery events and, therefore, the large numbers of robbed staff. The respondent found some comfort in the understanding others with a similar experience were able to demonstrate. He came to value the relationship between himself and those with similar robbery experiences [1157-1158]. He experienced this as both healing and capable of providing new victim's with direct relevant, support and empathy which, through demonstrated care and compassion - could tend to lessen suffering through the experience of a shared ordeal with a caring person who has had the experience [5B/431-432]. The respondent's own robbery represented a violent breach of his right to work in a safe environment and maintain his sense of self respect and dignity, his intact sense of how he was perceived by others [5B/914-919]: these crucial elements were damaged by the intrusive robbery event mediated by the momentary loss of personal control and
dignity, and heightened by the imposition of a gun - which shattered the rules of conduct the respondent expected to operate at work. The situation was made worse by his belief that robbers are drug addicts, therefore to some extent, even less worthy of sympathy, concern. It adds insult to injury to not only be robbed under the threat of violence, but to have the crime purpose be one of purchasing - and maintaining drug usage.

He occasionally still experiences moments of having the sense that the robber may still be out there - watching, waiting for him to approach his car alone, late at night. He had one dream in which the robber was going to shoot him [783-791]. The humiliation in court brought back feelings of helplessness, self-doubt, perhaps a lowered sense of self-worth [1089-1094] - as he had hoped the court case would provide a way to redeem the situation by giving decisive, powerful evidence with which a conviction would be clinched.

His fantasy was that he would be seen to be heroic in the eyes of other staff and his largely professional customer base (consisting mostly of doctors): "I would rather have it where I would look like the hero" [1063-1083]. The court experience left the respondent feeling deflated. He overcame his painful sense of possibly being perceived as not having performed up to par partly by talking with other’s who had similar experiences, by the passage of time, and possibly by shifting environments - by eventually moving on to a different financial institution.

A key factor in the healing involved a different robbery which took place at the same branch. In that robbery the respondent was robbed by a woman who left the branch
as the respondent signalled a work colleague to follow her out of the branch and, this time, the license plate [449-450] of the escape vehicle was secured. She was apprehended shortly after that by police. That provided the respondent with a more full measure of "redemption" and, perhaps, lessened the sting of the first robbery.

Lasting effects that the respondent was aware of included startling easily if anyone puts a piece of paper in front of him (representing the hold-up note from the original experience). He reported what amounts to the entrainment of autonomic nervous system functioning: being very immediately responsive - gets a burst of adrenaline: physically and emotionally switched-on, gets "hot," sharpened senses, whenever this happens. Whenever someone does put a slip of paper in front of him "it comes right back, and I don't think, for the life of me, I will ever lose that" [955-959]. The possibility that the robber may still be out there - possibly with retributive motives, still occurs to him occasionally [783-744]. The lack of closure - of not knowing outcome, prevents him from completely closing the chapter on the robbery experience. In a philosophical vein the respondent states that if another robbery occurred he would just want to go through the procedure and get on with things. He would not want to re-experience the feelings of helplessness, violation, or especially - the prospect of re-experiencing the tension between compliance with the robbery demands and the maintenance and preservation of one's integrity and self-worth, including facing the perceptions of others: attempting to strike the balance between compliance with the robbery request, fighting the feelings of having his right to work disrespected/violated, and finding some redemption out of the upheaval.
The respondent's existing pre-robbery stock of knowledge - experience in dealing with the robbery-problem-context, was not sufficient to master the emergence of intense disappointment, public embarrassment, humiliation, and sense of lessened self-worth that coalesced following the robbery and court appearance. The new problem-context required a new type of responding which was partially achieved through sensing his own increasing discomfort, talking with others with similar experiences; learning to accept and appreciate - to establish a relationship of empathy - with others who have had similar experiences; learning to accept and value their understanding. The respondent directly voiced his disappointment with the management response [597-598; 732-744; 1015-1026; 5B/948-949]. Some new learning may have occurred as he had to face the occasional question about the event from his bank customers, whose opinion he cared about.

Through these painful experiences the respondent was able to contend with the crisis and add to his pre-robbery level of inner organization and emerge from the experience more fully aware of deeper aspects of his own feelings, needs, sense of self. It is not something, however, that has left him: "I've moved past it, but I don't think I've ever closed it" [1201]. The degree of importance he placed on others' opinion of him came into sharper relief through the failure to be "heroic" in court. The court appearance also increased his stock of knowledge on the judicial process and the frequency of robbery events and its subsequent impact on financial institution robbed staff: whereas these points represent faint, dull pre-robbery awareness they are made to stand out much more in relief post-robbery - much more fully articulated in conscious awareness. This aspect
of the experience became integrated through the passage of time, and with the process of
cycling back-and-forth between feeling disappointed, humbled at times, and - at other
times understood, valued by key people particularly others who he felt truly understood
the experience and were willing to discuss it with him [1157-1158]. The respondent's own
ability to be more sensitive towards other robbed staff needs - though high pre-robbery,
plays an additional role in his post-robbery experience as he had the opportunity to
demonstrate his support, empathy towards other staff who experienced their own robbery
upheaval [5B/313-316]. This event - where it seems to have fostered some growth
through painful learning/experiencing - this type of robbery event is not something the
respondent "would wish upon anybody" [1315].

In concluding, the respondent notes emphatically: "Someone violates your space
and violates you and then from there, there's always something to trigger it back, as long
as I'm in that environment...It's always going to be there...I have to completely decide to
get away from this profession if I want to rid myself 100% of that" [5B/929-949].

Jenny (R6)

This take-over robbery event is characterized by three main features. First, the
confusing, disorienting initial awareness of a "commotion" which Jenny initially attributed
to an irate member. Second, the immediate, deep, and lasting sense of loss of control -
brought about by at least two related dynamics: (a) the robber repeatedly brandishing and
menacingly displaying the gun threateningly - then concealing it - only to bring it out
again, (b) the escalation and de-escalation cycles of the robber's agitation levels punctuated and animated by physical and verbal hostility. Third, the unresolved sub-plot of the second cash-drawer which was locked and which the robber demanded be opened and emptied on two dramatic, separate occasions throughout this one-minute event. The final demand - at the end of the robbery, was left un-finished as he was summoned to leave by his accomplice. The question of what would have happened if the robber had not been called to leave remains uncertain for Jenny to this day - over one-year later.

A theme which flows from and extends beyond the robbery event is the type and kind of robbery: the feel, shape - physiognomy, of the robbery itself. She discussed one type based on the obliteration, total disregard of the spatial boundaries of the robbery. This amounts to the violation of the counter-boundaries that separate staff from non-staff. It also includes the robber's sense of entitlement - to just burst into the scene: violent, unauthorized familiarity: "with a criminal act, there's a presumption of some rule following behaviour" [6B/110-111]. She compared this type of event with a more recent one (which occurred in her absence) in which - though still a take-over type - the robber "respected" the physical boundaries and presented a more accommodating style, demeanour - towards staff. The sub-text in Jenny's comparison was that where her role as manager was violently shattered, where sense of control was - not relinquished - but removed - wrenched away, the effects can be considerably more severe, particularly the enduring disruption to her sense of safety and security: "And I do think if...had been more conventional, the guy standing on the right side of the counter...my suspicion is that
I wouldn’t have felt as threatened outside the credit union" [6B/1040-1044]…"Because there seemed to be no rules, it was 'no holds barred', that’s what I was taking outside with me’ [6B/1050-1052].

Two dramatic moments illustrate the core features of the robbery event for Jenny: "Well, I think um the moment when I realized that it was a robbery. Part of what I also realized was that this guy had control over the branch and the second part would be … around when he um, was getting upset that he couldn’t get the second cash. So, got the traveller’s cheques and then he was still wanting to go for the second cash. And then time got called. I mean it - 'cause it was - it was definitely escalating. It was getting to a point that I was getting quite nervous about whether we were gonna be able to - keep this one under control, when it ended” [839-849]. For her the most disturbing aspect was the loss of control - and accompanying stark vulnerability to the situation by the intrusion and imposition of a weapon to take hostage her right - and others’ - to safety in the workplace as well as her respect, dignity, and security: "The most upsetting part of it, is the complete loss of control, like, over and over that would come to me, you know, if somebody had a gun, like, doesn’t matter what I’m doing, they get to take over. And how come there isn’t someone here now, like, what’s to protect me from that"? [648-653].

The disjunction created by Jenny wanting on one hand to de-escalate the robber’s agitation, ensure she followed his instructions to the letter - let him know he was in charge and - on the other hand, having to deny him what he seemed to want most - the
second cash-drawer - created a vivid and highly charged sub-text underlying the entire event. This persistent, stubborn aspect of the robbery had sufficient form and force to defeat all efforts for containment through the passage of time, through discussion, or through the application of reason or reassurance. It keeps spilling over into the present. It endures as an autonomous memory dredging questions about safety, security. As she said: "I didn't in any way resolve that final escalation. It just ended" [1594-1595]. "It" didn't end. Just the robbery ended. For a brief few seconds her life was intertwined with the robber's in a peculiar encounter based on responding, anticipating, providing, reassuring, fearing. The goal of this relationship was safe termination: "Um, probably times when I almost felt like I was one-on-one with this guy. It's like I'd have to almost physically summon up this reserve so that I could come back to him without appearing escalated. Because he was so escalated that I'm trying to calm him and in order to calm him I'm having to keep a tight hold on all of the escalation that I'm feeling, the physical reactions and so on. Because I certainly didn't want to escalate everything further" [1494-1502]. "...the effort that I had to be putting out to do it, was monumental..." [1485-1486].

If we move beyond listening to Jenny's words to a realm of interpretive hearing she seemed to be describing an exclusive 'one-on-one' encounter with a criminally dangerous, highly agitated man with a gun. This robber had targeted her specifically and thrust upon her the role of acting as his agent - at some point possibly his hostage, or object of fury. She had to reach far within herself to find the energy, will, resolve to
both still her own escalating inner turmoil and to try to calm his incendiary outbursts:

"Because of the agitation you couldn’t count on him to be rational. So he might just do something stupid because he’s agitated. So, really, wanting to keep him calm to make sure he knew we were complying" [6B/1152-1156]..."He kept saying 'safety’s off', then he’d say ‘safety’s on’ [6B/905-908]..."I didn’t get enough last time...don’t fuck me around’ "[6B/990-991].

Three 'situational values' may be described as Jenny struggled to contain her own - and the robber’s - escalation and as she attempted to move the event along towards its unknown conclusion: (1) exact compliance; (2) reassurance, explanation, repetition; (3) monumental, internal self-containment of her own escalating emotions. First, exact compliance with what the robber demanded. For example, when he could not gain access to the second cash he demanded Traveller's Cheques. Jenny bypassed the money orders to retrieve and give the robber exactly what he asked for: "I was trying to follow his instructions exactly" [112-113]. She expended an enormous amount of energy presenting and sustaining a persona of control. She realized this aspect of the robbery as she listened to herself tell the story: it’s not that she didn’t know or understand she strained to maintain her role - but more the realization at the amount it took out of her to keep the robber’s agitation levels within safe margins by both responding to his requests or repeating why she could not. The complexity of the task has the feel to it of someone trying to keep a container of high explosive stable on the deck of a pitching ship in a storm: "Definitely one piece of it is that like even myself listening to me describe it, a lot
of what I was doing was to still maintain as much of that control as I could, and the effort that I had to be putting out to do it, was monumental. So I know I was exhausted afterwards, just with that effort" [1482-1487].

The second initiative was using clear, simple explanation and repetition. Jenny communicated effectively with the robber - within the context of extreme tension. For example: "It’s (cash drawer) locked, we can’t get at it. We have no way of getting at it" [108-109]; "We don’t have anything else, we’ve given you everything" [983-984]. By reassuring him he had all the cash, that they were trying their best to comply, that this was a small credit union without a lot of staff and members - she created a kind of portrait - or landscape the robber would be faced with accepting or rejecting as event or 'situational reality.'

Third, by controlling her own escalation levels - with a "monumental" effort, she was able to present a more calm demeanour in contrast with his wildly fluctuating agitation levels. As the gun kept disappearing and reappearing she continued with these combination of behaviours which allowed her to establish a crude working alliance with the robber - though stormy, volatile - the relationship held by a thread up to the point of maximum tension: when he demanded the second cash after he had everything else she could give him - there was nothing left to give him. At this moment it was unclear as to how the tenuous relationship would have held together if the robber had not been called to leave by his clock-watching accomplice.

There are certain temporal aspects of interest for this event. The heightened sense
of uncertainty of the "final escalation" remains caught in time, against the passage of time - as a thing which has both duration and intensity. The grammar of trauma is not able to capture the pulse of this experience with words and phrases typically invoked to explain such things, such as: "the passage of time"; "it happened last year"; "you must have been scared, anxious"; "are there still some aftereffects"; "you survived," and so on. This language bears the mark of chronological time: to transcend - in the present - an injury inflicted - in the past. The assumption that time heals with proper support, and hard work from the robbed staff-person may not do justice to the experience of some aspects of this type of trauma. What happened during the event is, remains - raw. At times it enters into Jenny's consciousness and deeply disturbs, colours her sense of safety, security. At times it retreats - only to be reactivated - like a temperate virus - under certain conditions of stress. As a chronological event the robbery had a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a lived experience some aspects of the robbery simply ignore time's chronology and bear the distinct mark of something 'bundled' tightly together that seems enduring: feelings, thoughts from the robbery experienced in the present with alarming clarity, robustness - somewhat immune to Time's well advertised anesthetic effect for past hurt. In this sense to ask if the event is "healed" or "surpassed" by the victim is meaningless. The hallmark of experiences characterized by durational time is the lasting, enduring properties which become an indisoluble part of the organism - functioning within, yet separate from the unified sense of self. To ignore this is to sadly mis-hear the fullest understanding of the victim's experience, story.
Referring to the staying power of the experience the respondent notes that: "There is a long lasting effect after, that it still comes into the present as opposed to the past, um, like you can assume that time heals and you know, that there's some element of that but, but it's not that simple...It stays with you, it doesn't just go away" [6B/334-343].

Jenny's pre-robbery presuppositions about not giving a robber the money or getting angry during the robbery were not enacted. Instead, through a monumental effort - she made herself outwardly calm and deliberate, focussed and purposely compliant, with the primary focal points being the robber's gun, his agitation levels, and the running sub-plot about the locked second cash drawer which the robber was demanding - but was not going to be able to access. Escalation to increased violence, possible hostage-taking occurred to her as she attempted to convince the robber this cash drawer could not be opened. A question that animated her thoughts at the moment was: Where would he take it?

One sub-plot within the larger story - an aspect of this event that lingered until recently - was Jenny's recent realization that she spent the better part of one-year avoiding the routine activity (filing the paid bills) that she was engaged in at the moment of the onset of the robbery. This is not an uncommon experience for robbed staff and perhaps signals a potent, symbolic "gateway" directly, immediately back to the robbery experience - like being sucked into a vortex or being pulled by some unseen force through a knothole in a fence after a quick, unsuspecting peek. These represent startling, un-welcome rememberences. The task - filing paid bills - was a routine that she would put off without
really, consciously linking it with the robbery. It took a couple of times anxiously deferring the task before she realized what it was about it that she was avoiding [503-506]. Recently, she filed four months of bills with no apparent hesitation, distress. This is over one-year after the robbery. She thinks the task got a little easier each time she did it but this was the first time since the robbery she consciously did not think about connecting the filing of the bills with the robbery event [529-531]. This may represent a lessening, weakening of an associational link - a symbol signifying the threshold she crossed as she was thrust - with alarming speed, from never having experienced a bank robbery to being in her first robbery event.

In the several weeks following the robbery Jenny recalled talking a lot about the event. This usually brought about a physical churning that would start at a low level and increase in intensity as the discussion progressed. She recalled feeling a definite need to talk about the incident [1126-1127] - even though it would arouse upset feelings initially. She found helpful support from home - from her partner. Also, from getting away to her cabin - though the robbery event followed her to the wilderness in the form of bad dreams: "And in the cabin there, at night...the robbers burst in, and I thought 'even here?'" [622-624]. Group talks with people from the industry helped to review what was done well, what could be improved: these talks helped her increase the arsenal of responses to robbery intrusions. For Jenny the most disturbing aspect is the loss of control over the situation by the intrusion and imposition of using a weapon to take hostage her right to safety in the workplace as well as her respect, dignity, and security as
a person: "the most upsetting part of it, is the complete loss of control, like, over and over that would come to me, you know, if somebody had a gun, like, doesn’t matter what I’m doing, they get to take over. And how come there isn’t someone here now, like, what’s to protect me from that”? [648-653]. The realization for her was that if someone has a gun they can just do what they want. There is a helplessness accompanying this reality: not much protection in the face of this massive misuse of unauthorized force. It represents a "thin line" realization: we are all protected by a thin line based on volitional adherence of the rules of society by one and all. When someone steps beyond the line they can virtually take over the situation - through force, and hold all present unwillingly under their sway. It represents both an insult and a massive threat brought about by pressure and force. The solid support from home, from professionals and industry colleagues, from other staff does not reach far enough to touch, to remove - what the event - particularly the "final escalation" left her with. There is an unvarnished raw exposure, vulnerability - like a de-myelinated neuron - left in the wake of the assault, that can be said to be primarily organized around her sense of well-being, safety, and feelings of personal security. More recently the loss of her very protective dog has heightened feelings of exposure.

Throughout the process of her dog dying last May she came to the realization that the whole question of her personal safety is tenuous. Her sense of personal safety was lost when her dog was no longer near at hand. Extending this realization, she speculates that "...no matter what I’m doing, if somebody comes at me with a weapon, I have no
choice but to do whatever they want. Like, they have complete control over me if they have a weapon. And that was, like I hadn't really thought about that before" [570-574]. Starting with the robbery and amplified by the death, loss of her dog - questions of personal safety would arise frequently as she made her way through the day, through the community: walking through the park; being in a parking lot; walking down the street.

Taking into account the required measures for women's safety in today's world - her increased anxious feelings have been elevated much more in awareness, become much more present - more noticeable day-by-day. The loss of her dog seems not only the loss of a beloved creature but also the loss of the sense of protection, safety created by the dog on her behalf, and even the loss of routines required for caretaking an animal - which served to normalize life somewhat for her through stressful times following the several robberies of the past year. Exposure to the robbery June 6, 1995, the death of her dog nearly one year later, and the haunting question of what would have happened if the accomplice had not called time on the increasing tension regarding access to the second cash-drawer - the conjunction of these events has served to dis-unify Jenny's sense of well-being, safety, and to some extent - has left her equanimity enduringly disturbed. Jenny sometimes experienced a wave of anxiety [691] when walking down the street: "It would be really intense for a moment and then more or less dissipate" [712-713]. She continues to experience the realization that the state of mind of assumed safety is called up and questioned constantly. This may represent a particular difficulty as she described herself as typically not usually tending to focus on her own feelings: "...It's
not my strong point to really be in touch with, like if anxiety gets in the way of what I'm trying to do, I suppress it. Like I - I try to ignore those feelings, those pesky little feelings" [714-718]. These feelings have become more frequent, perhaps more intense - following the three robberies and the more recent loss of her dog.

Jenny's anxious feelings emerged more plainly from the initial robbery, were heightened and maintained by the two following robberies and - with the passage of time, the anxious feelings have dulled [740; 746], shifted somewhat. She made a distinction between her current anxiety as being more intellectual, cognitive at present as opposed to the anxiety being more physical, somatic following the robberies: "...It's almost just intellectually I'm feeling anxious as opposed to physically feeling it so much" [741-743]. The anxious feelings shift dynamically between emerging and submerging based on present stress levels: "...right after the robbery it would be exactly the same feeling as during the robbery, like the same intensity. Um, then over time it - like dulls, doesn't happen as often, that sort of - and then it all - I mean, it did get worse again by having two (robberies) in August that were - like less than two weeks apart. And there I was probably let off the hook a bit because a week of that week and a half between those two robberies I was actually out of the credit union" [743-752]; "...when the dog died, it came back very strongly again but didn't stay as long as the first time 'round" [754-756]. There was a wave-like course - an ebb and flow signature for this pattern of anxiety. Again, using the metaphor of a temperate virus the experience of her anxious feelings seemed to remain dormant for periods of time only to emerge - full force, under certain
conditions of stress, then subside once more.

When Jenny visited Nova Scotia and PEI the past summer she talked about how the geographic area "feels" less threatening, more secure [771-772]. During this time she was off work for three weeks. She reported feeling good: "...it was one of the most relaxing holidays I've had..." [777-778]. When she returned to work she felt "really relaxed" [809] - however, this feeling was "out the window" [812] by the second day back. Stressful events are part of a banker's life, but the question remains whether the initial robbery - and the chain of robberies following may not have robbed her of some of her resiliency, her ability to tolerate high and normal stress. In any event her relaxed feelings were quickly lost to the environment of the branch within two days of her return to work after three relatively peaceful weeks away.

Turning to Jenny's role during the robbery, one of the impacts of her feeling of loss of control seems related with her overall sense of responsibility in her role as manager: "I'm responsible for the overall, make sure things work smoothly, smooth work flow" [1419-1421]. She remembers feeling that she let staff down by "allowing this to happen. So certainly that was a part of control. I definitely was taking on the responsibility for the safety of the staff..." [1425-1427]. Even though staff - during a group meeting, confirmed they did not hold her responsible she still carried ambivalent feelings with her related to her responsibility to protect: "But afterwards, when I would be away I would think, oh what if it happens again when I'm not there, and I can't be this protection that of course if I stop and think about it, I know I'm not really" [1438-1441].
This example shows something of the failure of logic to turn away the tide of feelings welling up based on her values, sense of duty and responsibility - in this case in her role - her definition of herself as branch manager: "It wasn’t just me. Like I had to think about other people as well" [6B/198-199].

It is apparent this role to protect and lead required being in control of many aspects of branch life. The suddenness and magnitude of the event incursion plunged her into a kind of moral vacuum - where right and wrong seemed groundless as standards and where ideas like choice, responsibility for consequences, accountability - became bled of their meaning. The violation of the role brought about by the robbery shattered her control by removing her ability for both choice and responsibility for consequences: two requirements for the conduct of moral behaviour. She worried about making mistakes with her role and the responsibility that goes with it. She worries about doing the "right" thing. The tension comes about partly by her struggle with persisting to require herself to "be in charge" even in the face of a gun-wielding robber. In a sense she transformed her role during the robbery to being in charge of him being in charge - a strategy which was intended to control escalation levels and - in retrospect - purposeful in fostering a safe outcome [see 199-206; 213-215; 384-390; 1618-1626]. Again, there is a keenly felt interplay between the intellectual grasp of the issues and the deeper, painful consequences for making what she would refer to as mistakes: "...what if I make a mistake? If people see me make mistakes, there are things like that I know on an intellectual level it’s like well, you know, it’s not the end of the world. But of course deep down I know it would
be the end of the world" [1452-1458].

The whole question of the style and demeanour of the robbery and the robber was of interest for what Jenny noticed about the differential impact on role preservation, role loss, - therefore, sense of self afterwards, particularly sense of safety, security, and anxiety levels. Jenny compared her original robbery with one that took place recently - while she was away from the branch. She pointed to the robber's less intrusive, less invasive stance - he was on the lobby side of the counter for the entire event: "It seems that even though this guy wanted all the cash, you know it was still that kind of a branch takeover, as they say, you know, not just quietly going up to one teller and nobody else knows what's going on. He stood on his side of the counter the whole time, so he didn't invade our space. This other guy (first robbery: June 6, 1995) would come behind the counter, would be directing more of our movements, like I'm in charge here. And that seems to be a huge difference in how we've reacted to it" [1179-1187]. The invasion of space is a key point.

Invasion of space as a key point is linked with violating professional and social boundaries. In the original event the robber dominated by force - he trampled the staff roles and created much more of a stark life-and-death teeter-totter sensation - where the balance was maintained - not by the robber, but by her working to decrease his volatility levels. With the June 6th robbery as the point of departure for her (being her first robbery) the event was eclipsed by the robber's complete dominance of the event - including his location behind the staff side of the counter: "... there very much was the
feeling that this guy is the boss here, like he's running the show. Which is threatening" [1206-1207]; "He acted like he owned the place, right. He walks through the gate, you know, and just helping [himself]..." [1222-1223]. "Um, he came two more times. Each time he was doing that kind of thing, it was much more directive, and it wasn't until the one this summer where he [a different robber] didn't come across into that area and there wasn't that feeling that I thought, oh right this feeling is connected to the fact that this guy was in our space" [1208-1213].

The event that she was not present for helped her to realize that some of the impact may be due to the spatial characteristics of the different events. In the first series of three robberies the spatial relations were violated but so were the assumed, unspoken rules that separate staff from non-staff, with the symbols of division, differentiation represented by either the actual counter or an invitation to 'come around.' In the last robbery these boundaries were better preserved - even though it was a take-over type robbery being committed: the robber did not violate the spatial code of proper distance - of spatial location, boundaries - in the branch; he did not shatter the rules of conduct quite so much: he left the staff more of a sense of their role's being intact; of being in somewhat more of a position of control: "This other guy would come behind the counter, would be directing more of our movements like I'm in charge here. And that seems to be a huge difference in how we've reacted to it" [1184-1187]; "It just more had to do with his, it's like his familiarity not in the sense that he knew his way around, but a familiarity he wasn't entitled to...Acting like he belonged there" [1258-1262]. The
Unauthorized "entitlement" is another key factor in the impact and "feel" of the event for her. What seemed lost was Jenny's control over the custom of inviting others "in"; what got violated was the belief that others should adhere to these norms. A robbery event happens too quickly to allow time for anyone to "suspend" their normal beliefs about expected conduct: the normal beliefs about such things were just transported - whole, into the robbery event. The shattering of these normal beliefs forms a part of the upheaval for the respondent.

Jenny linked the invasive intrusion into her work space directly with loss of control and increased threat levels: "And that is threatening to me particularly, feeling like I'm not in charge and that's the part that got carried forward for me particularly for me, later" [1271-1274]. Again, regarding the comparison to the recent robbery where the robber did not violate the spatial barriers: "So it's almost like in the one this summer, even though it was still a robbery and I understand there was a gun, there were some rules that people were following, and so this guy (June 6, 1995) wasn't even following the rules he was supposed to be following! In a sense, you know...I hadn't really thought about it that way" [1285-1298]. It matters whether the take-over does or does not contain its own internal rules of conduct, its own level of integrity. The degree of "entitlement" the robber demonstrates matters. The difference amounts to both anxiety levels during the event and how much heightened sensitivity to post-event sense of safety, security, vulnerability: evidently, if the robber respects some rules the staff have more of their role preserved which may leave more of the personal and professional role (sense of self)
intact: this curious "respect" of the staff being robbed may allow for the critical element of volitional versus non-volitional participation by staff and thereby contribute to the preservation of self-respect, dignity, sense of control. Within the criminal act an alliance is struck which allows for both the safe completion of the crime and the preservation of self-worth, dignity for staff. Losses therefore, may stay more closely linked to paper: currency, traveller’s cheques, securities.

There are important difference between the two experiences. One is ruleless and one has a loose, more conventional structure. The structure of the recent case is formed by the robber demonstrating some considerate behaviour towards staff, maintaining, preserving some of the physical boundaries, clear two-way communications, and what appears as a type of shared goals: he was not menacing staff with threats of death or harm. The robber was in the lobby - that’s where people who are not employees are supposed to be. The first robbery was based on domination by physically taking over - collapsing the physical barriers that help differentiate (therefore define) staff from non-staff. His behaviour was highly animated: jumping around, waving the gun around then concealing it. He used continual threat of violence, heightening and lessening of agitation levels. The second example reveals a very different structure based more on the robber keeping his distance, reassuring staff, more mutuality and clear, calm communications.

There is, perhaps - something even resembling a situational trust bond, and a certain degree of robber-accomplice confusion with somewhat comic overtones in retrospect: these last robber’s were more sympathetic. Jenny commented on this aspect of the
robbery and even showed how the distance might even lessen the impact of the presence of a pointed gun: "Right, and you still have this counter between you which is some barrier you know, it doesn’t matter that the gun was pointed over the top of it" [1307-1309]. She qualified her point and stated: "I’m coming at this a little bit second hand" [1322-1333]. Nonetheless, it suggests a much more tangible sense of experienced control, role preservation for robberies where some rules of conduct are implicit: "It feels to me like it’s one thing in a robbery for somebody to say you know, you’re a financial institution, I’m a bank robber. What we do is, I come in, you hand the money, I go. As opposed to, I think the feeling is that I felt more personally threatened, and the other staff has said that, that they felt more personally threatened by this person coming behind the counter, than they did by the one who stayed on the side. Beautifully in camera range, now that we have cameras" [1323-1332]. "I wasn’t there during it, but I realized I was reacting this way to the most recent one [that the robber remaining on the lobby side preserved the staff roles, lessened event and post-event anxiety, and contributed to more of a sense of being in control]. So I thought maybe I should check this out, because I wasn’t there. And I have asked, and I’ve gotten the same reaction, so I do feel like I have to qualify that I’m coming at this a little bit second hand " [1317-1323]; "Well I don’t exactly know what I’m picking up on in even saying what was in the atmosphere, but what I think it is that people weren’t as threatened by it. Weren’t as anxious after. They were calmer. Which is what I picked up on when I came in" [1402-1406]; "The atmosphere didn’t feel as charged as after the first three" [1394-1395]. The robber
demeanour also makes a difference: "And one of the tellers had just come back from lunch, and didn’t have her keys out, and was fumbling to get her keys, and he [the robber] was being reassuring. You know, 'don’t worry, you can do it.’ As opposed to him getting himself heightened and more aggressive in his actions as a result of it. Whereas the guy that I keep seeing in my mind (June 6th robbery) definitely was aggressive in his actions, in how he moved, and in his voice" [1348-1356]; "There was such aggression in this guy" [1368-1369]. The shattering, breaching of spatial barrier’s (counters), the imposed, compressed physical and psychological closeness - along with the heightening of robber agitation and increased physical and verbal aggressivity, these aspects combine and smash staff sensibilities with the penetrating energy of a disease capable of producing long-standing weakening of sense of safety, security, and feelings of well-being. This type of event far surpasses mere loss of currency. It far surpasses a violation of coded laws. It far surpasses a disruption to the normal business of the financial institution.

The respondent linked the shattering of spatial boundaries during her initial robbery, and compared it with the "rule following" second robbery. She concludes there was a difference in post-event sense of safety: "And I do think if [the initial robbery]...had been more conventional, the guy standing on the right side of the counter...my suspicion is that I wouldn’t have felt as threatened outside the credit union" [6B/1040-1044]..."Because there seemed to be no rules, it was 'no holds barred', that’s what I was taking outside with me’ [6B/1050-1052].
Jenny wondered out loud about the final moments of the robbery, the final escalation which was resolved by the accomplice calling time just as the robber was pushing hard for the second-cash drawer - which was locked (and the person with the key was at lunch): "I mean I wonder just in talking about it now...if...I never...I didn’t in any way resolve that final escalation. It just ended. So I wonder if that has a residual effect. Like for some of the time I’m okay, you know, I was able to bring this one under control, but that one I wasn’t, it ended. I don’t know-" [1593-1598]. She could bring "some of it under control..." she could meet his requests or substitute or divert by brief explanation - but there was always something else he could ask for - or she could give him. But the "final escalation" provided no further improvisational possibilities: he had everything - except the second-cash drawer contents. The "ending" has a haunting quality and with the full flush of the adrenaline at the moment could represent an encoded physical, mental, emotional state "finished" only by the intervention of the accomplice. In her words: "I mean it hadn’t occurred to me before, but as you go through it [1604-1605]...Well, the times before he came up with another request, like I didn’t say, "Why don’t you take the traveller’s cheques instead?" So it’s...pretty much I would just respond to him, so I guess it would depend on where he would take it. What I was saying was trying to give him as much information about what was happening, you know, we’ll give you whatever we can give you. I don’t remember exactly what words I had, but you know, we’re not trying to play games here. We want to comply with what you want. We cannot get another cash. Everything’s locked. And to some extent I think he
believed us" [1616-1626]. Attempts at explaining that this was a small credit union, without many teller's on duty, with few members seemed to be accepted by the robber. This perhaps established a relationship of necessity that seemed at least plausible to him. The relationship with Jenny and with the changing tides of this event may be summarized briefly.

The robber had some of his requests met, there had been some very tenuous, begrudging acceptance on his part, some adjustments on his part. Though always tenuous the tension held together through the crisis peaks perhaps by Jenny's conduct which - under enormous pressure - she presented as calm exterior, provided verbal, simple, reassurance about relevant facts, and was clearly complying with demands or stating clearly, non-threateningly, why she could not. At the moment of maximum tension - his final demand for the second-cash - he was called off by his accomplice.

Thus, emblematic of this event was a series of highly charged demand-comply (or modify)-demand cycles leaving her always uncertain of the robber's stability, and culminating by her reaching the end of her diversionary measures with the gunman in a highly agitated state demanding - for the second time - the un-opened cash-drawer. At the moment of maximum tension the robber was called off by the accomplice and fled. The relationship was one forged in the crucible of highly-charged, extremely dangerous necessity - fuelled by her sense of responsibility, monumental effort to master her own escalating feelings, duty to provide for, and protect staff. The relation with the robber entailed very little in the way of choice for Jenny because the robber took away the
element of choice when he exploded onto the scene and shattered the normal staff roles.
The robber responded - never gracefully, but aggressively, in hostile tones. His limits of escalation were - to some extent - kept from igniting by the constant one-on-one interplay with Jenny anchoring the situation and trying to take charge of the robber's rampage by dampening, quelling his combustibility. At the end Jenny was left with an immediate sense of relief which eventually became consumed by a much longer-lasting, slower-moving, autonomously defined 'bundle' of thoughts and feelings propelled by the "What-if's," the "What-now's."

Upon reflection, to some extent the situation may have seemed slightly less terrifying by the respondent's hunch that the robber may have believed she was telling him the truth about the locked second cash drawer: "To some extent I think he believed us...I think if he really didn't believe us he might have reacted differently" [1626-1635]. This may be small consolation, but does bring out the element of the relationship between the robber and the staff.

Of the duration of after effects from the robbery she noted simply that: "There is a long lasting effect after, that it still comes into the present as opposed to the past, um, like you can assume that time heals and you know, that there's some element of that but, but its not that simple, it stays with you, it doesn't just go away" [6B/334-343].

Joe (7R)

Two robberies that occurred three weeks apart over one-year ago, were reviewed
in detail. Emblematic of the first robbery were two core features. First, the respondent struggled to work out what his role should be during the robbery (there is a related theme here of his diminished sense of self regarding his "wimpy" behaviour - that went passed the robbery event and - to some extent, still lingers). Second, how he should handle the Head Office criticisms following the robbery. The central issue of the first robbery event was based on being torn by the impossible demands of the dilemma: caught in his office Joe’s urge was to be with his staff - who he could hear being intimidated, abused, threatened by the robbers. If he left his office two opposing, potentially life-jeopardizing consequences would need to be confronted: (a) he could escalate the violence level of the robbery by barging into it from the perimeter; (b) he would need to abandon the four staff hiding in his office in order to be there for the staff out in the lobby. Joe’s compromise to the dilemma - to stay seated and present himself as the primary target if the robbers burst into his office - which provided protection for the staff in his office - not only "tore" at him but was singularly not understood (he believes to this day) by anyone. What for him was the best brave act he could think of in the heat of the moment remained within himself, private. The result was a diminished sense of self - his "male ego" based on feeling impotent, torn, helpless and - post-robbery; not finding a way to engage an understanding person, listener - someone that might listen sympathetically to his experience of his moment of "hell" as he listened to his staff being violated by this criminally dangerous, life-threatening take-over robbery.

Joe’s decision to stay in his office - based on his description of what the
conditions were - seemed clearly to have more than a little merit. But the merit of his actions seemed not to be the main point. If it was just the logic of the decision its weight would likely not still be felt by him at the present time. It seemed more likely that the burden remained enlivened by the systematic failure of anyone to understand what he went through in formulating and living the decision in those moments of "hell." To some extent the "empathic failure" - the lack of finding someone who could understand his dilemma - is what gave the experience its duration. Though time has passed and some aspects of the event have attained "closure" - this part has not.

The robbery onset was marked by profound surprise and disbelief as he attempted to grasp the magnitude of what was occurring. The robbery event took about 60-90 seconds maximum. Time seemed to stand still: "it seems like an eternity...everything goes into slow motion" [127-128]. The main theme of the robbery event had its point of origin at that moment. He was "torn" - ripped to pieces as several opposing courses of action vied for attention. Leaving his office to assist, support branch staff would necessitate abandoning the four supervisors presently in his office. Staying put would protect the staff in his office but he would be abandoning staff he could clearly hear being held hostage by the "very loud and very aggressive"[76] robbers. He could hear them saying "Move or I'll blow your f-ing head off" [74]. If he did present himself, introduce himself into the event-in-progress, he was tremendously concerned with what effect that might have: if the robbers didn't know he was there they would see this "big...galoot charging out of his office" [534-535]. Reflecting upon his thoughts at the time about
escalating things Joe stated: "...the trigger goes once, chances are it's gonna go again" [594-595]. The imagination shifted from an image of a violent take-over beginning and ending - safely - to the escalated image of mass gunshot victim's strewn about the bank floor on the teller's side of the counter. It's not hard to appreciate his dilemma as it must have been in the heat of the moment.

An essential aspect was the evolution of a three-part dilemma which originated at the onset of the first robbery as he was meeting in his small office with four female supervisors: (a) realizing this was a violent take-over type armed robbery Joe struggled with what his role should be - to stay put or go out to the lobby to be present with his staff; (b) his internal struggle to force himself to stay put in the interest of not escalating the robbery violence to a potential shooting incident; (c) his decision to sit with his hands exposed on the desk to ensure that - if the robber's burst into his office he would present a non-threatening impression and would be first in the line of fire [111-112] to "take the hit" [131] if shots were fired. If he went out to try to be of some protection of the staff under siege he might inadvertently escalate the already explosive event in-progress. If he left his office he would be abandoning the four supervisors who were pressed against the wall seeking some distance, safety from the event. If he did nothing he would feel cowardly [101], humiliated - at "letting staff down." The "compromise" [107] was to sit still, face the door, and face the music - as the first target the robber's would confront - if they burst into his office.

In the post-robbery environment several Head Office staff visited the branch and
- to his astonishment - levelled a barrage of criticism at the "mistakes" the branch made. This left Joe with a sense that the robbery was somehow their fault that they "deserved to be robbed" [986]. The divisiveness of the Head Office intrusion culminated in staff feeling pitted against a "common enemy" [1155]. He pointed to the positive aspects of this situation as it did have the effect of unifying staff. But the "unification" may have been costly - and traumatic, as the "common enemy" does represent senior corporate staff - their bosses. This core theme did not represent a sub-plot to the violence of the armed robbery but more a separate but parallel theme, which in some ways - represented an equally intense - second order traumatization, a "second injury."

When Joe saw the robbers run by his office window as they escaped in the direction of the parking lot he ran out into the branch lobby, went to the front door to note the exit path of the robbers, and there confronted the initial robbery victim: "...he was kind of a scruffy guy, I remember that, and he um - he was - the poor bugger, he was walking out the door and these guys as they came in they had umbrellas, and inside the umbrellas were their guns and as they came in the door they pulled their guns out of the umbrella and put the gun to this guy's head and told him not to go outside. Made him lie down on the floor" [167-175]. "...he was trying to leave when I came out. And I spent the whole time, you know, closing the branch up and getting everyone to lock it up, phone 911, phone administration up..." [175-178]. Joe had to keep this victim in the branch - against the victim's will - until police arrived. This massive shift from the strategic inaction of enclosure within his office to the whirlwind activity immediately
post-robbery - with an elapsed time of just a minute or two separating both levels of activity, seemed to represent a return of the full-fledged 'manager role,' but not a sense of "redemption" of the diminished sense of self born of the necessity to stay, helpless - in his office while listening to his staff being assailed in a life-an-death drama. At this time Joe took charge of the post-robbery corporate requirements of the crime scene. He divided his attention between being concerned about his staff, finding out what happened, detaining the reluctant member, organizing, mobilizing the post-robbery procedures, requirements - and, for the moment - putting aside the unbelievable experience of being able to do nothing to assist his staff during the robbery. The main point was that while the robbery termination gave Joe back his role of 'manager-in-charge' - it in no way mitigated or regenerated his diminished sense of self brought about by his requirement to invert his usual way of being - typical self - and shroud himself in the awkward, unfamiliar garb of inaction, uncertainty, confusion, monumental helplessness. This culminated in the "compromise" decision to present himself as the "target."

His tormented, deliberate action - staying put and presenting a non-antagonistic, escalation-reducing presence - represented the courageous thing ("I will be the brave guy in this office..." [107-108]). That this 'brave' stance was so little understood, acknowledged, appreciated by the Head Office staff - to some extent by branch staff, would remain a particular source of discontent for Joe, up to the present time: "...to me [that] was the most memorable [part] about the robbery was just sitting there and feeling so bloody helpless [134] while my staff was out there on front lines, you know, being
abused and intimidated and threatened and you know, in a life-threatening situation -
while I'm looking at the four ladies pressed against my wall in my office" [132-138].
Continuing to wrestle with this dilemma of staying in his office and the particular anguish
of not feeling that anyone understood his actions Joe restated the point: 
"...if they, if someone goes out and scares them [robbers] and they do something they're not gonna just stop at that' [597-600]; "I didn’t want someone to start shooting because you know they don’t just, the trigger goes once, chances are it’s gonna go again [593-595]. So I, that did go through my mind but the brave act that I felt I did - and no one understands this, that I did sit right at my desk and stared right at the door and if they came in they’d get me and nobody else" [598-604]. The 'nobody else' was the four staff he made himself the target for. This represents a singularly isolating aspect of the drama. Torn by the dilemma of what would be the best action he forced himself to stay in the office. Over one-year later Joe summed the point up as he stated: "I was mad that I was impotent..." [1147]; "I still think of it as wimpy..." [788-789]..."But they don’t know, how — how tough that was" [779-782]. He stated that the decision to wait in the office "tore" at him. He does not say "pulled" or "tugged" or "gripped"; not "chewed at" - but "tore": 'torn' - to tear - to pull forcibly apart or away or to pieces. By this he may mean at least two things: (a) not being there to be with - to protect his staff and, (b) the subsequent feeling of masculine diminishment, perhaps humiliation - at "hiding" [516] in his office - as he describes it. "Well, it just goes back to what I said originally, you know, not going out there and being in the, in the fray if you will, I mean I — if there was no one in my
office I would have been out of there in a shot [532-533]. Unfortunately what would that have done if they see this big... galoot charging out of his office, I mean who knows what would have happened, I mean you only know if, if it does [536], but — but the worst part was just sitting there, for that, you know, half a minute I guess... by the time I sat down at my desk and it was going on, and just listening to it all and just not doing anything, that just — it — it — it tore at me. It really, really tore at me" [537-541].

"...no one understands this" [601-602]. Where staying in his office marks a tormenting decision one wonders at how the outcome might have gone if he *had* barged out into the "fray" during those compressed, incendiary few seconds that the robbery was in-progress.

The post-event environment was exacerbated by the arrival of Head Office staff who were perceived by Joe to have inflamed the atmosphere even more by condescension, judgment, blame, criticism. This contributed to further damage to staff sense of respect, loss of dignity, following the violent take-over drama of a few minutes earlier. The robbery violated the framework of ordinary respect for life, integrity, well-being that most people hold implicitly. The Head Office comments seemed to trample the staffs' already shattered sense of moral rights into the dust even further. There seemed to have been a near complete empathic failure fuelled by whispered criticism, by focussing on what went wrong: "...they lost perspective of what the staff had gone through [255-256]. They were thinking more about the, you know, 'whys' - you know, certain things were - they were very ... ah, I guess accusatory, you know, like - it was like it was our fault [259]. Which really got me riled, I have to admit" [255-260]. It would be difficult to pick out one
strand of these complex cross-currents to cite as "most" prominent. The robbery left Joe with a deep sense of being "torn" - that staff had to suffer at the hands of violent criminals - without him. He further struggled with the chilling uncertainty of not being sure if the robbers would burst through his door. Then what? The event held captive Joe's "protector" role as manager and rudely dispelled the misconception that choice is purely an internal matter, immune to circumstance and chance.

In the post-robbery atmosphere in the branch, Joe was busy detaining the member-hostage, attending to the multiple requirements of the aftermath - then "getting his head out of the clouds" [239-240] and turning his attention more fully to corporate and staff requirements. At this point the H.O. staff arrive and: "...Instead of anything that's gone right, we started deflecting things - I all of a sudden decided I'd better wade into this battle" [367-368]. In beginning to fend off the criticisms he took the stance that where he made a tough decision not to be with the staff during the robbery - he could - and would - insulate the staff from Head Office barbs: "I guess this is the way now - where, OK, I couldn't protect my staff during the robbery, I don't know what I thought, but I - all of a sudden now I was having to protect them against the Head Office [370-371]- type - barbs that were coming out, and I started getting - um, emotional, I guess, is a good word...and they thought it was because I was so freaked out over the robbery still, but they didn't understand, I was getting mad at them" [372-376]. On deeper reflection Joe recalled feelings of anger, frustration, disbelief at their insensitivity. He felt a requirement to be careful what he said to the H.O. staff. Another dilemma presented itself having
everything to do with feeling he needed to worry about protecting his job, his image in
the eyes of his employer. Certainly distrust was part of his experience as he wrestled
with how directly to ward off the H.O. barbs. He still does not think they have any idea
how much the staff were upset by their conduct, behaviour. Finally, as his powers of
professional tact diminished - he confronted the visitors: "Well, I was beyond being
diplomatic [465]. And I um, I'm not a — a quiet person by nature anyway. And, uh...
and I can be emotional and I have to keep that in check sometimes, and uh... I — I guess
I, I was just downright mad. I was, I was, I was, you know, um, I was getting really
mad. And I think it was also, it was something like...this has been a life-threatening
situation as far as I'm concerned. I can sit here and play the corporate role and just 'Oh
woe is me' wring my hands bad that staff, I could have got on the head office side of 'I
can't believe it,' you know, 'did she do that, God,' you know, 'she's useless, gotta get
rid of her,' you know, or whatever, 'I can't bel--,' you know... But, I've never really
been that way [468-479]. And, much to my — detriment, um... and so I just, you know,
I decided, that what's the worst that can happen here? I can upset these head office
people, uh, and... you know, and maybe it can be a, a career-altering move — uh, a
CAM, that's what we...[483]. And um... but I could have my staff support or... I just
said "To hell with it, this is my staff, these are the people I work with daily," I just said,
you know, I went in there, um... uh, you know, I was quite uh... chippy; I guess. Or,
or, or, or, uh, I don't want to say cheeky, that's not the right word — defensive? Yeah,
maybe overly so, and I think that's why they thought I was freaked out still. They still to
this day I don’t think understand, how much — they upset — the staff at my branch” [500].

Three weeks later the branch was robbed again by the same team - in much the same manner. This time Joe gave chase in his vehicle as the robber’s fled. His sense was that, clearly - he was not going to endure this insult again - to his "ego," or to his staff. He was flooded with feelings of having let his staff down during the first robbery. His experience of utter helplessness, emasculation was still very much with him. He also still had the sound of blame ringing in his ears from the Head Office staff visit from the first robbery. Containing his activity level once might have been just barely tolerable: doing it a second time - in three weeks - was not an option: "The, number one, felt it was — I didn’t help my staff, and number two, it was my fault as far as — or, you know, we deserved to be robbed according to — I mean those words did come out. You know. Those words did come out, that uh, you know, we were so stupid we deserved to be robbed. And uh, if you can imagine that... Uh, just — all the stupid things, you know. It was all our fault [1003]... so, I just, it was like, my way of redeeming myself, it was redemption [1006-1007], Ah, I’m gonna get these guys, Oh, that’ll put to rest all these — guys, you know, things, the thoughts and, you know, bolster my ego back up where it used to be up — twenty miles too high" [984-1011].

Upon his return from the car chase Joe encountered a similarly "insensitive" Head Office group awaiting him as he returned. The same sort of denigrating remarks and behaviour were presented by the H.O. staff. He recalls their first comments: "...Senior
VP walks in, I'll never forget this, "So what did they do wrong this time?" [1050-1051]. He felt another gulf had been created by these "snide remarks and innuendos [1059-1060]... I don't know, it was just - left a real void" [1059-1062]. The "void" created by the manner and tone of the Head Office staff exchanges with the branch staff seemed to fill and harden into a real spatial entity: "them" (over there) and "us" (here). This would soon become a rallying point - a sort of "cause" for the branch staff as they sought deliverance from this disruptive source. The H.O. staff made an offer to have pizza with them - which was not surprisingly, declined by the branch staff. The branch staff decided to go out on their own. "...it [assembling as a group on their own] was the best thing we ever did [1079], and I tell you, no one missed a beat after that [1079-1080]. It was the best thing that could've happened, and again, it took, if you can believe this, not the robbery to pull us together as a team, but an outside force of someone not involved and coming in and looking at us like you know, like we were, I don't know, lepers, I don't know the words" [1080-1085]. Later in the interview he finds the words: "But you know, nothing brings a bunch of people together like a common enemy, and that's a hell of a thing when your head office becomes that"! [1154-1156].

'Closure' for Joe consisted of three aspects of these two robbery events: "...That was my closure. Yeah. And being able to deal with - I felt I did three things, I've basically went after the guys, redeemed myself there. Took care of my staff with the head office people and took the heat for it, redeemed myself there. And then told by the ex employers I mean I let them know that was one of the things that upset me. Their lack
of...so that's...their insensitivity" [1335-1342]. The price he seemed to have paid for going after the robbers (which marks 'redemption' for him) was to be considered by the organization as overly-excitable, or out of control, or a 'raving lunatic' [1285].

'Closure' in this sense might be more related to a surface-level type of experience where he felt himself to be taking action proportionate to the apparent insult. However, this may still leave open the question of the original injury site - his ego, pride, sense of self as protector, man-in-charge, person-to-be-relied-on in times of trouble. All these roles were disabled during the crucial few seconds during which he struggled with shock, disbelief, better judgment, desire to go out and protect the staff - during the first robbery. He forced himself to stay put but could not escape the exposure of hearing his staff being violated by the robbers - just a few feet away from where he sat helplessly, impotently. It is this aspect of the event that has a durational quality, still endures as an open injury, has never really been understood fully by his former staff or his former organization - has not been "closed" by Time. As a discrete, un-told story - this aspect of his experience may remain in a kind of internal exile - existing separately, autonomously from his otherwise high-functioning, integrated self. This splintered-off piece may be characterized by its durability to persist over, persist despite - time - and perhaps requires not so much the passage of time for its consolation - but more the remedy of an audience: the sympathetic powers of the imagination of interested listeners should not be underestimated in their potential for healing.

The disjunction of closure - on the one hand, and lasting effects on the other
hand, suggests a complexity beyond simple rhetoric. Some aspects seem "closed." For example, Joe stood his ground against the repeated insensitivity of some H.O. staff. His staff witnessed that. That might constitute closure for that aspect of the event. But, at another level of complexity - the ego wound of having to listen helplessly, impotently - to his staff suffer the violence of the robbery and the inability for him to find the audience, the listener he needed to have hear the story - to this extent "closure" seems questionable.

Other aspects of the robbery seem not to be adequately described in the chronological language of closure, completion, or of an incident surpassed. Certain bodily and emotional feelings can break loose and assert themselves with alarming speed as a reminder of the durability of some parts of the robbery experience. Joe illustrated this point: "I couldn’t believe it’s still there" [1355]. "Something happened today (August 30, 1996), and I couldn’t believe it’s still there. Somebody came into my new branch, and I’m in an office off in the corner of the bank and he was very loud and started yelling. Boom, hit me just like that. We’re being robbed, and just all of a sudden the old heart went, or missed, probably is a better word. And I was like Jeez I can’t believe this is still happening. So if you want to talk about, that’s the worst part, I don’t think there is a best. Just it’s still there" [1354-1363].

Appeals to chronology and spiritual language seem flat. At the moment we cannot accurately invoke the language of the transcendent human spirit which overcomes all injuries. Joe may have Hope, even Belief in some higher source. But he also still has
some enduring, painful experiences. He does not carry "scars" from the take-over robbery events. "Scars" suggests a healing process has occurred to a considerable extent. He doesn't have scars because certain aspects of the trauma have not healed. Again, in his words: "I couldn't believe it's still there"; "...this is still happening"; "...I can't believe this is still happening." Some traumatic experiences don't go away just for the convenience of others who may have difficulty with the concept that Time may not heal all wounds. There is a danger in believing with too much conviction that emotional, psychological upheaval is perfectly analogous with physical - flesh and blood - injuries - which usually do heal successfully with time and adequate care.

The essential features of this event can be summed up as Joe's experience of feeling torn, pulled to pieces, by an impossible situation and then failing to find adequate listeners with whom he might have his feelings understood: "...but the worst part was just sitting there, for that, you know, half a minute I guess... by the time I sat down at my desk and it was going on, and just listening to it all and just not doing anything, that just — it — it — it tore at me. It really, really tore at me" [537-541]. "...no one understands this" [601-602]. The perceived violation by an unexpected source - Head Office staff - represents another core theme in this story. Finally, the duration of the effects astonished Joe as he recently experienced an example of the durability of the aftereffects from the robberies. Joe notes that "Boom! The whole thing changes, you know, and brings everything into perspective...what's important in life and what isn't...you can have all the rules...you want, but not all people are going to follow them
If I’ve learned anything it’s just I’ve matured from it. Life’s too short to take any chances and start fretting about this stuff. You’re still alive, no one got hurt...who cares whether the bait money was right or the camera was on” [7B/511-519].

Carrie (8R)

Two central features characterize this bank robbery event. First, the actual robbery itself which contained several crisis points: (a) during the robbery three direct death threats were made to the respondent by the robber if she did not comply more quickly; (b) on two occasions she had to leave the cash machine in full view of the robber (once to come back to her wicket to retrieve her cash card; once to get a deposit slip required to activate the cash machine); (c) towards the completion of the robbery the robber walked down the lobby to a position across from her and slammed his hand on the counter shouting for the money - no other staff seemed to take notice of this. The second main feature of the event was the perceived mistreatment she received from the management of her branch following the robbery. This included sarcasm, criticism, direct confrontation, and outright hostility which led her to conclude they just wanted her to leave. Eventually she did leave that financial institution. One year later was confronted in her new branch by a machete-wielding robber who jumped over the counter. The recent robbery provided a point of contrast with which to assess her own handling of another life-threatening situation. It also provided her with another event with which to compare the organization response - in the second case, a very positive post-
robbery response from management.

Some of the lasting effects included a loss of overall sense of security - of feelings of safety - especially if out in the community at night, or at times when alone. She also had a lasting sense of disillusionment at the dismissive, disrespectful treatment she received from her workplace following her first robbery event. She recalls the worst part of the experience consisting of the negative attitudes towards her from her co-workers [2031]. Through all the upheaval Carrie felt that she emerged from the pressures, upset, disillusionments and painful experiences of the robbery very happy with herself as a person [1897].

Awareness of Carrie’s first robbery began while she was making the transition returning from lunch to preparing to open her wicket for business. As she readied her work area she heard and noticed another staff address a man and ask if she could help. She heard the man decline then, vaguely, noticed him sidling towards her wicket, slowly. She was still not open. She had a 'hunch' that this was a robbery which she quickly dismissed: "Oh, my God, I'm gonna get robbed" [48]. She replaced this with the thought that this perhaps was a new member who was acting edgy - maybe through embarrassment, that he may not be sure if the withdrawal slip he was staring at was filled out properly. Her role was set: she was there to help members.

The illusion was shattered when he came to her wicket and stated he wanted money. His hands were shaking and he looked quite edgy [8B/883-884]. He stated clearly, repeatedly that: "I have a gun and I won't hesitate to shoot you" [8B/310] if she
did not do what he wanted. She experienced a momentary slowing of time but quickly
collected herself and she started to move towards the cash machine. On the way she
considered - and dismissed, the possibility of trying to alert another staff person. The risk
of inadvertently being revealed outweighed the advantage of her getting some kind of
response from her co-worker. She then realized she did not have her access card with her
and now faced her first dilemma. She thought about running momentarily. She wrestled
with the thought of getting out of the line of fire. She was at the maximum distance away
from him: "I could just run to the back of the lunch room and hide, or I can go back
down and confront him" [8B/706-708]. Her sense of duty, responsibility to others
surfaced powerfully as she gauged her own personal fear against how she might feel if he
exploded and hurt others. She described this momentary dilemma: "I was more scared
that if I didn't go back, what if somebody got hurt. It was...my obligation...and I didn't
think I could live with that, the fact that I cowarded out, ran away, and he got mad and
went on a rampage or hurt somebody...so I chose to go back" [8B/721-726]. She
returned to her wicket mindful of not wanting to alarm the robber. She showed him her
hands and verbally told him she needed her card. Again she turned her back once more
to the robber and went back to the cash machine. This time, as she swiped the card
through the machine - she realized she did not have the required withdrawal slip - which
is necessary for activating the machine. She made the decision to jump over an empty
wicket to retrieve a withdrawal slip. She was concerned about the manoeuvre- that it
might arouse suspicion from the robber, but she took the chance [8B/756-759]. She
swiped the card through the machine and took out the first $1000. The robber, getting increasingly agitated, walked down the lobby side and stood opposite from where she was. He "Slammed his hand down on the counter and said 'give me the money' " [8B/771-772]. Unbelievably, no one still made the connection that a robbery was in progress.

The respondent, now wanting to rapidly exit the robber out of the branch - just grabbed what cash she had, walked over to the robber and handed him the money, then quickly retreated - not wanting to observe which way he exited. Reflecting on the first few moments of the robbery Carrie recalled that when she returned to her wicket to get her key the robber reminded her that he would shoot her if she didn't do this right [130-134]. She recalls feeling violated [132].

She was then ushered into an adjacent room and left alone to write her description of what had happened for the police reports. Looking up, still in shock, she caught sight of an older, sympathetic-looking member and "just kinda lost it" [144]. She broke into uncontrollable tears at the sight of a friendly face. Starting to feel the anxiety of the event she first wanted a cigarette, then wanted her mother. She focussed on writing the report but found great difficulty in even spelling the simplest words. She was shaking so badly she could barely decipher her own handwriting afterwards. Anger directed at the staff’s apparent paralysis at being unable to trigger the alarm - having to finally go to another wicket and do it herself - being ushered into the small side-room, catching sight of the member’s sympathetic face and breaking down crying uncontrollably - then
pressing out her story in a shaky, numb handwriting task - all contributed to a buzz of confusion, emotional upheaving - unrelieved by human contact, except for the sight of the "sympathetic" member's glance [142-163].

She felt scared, mad, and alone at that moment. At that point she added to her constellation of feelings the thought that the credit union was going to be mad with her that she "just let this person walk out with, with a thousand dollars and was unable to give him my bait" [174-175]. Still in a state of shock, she felt stupid that people were staring at her [184]. She experienced a flush of feelings - fear, anticipated negative judgement from her employer (which turned out to be prophetic and correct - just as she was correct in her initial sense that she was going to be robbed at her first sight of the 'unknown member'); she felt a numbing shock and just wanted to be out of there [190] - removed from her sense of post-robbery emotions, away from her anger at others apparent inability to detect that the robbery was going on - at her feeling of being alone in a crowd, and her emerging sense of isolation - being left on her own by staff after the robbery.

Three main crisis points illustrate the core of the robbery: First, the initial notification of the robbery when she suspected it when she saw him initially - but she then dismissed her initial hunch. Second, as she arrived at the cash machine and realized she didn't have her card and made the decision to go back to face him and get her cash card. Third, her strategy of verbally communicating simply, clearly with the robber what she was doing while showing him her hands - that she was not attempting to reach an alarm.
Following the robbery she was caught off guard by what struck her as the bewildering negativity of the response from some of her co-workers. Her first surprise came in a discussion with her shop steward who informed her she was only allowed twenty-four hours off immediately following the robbery. She had returned to work the next day. Her worry was that: "If I didn’t go back into work the next day, then I’d probably never go through that door again" [708-709]. The shop steward spoke to her in what she perceived to be an insulting tone [709-727]. Two weeks later she got called into the office and confronted by the branch manager, the head teller and the administration supervisor. They wanted to talk to her about how she was coping with the robbery. She felt "suckered" [755] into meeting because what followed was criticism about her attitude and a complaint that she had been speaking with a member about her being docked pay. She felt disappointed and bitter that "...they’re, you know, docking my pay for it because of something that this guy did to me" [762-763]. One example of feeling unfairly treated was when her supervisor got a citation for a "job well done" - which amounted to putting Carrie in a room after the robbery and closing the door. She did not receive any acknowledgement about her effective handling of a robbery that could have escalated into a explosive situation. She felt confused, angry, disappointed, disillusioned at what seemed to her unfairly singling out the supervisor and completely disregarding her own contributions in safely handling the robbery.

She described the robbery as not only a violation of her work space but also a "violation of the mind" [1489]. What she intends by the idea of "violation of the mind,"
- in part, is the legacy of feeling lastingly unsafe - at times. She is also aware of feeling unsafe even in her parents back yard if she is outside at night. She won't walk to the store any more by herself. Her vigilance, sense of caution is much elevated from before her robbery [1499; 1502; 1510]. This has left her feeling very wary about going out at night - though she also feels a little smarter, more cautious about her safety [1515-1516].

The respondent had been employed by the bank four years prior to this robbery taking place. She had never been in a robbery before. She was very involved in committees, staff softball, and bank social activities [B/123-128]. She considered herself "more than just an employee there...I showed my dedication to the bank and I did everything to the fullest and best of my capabilities...I've always been praised for that" [B/144-148]. It almost seems that she had a pre-awareness of what was coming as one of her biggest worries during the robbery was "that I was going to get in trouble from the credit union because I didn't see a weapon" [B/818-819]. When I asked her what would make her think of getting in trouble from the bank right in the middle of a robbery, she responded vaguely: "I don't know, I just right away...I just kind of thought I'm gonna get in trouble for this" [B/829-830].

A series of unfortunate incidents occurred over the course of the following year - at which time she quit and went to work for another bank. She received "snide" comments [B/77-78], was told in response to a question about taking time off, after the robbery, that she "had a collective agreement at home and why didn't she read it?" [B/88-
89]; she was criticized for talking with members about the robbery [B/188-191]; she felt "tricked" into a meeting with three of her supervisors, presumably to discuss how she was doing, coping with the robbery [B/447] but as soon as she got into the office "they started to talk to me about my attitude...so it was like they tricked me into the office" [B/445-456]; at the end of the year the Workman's Compensation tax receipt she received in the mail was entirely different from the amount she received. The bank had made an error in not paying her enough (she received $200 - the tax receipt WCB authorized the bank to pay her was $1000). She had to press to get them to correct their own error. She feels "the [bank] probably would have kept it" [B/106]. Finally, upon the anniversary of the robbery - one year later, she became aware of a return of robbery-linked anxiety and nightmares [B/228] which were starting to come back. She became a little more absent minded. She became "really nervous and had to be at work and I just felt I didn't have anybody to turn to" [B/395-399]. "I was making errors, they were threatening to fire me...there's no point to try to explain this to them 'cause they didn't understand the first time, why would they understand now?" [B/231-235].

The respondent reported a lot of hostility built up at the treatment during that period of time. In comparing the impact of the robbery event itself with the treatment over the following year from the organization she made it clear that the robbery incident was secondary. In a somewhat scathing, revealing comment Carrie contended with the weight and duration of the impact to her from the death-threat robbery and the experience of life in her workplace following the robbery. From the vantage point of eighteen
months later she considered the robbery "rather tame now when I think back on it" [B/879-880] though she adds "I've never had somebody tell me...they won't hesitate to shoot me" [B/1003-1004].

In her assessment she used the idea of intention to try to understand the two situations. She expressed her disillusionment, disappointment with the organizational response: "He [robber] didn't do this deliberately to me...he probably doesn't even still know what I look like...once he left and made those threats, well I knew I was safe and he probably wasn't gonna come back [B/342-346]...the robbery would actually be a very small part of the story because the main issue would be how I was treated at work...I mean it pretty much outrages me...I can't believe all the crap I have to go through. So really, the robbery part's easy now...the guy came in, he threatened me, he got his money, he left. He didn't come back to hurt me any more...Whereas I was faced then with having to come in day after day back to work and having to face that attitude" [B/369-378]. Carrie was let down feeling that staff weren't able to pull together after the robbery [B/210] and she felt that she was the one being "punished" [B/215] because the robber walked off with a thousand dollars. At the one year mark she concludes: "I knew it was time...I just wanted to get out of there" [B/217-218].

Since joining her new bank ten months ago she has experienced two more robberies. She reported she has had no problems, the branch has "pulled together as they should" [B/1112-1113]. She received a recent promotion and feels confident, content. When she reflects on her previous robbery experience she feels hostility at the treatment
but also believes that leaving was probably "the best thing that I've done"

The interplay between the robbery (which lasted several minutes) and the organizational treatment experienced by the respondent (which lasted one year) provide two contrasting points and provides a basis for understanding Carrie's experience of this event. Certainly the robbery constituted a potentially dangerous occurrence. She had to contend with the presence of a weapon, with three direct death threats, with clumsy logistics involving leaving the robber - returning then leaving again, then jumping over another wicket and back to the cash machine again - all while trying to reassure the robber that she was not trying to pose a threat to him. She struggled momentarily, with the thought of running, but overcame her fear when she considered that he might hurt others. She forced herself to try to pay attention to what he looked like so she could give a good police report, but shifted between fear and attention to details [B/900-910] back to being scared, trying not to "buckle." She shifted her strategy mid-event from attempting to call quiet attention to her predicament, then realized if she did get staff attention they could over-react and spark an escalation. She decided to treat him - for all appearances, as a regular member and get him out of there [B/976-977]. Finally, when he slammed his hand on the counter and demanded money, she just walked over, gave him what she had so far, and walked away as he left.

These several, compressed minutes contain many currents - many danger points, and a good deal of moment-to-moment tightrope-walking on her part to handle this shaky,
edgy robber. The experiences following the robbery relating more to the robbery consisted of nightmares, feelings of anxiety and loss of sense of safety and security, which lasted for about four or five months after the robbery - but were re-activated when she was involved with the "machete bandit" robbery more recently. As she worked through the effects from the robbery she also began to feel her sense of belonging at work start to crumble. With a constant perception of mistreatment from the organization she eventually discontinued her previous high level of committee and social involvement [B/140-150] at work. The constant criticism, job-loss threats [B/1096], and declining relationships with peers and supervisors left her feeling "sick sometimes walking into work just to think what these people were like" [B/355-356].

Outside work she contended with the fear, loss of feelings of personal safety - viewing the community as a constant source of threat at times - especially after dark. At work, she felt an increasing sense of antagonism from her supervisors, a sharp decline in her involvement and performance at times. She lived a life of vulnerability and increasing unhappiness with her situation. Though both incidents contributed to her feelings of anger, loss, fear, self-doubt she stated the negativity from work was the most difficult to bear of the two. Passage of time, talking with family, counsellors, friends - helped with the robbery part. Moving to a new job helped with the defeated feeling she faced day-by-day at her former financial institution.

Emblematic of Carrie’s post-robbery experience was a feeling of disillusionment about the treatment she got from staff, supervisors - after the robbery. In some ways this
may equal - or surpass - the three death threats she got from the robber during her robbery. Through the legacy of feeling alone, not understood, she has had to contend with her own ability to communicate more effectively what she is feeling. This event represented a crumbling of her feelings of well-being both outside work, and at work. It represented an insult and a violation: "I guess what I mean is now it's not only just a violation of my work area or a violation of - you know, any experiences I've gone through in that day it's really a violation of the mind, because things are never the same way now" [1486-1490]. Despite a number of adjustments over the past eighteen months - some represent very good moves, changes, there is a sense of her being pressed flat, squashed by her former bank. Nevertheless, these experiences seem to have left her with more personal clarity, assurance about herself - in many ways.

Carrie has found new value in the importance of verbalizing her feelings. She has learned not to take the robbery - and to some extent the post-robbery treatment from staff - personally. She places a high value on teamwork and using her own caring and empathy to help other robbed staff not feel so alone following a traumatic event. She has crystallized a kind of philosophy of what she chooses to do professionally. As she puts it: "It's work and I've come to realize that this is the line of work that I chose, and it's the line of work that I enjoy and yes there is this risk that goes along with it, and that there isn't any guarantees that, you know even if I was to walk across the street, that I'm not going to get hit by a bus, so you know the world isn't full of guarantees, and then if it does happen [you have] to cope with it, communicate with them [robbers], let them know
what's happening, don't make any sudden moves, and above all, not to take it personally...whatever feelings that you, don't feel stupid for experiencing and talk them out and see somebody. I mean and it really does help, I mean in this last one that happened at Burnaby, everybody has experienced what was happening, so it was nice that everybody knew, even those that weren't directly involved but you know, they were feeling something, they were feeling scared for the girls that were up in front and it's nice to know that everybody was there as a team and that they pulled together and it was teamwork and that there wasn't, it was just a solo thing and there was only one person involved, it was more of an aspect that you know, people pulled together as a team and helped each other out [1816-1828].

Several aspects of the event tend to return to Carrie's mind after eighteen months. Dismissed awareness stands out in her mind as a key feature of the event: "What I remember the most, stands out the most is-is-is that I thought that I was gonna 'Oh, my God I'm gonna get robbed,' and sure' enough I was" [2105-2109]. Learning to trust herself may represent one key growth area for her as a result of the robbery. The death threats re-occur: "I guess the big thing that always jumps out, is just the fact that he said he wouldn't hesitate to shoot me. I had never had my life threatened before" [8B/1000-1004]. Finally, her learning as a result of her hostile, negative experience with her former bank: "I just feel you come away being a better person. I'd never let anybody go through that. Because it's hard enough as it is, you don't need that...negativity...you should be there to support staff not reprimand them because their attitude isn't up to
par...show a little bit of compassion, like I just don't understand, you know, being this wall and it just kind of bounces back. And I feel better now that I know all of what not to do. And all of what to do" [8B/1017-1036].

Summary

The respondent individual event structures have been seen to contain nine categories that serve a synthesizing and synchronizing function: the event foreshadowing/onset; internal dynamics; experience of time; shifting patterns; spatial relations; principle dynamics; coping; the controlling principle of the narrative; and the legacy. Tymieniecka (1997) noted that "Time is the main artery through which life's pulsating propensities flow, articulating themselves, intergenerating" (p.4). These categories have been seen to occur in a connective network flowing within the "artery" of time. The respondent experiences that created the "points," or categories, have - at times, been disrupted, at times broken - by the effort to understand, to find meaning in, the private and the social aspects of the often lethal encounters during the robbery events, and in attempting to live in the post-robbery environment.

In attempting to discern the "ground" for living, the Greek philosopher Periander recommended that those seeking understanding of human existence keep mindful that "when focussing upon the singular, consider beings as a whole" (Tymieniecka, 1997, p. xii). The following section shifts the review of the results from individual cases to points of convergence and divergence among respondents as a whole.
Chapter V

Results: Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The following section presents a comparative analysis of the individual narratives combined to reflect a variety of what seemed to be more general features of the respondent experiences at the various stages: foreshadowing/onset, during the robbery, and after the robbery event. The analysis brings out both points of convergence and divergence between the eight respondent robbery event structures detailed in the previous chapter.

Phenomenological research aims to understand the general dimensions as well as the specific aspects of the respondent's lives. The typical, or general, is an integral part of human experience, in contrast to the abstract or theoretical which may be arbitrarily imposed upon experience (Halling & Goldfarb, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The categories which form the basis of the present chapter represent a way to synthesize and synchronize the inward and outward functioning of both faintly sketched, foreshadowed understanding to more plainly conscious functioning/reasoning/creating - all of which prompts human life forward. In her treatise on human development from self-individualization to the delineation of human history, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (1997), of the World Phenomenology Institute, suggests that:
The unfolding of human action through kairic [compelling, innermost "drive"] accomplishments carries with it the specifically human valorization of facts, acts: through moral circuits that imbue personal and public life with rightness and wrongness; through aesthetic circuits that bestow the taste for beauty and lift the human spirit by ideals; and lastly through circuits of intellectual valuation that endow experience and action with formal structures, articulations, constructive devices and measure the underpinnings of experience and judgment (p. 17).

The following general narrative comparative analysis and synthesis provides a variety of instances of "valorization of acts," "moral circuits that imbue personal and public life with rightness and wrongness," and "intellectual valuation" that "endow" respondent behaviour with the means with which to take stock of the most essential elements of their thoughts, actions.

**Comparative Analysis Of Narratives**

**Event Foreshadowing and Onset**

This part of the process provided an entry point which foreshadowed, pre-figured the actual event onset and the experiences which followed for each respondent.

Foreshadowing occurs when something is experienced but not apprehended. The manner of responding initially by no means presents itself as a uniform experience. As a whole the stories suggest a dawning, faintly sketched, pre-robbery responding based on a number of types of first awareness. Gwen: "I heard a voice, instant, blind anger"; kinaesthetic, bodily sense of the robbery: "Even though my body did [react instantly] my brain didn’t." June and Catherine’s experience of an immediate sense of wanting to hide,
duck down - dismissed in favour of choosing involvement based partly on a sense of safety of others; Joe's thorough sense of surprise, disbelief, shock and a "confirmation" of robbery in progress and the lightening-quick entrainment of internal struggling to determine a proper course of action - occurring almost as a simultaneous temporal sequence at the onset of the event; Carrie's actual "hunch" that a "nervous" looking customer was a robber - dismissed in favour of re-defining him as a "new customer, unsure how to fill out a deposit slip"; George's sense of surprise, disbelief: "At first I really didn't have a clue that this guy was trying to rob me...I was quite frightened at first..." He responded with limited compliance, an undercurrent of defiance regarding meeting the robber's money request - ultimately responding with a "safety of others" motivation; Jenny's confusion, surprise followed with "literal," exact compliance with the robbery request; finally, Alice represents an instance in which the initial awareness was not resolved to a definition of the event as a robbery until the event was over and the robber was out of the branch: Alice's initial sense of something being wrong but never determining the source until after the event was over.

Each respondent was able to articulate an awareness of the initial sense something was wrong, or something was different. Definitions of "initial awareness" occurred at the point at which the event broke through each respondent's stream of awareness: this disjunction of "usual - not usual" may represent, not a starting point, but perhaps the tip of the iceberg: the "awareness" may be antedated by some tacit knowing, an already "moving" knowledge, sense of danger in the making. Respondents were not going from
full-stop to engagement with the event: the texts read differently. For example, Gwen stated that she "...didn't make the connection immediately. Even though my body did, my brain didn't." In a dismissal of foreshadowed knowledge Carrie first noticed a customer in the lobby who looked "a little edgy because he kept on staring at a withdrawal slip. And at that moment I thought in my head, you know, 'Oh God, I'm gonna get robbed,' and then I - just politely told myself, you know, kinda 'Get with it Carrie,' and you know, you never know, maybe it's just a new member and he’s not sure that he filled out the slip properly. And, sure enough he did...[rob her the next minute]."

Despite her "hunch" Carrie - when presented with the robbery note - remarked in disbelief: "You’re joking, right?" And [the robber] explained that he wasn’t joking, that he had a gun...and [said] if I did anything funny he wouldn’t hesitate to shoot me." Even with an earlier conscious sense that the man was a robber Carrie dismissed this knowledge so completely that she could be "shocked and stopped for a second..." just seconds later when the same man handed her the robbery note. Though, in some cases (Carrie), there seems to be clear "advance notice" this sense, or form of knowledge source, seems not to have significance beyond that consciously assigned by the faculty of reason, logic, what is considered "believable" - even though it predates - or is contemporaneous with the actual robbery. George reported no foreshadowing of the event. His uptake with the initial awareness was more "blunt." Even though the note was specific George needed to uncover its meanings more specifically. He did this by making a theme of that which was - to him, implicit. He bluntly, slowly explicated the implications of the note through
verbalizing his disbelief: "I didn’t have a clue that this guy was trying to rob me. And then I said to him ‘are you telling me you are robbing me’"? In order for him to grasp the nature of the situation more fully he needed to make that which was implicit, only just barely conscious - explicit. The robber’s affirmative answer allowed George to create the meaning necessary for him to determine that begrudging, mixed compliance would be how he would response in this context. This seems consistent with Carrie’s experience - where verbal verification seemed an important precursor to continued action. This initial dialogical exchange may serve as a kind of determination context within which staff get a faint sketch of where the boundaries, dangerous contours may lie within the robbery: since much of the event remains unknown, unseen, undisclosed - the preliminary exchange may serve - analogously, as a kind of highly sophisticated echo-location device, which may prove useful for determining and guiding movement through unknown terrain. This may be seen particularly clearly in the continuous verbal exchanges Jenny used to keep her bearings, to reassure, to keep the robber engaged as she tried to meet his demands "literally." He was "running the show" but she was guiding him through the intensely uneven contours of the robbery event - partly through the constant maintenance of patterned sounds, signals, corrections. The foreshadowing, or breakthrough of a "hunch" into consciousness does not seem to be sufficient to eliminate - or even reduce a full measure of surprise, disbelief as in the example from Carrie’s and George’s experience. It is simply noted that, in some instances, a process of "knowing" seems to have antedated - or be co-evolved with, the actual, conscious awareness of the robbery.
This "knowing" may be experienced but not apprehended fully. If it results in a dismissal, or if there simply is no recalled foreshadowing, the onset will be marked by "shock, disbelief, amazement": these ingredients are formative, influential at the onset of the robbery event.

Experience During The Robbery

Principal Dynamics.

Principal dynamics represent overarching themes of the robbery event that both define and direct the respondent's thoughts, feelings, actions. These represent overarching beliefs about self and world. Though there are sometimes many themes present (articulated next as "Internal Dynamics") all of the stories contain at least one identifiable principal theme. Principal dynamics are meant to depict relatedness with some one (self-other) or some thing of direct importance throughout the event. Principal dynamics constitutes broad schemas that organize one's experience of self and world. Schemas, by extension, represent cognitive manifestations of psychological needs.

Gwen's wave-like struggle for control with the robber throughout the event represents an example of a principal dynamic. It was structurally linked to several experiences: (1) her previous history of being around violent situations; (2) this event was the third robbery by the same robber. It was more personal. He "wasn't a stranger any longer"; there he was: "standing there again, like an ongoing saga"; (3) she "had no fear" no "respect for the gun" which "bothered me most" because that could lead to putting others at risk,
which is exactly what happened: another staff-person told her: "I was looking right at you thinking now 'just be calm'"; (4) her actions during the robbery ran contrary, at times, to her deeply held sense of responsibility, her belief about staff safety.

For June it was the dynamic tension and interplay between "detachment" and event vigilance as she was subserved as a hostage in the immediate grip of the robber. For over seven minutes her entire sense of expectation of safety in the world was shattered. Her guilt afterward at having to direct others, on two occasions, to involve themselves with the robber was a direct assault on her value of autonomy and independence, of preserving others safety. The principle directing part for Catherine was the invocation of her "bits-and-pieces" file: her memory stock of knowledge advising her what conduct during the robbery was required - and her immediate application of her actions in order to help guide the "new cash teller" reveals something of her underlying, broad value both of a sense of self-preservation and safety of others. For Jenny the principle movement in her robbery consisted of the tension created by the escalation - de-escalation cycles, punctuated by the running sub-plot of the "second cash drawer" that was locked and could not be opened. Her robber was "not following the rules." Each respondent experienced their robbery consciously directed toward some aspect of the event that could be considered the principal part. The principal object of thought could be singular - as with Jenny's "absolute literal compliance" throughout, or dual as with "Gwen's shifting back and forth between complete compliance "when others were present" and complete "defiance when alone with him."
Four features represent the principal dynamics of Jenny's take-over robbery: (a) the robber shifted between overtly threatening staff with his gun and hiding it under his jacket in his belt - then threateningly taking it out again if staff were not complying fast enough; (b) the wave-like motion of surging and declining escalation cycles; (c) the "unfinished" drama of the unopened cash drawer; (d) her dilemma, disjunction - of wanting to ensure complying "literally" with each request of the robber and having to deny him access to the locked cash drawer without him becoming explosive. These all represent highly charged focal themes enacted within the context of wanting to comply exactly, "literally" - and a deep sense of responsibility for the safety and well-being of the staff. The duration of this team take-over robbery was sixty seconds. The accomplice was by the door shouting out time in fifteen second intervals: "45...30...15...Go." In addition, Jenny held presuppositions that rules of conduct would be followed normally. She held that even in a robbery the robber would stay on his side of the counter, the staff would give him the money, the robber would exit. This frame of reference was transported whole into the actual robbery event with no 'clearance time' with which to question or examine the soundness of these presuppositions. This aspect of the drama constituted a jarring, deeply disturbing aspect of the robbery which would remain pre-reflective for almost one-year - emerging only after talking with her staff about another take-over robbery which occurred in her absence.

The significance of these dynamics lies in their referential nature: they fold back on the broader, abiding beliefs. Their significance lies in their ability to reflect back on
the original phenomenon - the primary experience of consciously grasping the experience as sometimes violent, sometimes life-and-death, sometimes a leap into the unknown, the elemental sense of the event as it was lived by the respondents and as it was structurally tied to their overarching beliefs about self and world.

**Internal Dynamics.**

A clear relationship exists between principal dynamics and internal dynamics. Principal dynamics are somewhat more encompassing, far reaching, than inner dynamics - in which events are more "local," immediate. However, internal dynamics often reflect deeper, more abiding principal commitments, beliefs, assumptions. Internal dynamics is intended as a category representing the interplay of major and minor themes as respondents experienced their robbery events distinctly, uniquely, differently: both during and after the event. Several types can be identified: (1) polemical, (2) singular, and (3) "forged."

The latter type almost gives the impression of action being forged in a crucible of inner containment - distilled and condensed under pressure, heat. Joe was "torn to pieces" by the inner conflict, by the choice he made to stay in his office, yet having to listen helplessly as his staff were terrorized by the robbery take-over team. His anger, shock, sense of helplessness, "impotence" can be followed backwards to a much deeper, grounding level where the fundamental phenomenon experienced was a consciousness of keenly felt loss of self-directedness: loss of his owned sense of "protector" of staff; loss of
sovereignty in his own domain; and his faintly sketched sense of distance in that this
decision to stay out of the event was made primarily for the staff but in the absence of the
staff: it was not witnessed by staff; it was not collaborative, cooperative with staff. Even
as the event was in-progress the faint sketches - which would later constitute the core of
the legacy of the event for Joe - were being etched: that "no one would understand my
decision." No one would understand what it took for him to stay in his office while his
staff were "intimidated and abused."

The event dynamics are polemical as when Gwen attempted to isolate, contain,
and trigger a response from the robber as she was alone with him but switched to
complete compliance with what he wanted when in the presence of other staff. At play on
the surface was her outrage at this third robbery by the same man. At a deeper level was
her value for human safety, her sense of responsibility towards staff, and her concern for
the emotional well-being of staff: her deeply held belief that the robber could damage staff
emotionally by violating their integrity, dignity, or damage, distress them emotionally by
his terror tactics. There is a structural relation between defying and complying - between
submitting and aggressing. This seems grounded in the founding, original conscious
apprehending of the event as a third violation by the same man, voice-triggered at the
onset with the relevance of a violation, an experienced outrage for Gwen as her body
responded by charging out to meet the robber even though her "brain didn’t know what
was happening." The tension was created partly by her later reflection: "How stupid of
me to stare him down. I know I was doing wrong."
The internal dynamics are sometimes private, singular as when Catherine quietly refused to make eye-contact with the robber - which, for her - had roots going back over twenty-years based on another robbery experience. Though Jenny struggled with several conflicting internal dynamics - fear of making a mistake; monumental effort to contain her own feelings of fear during the robbery - her responding was more singular in that she never wavered from her intention to "comply literally" with the robber request. The outrage she experienced at the robber's sense of "entitlement" at taking over the work space was sketched during the event but felt, apprehended more fully only afterward. The dynamics are singular as when Alice sought simply to hide from the violence of her robbery so she would not be discovered "and harmed or killed": the terror of struggling internally with a sense of impending disaster: "he's coming to get me...I'll be killed." The few minutes of Alice's robbery were experienced as if "a year." The intensity of the experience was extreme: "I felt like I could die from this...the end of the world." Alice experienced cold hands, numbness, shaking; a sense of confusion and panic - a sense of complete aloneness.

**Coping.**

Coping during the event had several aspects in common for respondents who were in the robbery. First, each engaged in some manner of compliance with the robbery request. Compliance varied from total to minimal. Second, each of the respondents engaged the compliance facet with a type and range of verbal and non-verbal communications including utilization of repetition, reassurance, reasoning statements,
display of hands ("not reaching for the alarm"), at one end of the spectrum - and several types of communications that may be perceived as more risky at the other end of the spectrum: glaring, staring, openly defying, verbally refusing to do what the robber demanded. Third, coping occurred in some cases as preservation and enactment of internal moral values: primarily the preservation of safety - both emotional and physical, for other staff and customers. Three factors combined to contribute to Jenny’s coping during the robbery: (a) exact, "literal" compliance with his requests; (b) reassurance, explanation, repetition; (c) "monumental self-control." These actions by Jenny constituted a kind of crude working alliance with the robber which was based on the curious disjunction of her being in charge of him being in charge. Fourth, use of spatial relations was central for coping in several instances: the space underneath the desk in Alice’s case; the position, attitude, the pose Joe assumed behind his desk in his office; the inner office and hallway corridor as places to confront, defy the robber in Gwen’s case and the shift to immediate and complete compliance when the action moved to the branch working area. Gwen’s strategy depended on both position and presence: submission-aggression cycles mediated by position (her office versus out in the more populated work area) and presence (alone with robber versus with other staff). Fifth, there is a difference between coping in the interest of achieving safe outcomes and coping as a primary response to an impending death threat. Alice and Joe were responding to their sense of impending death threat. In Alice’s case she was protecting herself: she squeezed her eyes shut as if to shut-out the unseen danger that stormed only a few feet away. Shutting one’s eyes may
be one of the most primitive forms of denial. She clenched her fists tightly. Concealment and attempting to "shut-out" the violence was the key to her coping during the violence. Joe was responding to his own safety and those of his staff. June thought she would be shot: her only thought was "does it hurt" yet her initial impulse to "duck" was overturned in favour of her belief that she would be the best fit to handle the robber's assault. Catherine coped during the robbery by intentionally not making eye-contact with the robber and by relying on her "bits-and-pieces" file: a stored stock of knowledge she describes as having pooled over her career that she could draw upon to help direct her actions during the robbery. She coped by focusing on the new cash teller. She coped at one point by fixing her gaze on a "spot on the wall." Finally, coping took the form of direct action based on specific requests for clarification or "redemption" as in the instances of Carrie and George. Carrie specifically requested confirmation from the robber that it actually was a robbery. So did George. For George coping consisted of a combination of requests for clarification of the robbery note to reduce doubt, disbelief - and attending to robber's appearance for accurate police description for after - as well as his decision to present mixed compliance, which allowed him to retain some semblance of "control." Joe felt a sense of "redemption" with his decision to place himself in the line of fire - "take the hit" if necessary. George felt a sense of redemption at deliberately withholding cash from the robber, staring at him partly to defy, partly to be able to describe him accurately, afterward, for the police report. This manner of coping, by acting, carried over in both instances to immediately after the robbery involving chasing
after the robbers and, thus this aspect straddled the during and the after segments.

**Spatial Relations**

Spatial and time relations played an important part in all the robbery narratives. Three types are identified: (1) vicarious, (2) one-on-one, (3) "entitled" (take-over). The principle defining feature of the vicarious type is hearing - but not seeing the event develop, progress, and terminate. For Alice it consisted of crouching, hiding underneath her desk feeling like "it took forever" for the violence to move out of the environment. As she hid, listened, and waited she thought she would die, that this would be "the end of my world." Joe sat in his office feeling that "time stood still." He was acutely aware of the sounds of the violent take-over robbery. He had been informed by one of the staff in the office with him that she glimpsed that the robbers' had riffles - as she quietly shut the office door. Joe had limited perceptual information and imagined what would happen if he burst out into the lobby, or if the robbers burst into his office. Re-patterning various possibilities of spatial relations (where he should position himself; whether to move to the lobby) and their possible consequences, centrally occupied Joe for the duration of the event until he saw the robbers flee past his office window - at which point he left his office and entered the robbery space.

For both George and Carrie the events were one-on-one with the robber on the lobby side of the counter - with the barrier of the counter preserved - providing a natural boundary between the robber and the respondent. Carrie's robbery "covered a lot of ground" in that she had to transit between the robbery wicket and the cash dispensing
machine twice, and jump over to another wicket to retrieve the necessary withdrawal slip needed to activate the CDM. Each movement left Carrie unsure "how much more he would put up with."

For June, Gwen, and Jenny each had her normal boundaries breached, by the robber tactics. The character of the experience thus created was very different from those events where the spatial boundaries were preserved. Specifically, "entitled" events created a situation where volitional acts exploded into non-volitional hostage-taking (as with June), proximal terror resulting partly from close-quarters, waves of escalation cycles, and a sense of robber "entitlement" (as with Jenny), and extensive movement with the robber through all parts of the branch, as with Gwen. With Jenny, spatial boundaries became violated. The robber was in the staff work area dominating the situation menacingly, gesturing with his gun. This aspect of the robbery would bring out layer after layer of post-robbery feelings related to his sense of 'entitlement," and would provide a seedbed for a number of persistent after effects. This robbery was ruleless: "It feels to me like it's one thing in a robbery for someone to say...you're a financial institution, I'm a bank robber. What we do is - I come in, you hand me the money, I go...As opposed to [being] personally threatened by this person coming behind the counter...It just more had to do with his...familiarity...a familiarity he wasn't entitled to...Acting like he belonged there." The dis-ordered event - from lawful to lawless, left Jenny "on edge" for over one year until she was able to connect the two concepts through reflecting upon another robbery that occurred in her absence.
Spatial relations were structurally linked with Gwen's submission-aggression patterns and were mediated by the presence or absence of others: if alone with the robber she would willfully defy him; if other staff were in the drama at the moment she would offer complete compliance. The structure of spatial relations-respondent behaviour may be linked with - may be founded upon, Gwen's original consciousness of the event foreshadowing the relevance of which was based on her sense of outrage. Gwen's behaviour during the robbery emerged from the breached violated sense of - expectation of fair and reasonable treatment at work (her beliefs, relevance structures) and showed itself shifting at various levels - based on possible harm to others versus herself alone with the robber. Her previous history in two previous robberies with the same robber sparked a deep sense of rage within her: "If I didn't have to be concerned with [the safety] of anyone else I would do everything in my power to dispose of him...I could kill that son of a bitch...[the thought of which] has been quite scary for me."

**Shifting Patterns**

Emerging patterns may be noted in each case reported during the robbery events. These patterns can be regarded as having properties of both quantity and quality. Patterns are taken to mean networks of thoughts, actions, feelings that are meaningfully and structurally related within the context of the lived experience of the event for the respondent. Like the other categories they are of interest for what they may reveal about the respondent's original sense of the robbery event and what might have been relevant
June, while being held hostage - shifted between moments of "detachment...almost as if I'd left my body" and moments of lucid connection with the event - as when she came out of her detachment on one occasions to direct others in what they needed to do to get the robber the cash drawer keys; on a second occasion she moved to get the robber the Traveller’s Cheques he had requested. These initiatives having been completed, she returned to her detachment. Towards the end of the event June again - for a third time, had her sense of detachment penetrated by a piercing sensation of fear as she realized the robber could drag her out of the door as he exited. Gwen reported a shift in the kind of anger she experienced - the shifting forces of intimidation: "Before it was anger where I wanted to take him on physically. This was different. Like before I wanted a piece of him, but this time it was like he took a piece of me [when he threatened other staff]. Before [when alone] I was intimidating him. When others were in the picture the role was reversed." Gwen noted the constant shifting between states of anger, which represented "no fear of the gun," and states of fear, which represented a more sensible "respect for the weapon." In addition, Gwen’s visual imagery of her robber shifted both in temporal ways and in meaning. She first experienced the image of the "kangaroo-hooded rodent, weasel" during sleep. It was initially specifically that robber and its meaning was intrusive but restricted to him. Over time the image began to emerge in the morning as she prepared to go to work. Its character became more like a "shadow" and was less specifically the actual robber but more came to represent constant reminders of
her unsafety at - and around work. The image remained but the feeling of unease, "un-safe feeling" generalized to the surrounding area of the branch. It also took on the function of constantly reminding Gwen of the potential risk her robbery behaviour carried for possible harm to other staff. The image was etched by the three robberies he committed at their branch in six weeks, the hours with the police sketch artist re-creating his every feature, and the many hours of looking through police photographs of known criminals.

Carrie shifted her awareness on several occasions when negotiating several setbacks in her attempt to obtain money for the robber. What emerged for her was a realization that no one else was going to notice her efforts at "eye contact." She realized she was alone with the event. In addition, she determined that was probably a good thing as another staff - brought into awareness of the robbery in progress, might spark, trigger the robber. Carrie progressed from early attempts to get some help with this robbery to determining she was going to handle it alone. At another point during Carrie's robbery she realized she could flee into the back office and be out of harms way. As she fleetingly pondered this possibility she overruled it in favour of continuing to handle the robbery. Her thoughts were based on two values: (1) others might get hurt or harmed if her disappearance escalated the robber, and (2) she would not want the feelings of guilt if others were hurt because she ran for safety. Carrie had "the familiarity" - the relationship with the robber by this time. She would see it through.

During Jenny's robbery she was catapulted into the event still having a sense that
the "disruption " was an "irate customer." She had to make a tremendous shift in focus, demeanour from "irate customer" to "robber." That represented one level. A second level of shifting experience required her to confront the violation of her belief that "even during a robbery...rules would be followed." The robber she confronted followed no rules. The spatial barriers were shattered. He threatened repeatedly with a gun. He presented as "very agitated." Jenny had to exert a "monumental effort" to keep herself in check, under control, in order not to appear to do anything that could possibly agitate him any further. The impact on her resulting from the violation of a deeply held belief that "people followed some rules" would take her the better part of one year to clearly identify and begin to absorb.

Joe's robbery dispatched his taken-for-granted belief that choice was purely an internal matter. He just assumed he would always be able to handle whatever came up. He just assumed that "this would never happen in my branch." His whole sense of himself as a manager reputed to protect staff and see them through intrusive events in their environment ("drunk, abusive, sometimes fighting customers") became wrecked, smashed in the sixty-seconds it took for the event to begin, develop, and end. The impact of his decision to stay in his office would not receive more full, conscious clarification until the series of interviews for the present research process - at which time he commented at his "great relief" at having discussed it. The comment, made in a phone conversation when setting-up the time for the second interview, seemed to suggest a kind of finishing, or closing for a part of the event for Joe.
Controlling Principle Of Narrative

This category represents the heart of the story. Without this part the robbery event would not be what it was for the respondents. This category is indispensable to the event for each respondent. For Gwen the central feature was her experienced outrage at the onset of the robbery: this aspect influenced most, if not all, of her behaviour following the opening scene. Her immediate bodily response of charging to meet "the voice" was structurally linked with the two previous robberies by the same robber - all within six weeks. Gwen's outrage, sense of violation at the repeated "insults" were experienced as unbidden, unwanted, and finally, unacceptable to the point that she became oppositional, defiant in thought, word, and deed. The compliance-aggression cycles, the "tug-of-war" also comprised core features.

For June, the onset of her robbery involved her initial dismissal of the thought of ducking and thus avoiding the robber - though he would then claim someone else. The experience of sense of self as object: "I don't think I was actually a person to him at that time. I was more I guess a tool or some thing to get what he wanted." Another core theme was the interplay between states of removal ("detachment, separation") and presence (directing staff when the were having difficulty locating the cash-drawer keys). One overriding moment was when she suddenly realized he could take her out of the branch with her. Her cycling between detachment and present-time functioning was central to her experience. She wondered if it "would hurt to be shot." Defining her relationship with the hostage-taker as one of him perceiving her as a "tool" was a key
piece of her experience - and seemed to have the advantage for June of helping her not personalize her hostage-role.

Alice heard - but did not see her robbery. For Alice the central defining feature was the chilling fear of discovery as she crouched, concealed - under her desk not knowing what the "violence" in the lobby was - thinking that she "would die...my world would end." These two aspects constituted the core of her experience and hauntingly animated the fear in her imagination - and played havoc with her sense of event uncertainty. Catherine experienced and dismissed an initial impulse to duck down out of sight of the robber. She overcame this momentary impulse and made the decision to go to the "weakest link" - the new cash teller - to provide guidance, direction, support for the upcoming robbery demands. This experience evoked thoughts of death: images of "blood-spattered walls." Catherine "stuck with the new staff person" and at times "escaped" by staring at "a spot on the wall" - though her sense of presence was generally with the drama of which she was a central part.

For George the central feature was the conflict brought about between limited compliance, preservation of staff safety, and "redemption" for himself against the violation of self brought about by the use of force which took away his deep sense of expectation of respectful treatment from others - his "right to work." Central to Jenny's experience was her dedication to "literal" compliance with the robber's request. Linked with her exact compliance behaviour was her "monumental" effort at self-control so as not to escalate the clearly highly agitated robber further. Jenny's literal, immediate
compliance with the robber requests seemed tied to his obvious highly agitated state as he threatened staff with a gun he alternately waived around threateningly and hid under his jacket. Jenny did "not want to make a mistake." The sub-plot of the locked cash-drawer moved inexorably toward the event conclusion and was seen by Jenny throughout as a highly combustible moment of "final confrontation."

Joe experienced a massive loss of role continuity - especially in his assumed role as "protector." The sheer weight of his sense of helplessness, "impotence," the realization that others would probably not have a way of understanding his dilemma, and the conflict with Head Office staff following both robberies combined to create a mass, a density which fused to create the core of Joe's robbery experience. Carrie's experience was focussed on three key events: a sense of being "alone," ignored during the event by colleagues; three death threats during the event as she had to retrace her steps on two different occasions and backtrack to her wicket; and the "moment of truth" in the middle of the robbery when she had the opportunity to step into another room and remove herself from the threat - which she did not do in favour of continuing to handle the robbery herself, which she thought would reduce probable harm or injury to others.
Experience After The Robbery Event

Principal Dynamics

Several types of main themes were identified following the robbery events. These dynamics are loosely linked in that they all represent disruptions to some central needs of each respondent. Exemplified are (a) instances of protracted corporate empathic failures, (b) instances of attempts at defining, making meaning of the robbery - coming to grips with "what it was"; (c) mixed dynamics related to re-integrating back into work routines, adjustments between personal strife, and contending with different types of management "inertia."

First, dynamics having to do with continuing conflict with the management. These represent, are perceived by the respondents - as post-robbery corporate empathic failures. These dynamics are broadly cast in that they include complex interactions between the organizational system and the respondent (Carrie, Joe, George, June). For example, Carrie faced continuing difficulties with regard to the post-robbery treatment she received at work. In this phase the main effects were Carrie’s attempts to come to grips with what she perceived to be the negative response from management. She thought it "very unfair" that her colleague received a letter from management citing "commendable performance" while Carrie did not get any acknowledgement for how she handled the actual robbery. This was highly disillusioning for her. She experienced being "suckered" into her manager’s office on one pretext only to discover three supervisors were there
waiting to discuss her attitude: "...as soon as I got into the room they started giving me, pardon the expression, they gave me shit because they didn’t like my attitude..."; the manner and tone of many discussions with her supervisor regarding her performance was based on a lack of understanding: "people just...weren’t understanding anything that I was going through, they were giving me a hard time..." On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the robbery the lack of empathy, understanding she received regarding her upset feelings disturbed her greatly and formed a decisive part in her decision to leave.

Carrie’s experience was similar to Joe’s in that Joe also faced an extended period after the robbery in which no one really understood his actions, sense of personal agony, during the robbery. As a manager, Joe could be more vocal to management than Carrie was able to - though the experience of conflict with management, which represented a kind of sanctuarial stress, was penetrating, biting for both Joe and Carrie.

Joe went from strategic inaction during the robbery to a whirlwind of movement, activity immediately upon leaving his office. A key incident was the action involving the arrival and impact of head office staff in which he felt he had to: "...wade into this battle." Carrying the legacy of feeling so powerless, helpless over the course of the next days, he struggled with the damage to his sense of self as "protector" - his typical role as manager responsible for staff well-being, performance, safety. That no one understood his decision to stay in his office during the event constitutes the core of the post-event dynamics he struggled with - and to some extent, still does. Upon the occasion of the second robbery two weeks later - by the same robbery team, Joe chased the robbers, by
car, through the community partly as vindication, "redemption" for his "impotent"
feelings from the first event; partly because he vowed to himself he would never be put in
a situation of such agonizing helplessness again. Joe experienced anger, distrust,
condescension, blame at what he perceived to be the attitude of head office staff
immediately following the robbery. This "negative impact" in a curious way - unified the
staff against a "common enemy." Joe felt that the censure from head office staff on the
scene constituted a "battle." This was based on H.O. staff stating that "it [the robbery]
was our fault." Joe recalls head office staff made many "snide remarks and innuendos."

Dynamics related more to individual functioning following the robbery and
attempts at greater understanding (Alice) or just trying to contend with the impact
(Catherine, Jenny) were also noted. For Alice, the principle dynamic after the robbery
was attempting to actually find out what happened: to label the event as a robbery, to seek
information as to what happened - the part she could not visually witness. A mixed
principal dynamic pattern may also be seen. For example, June struggled with personal
difficulties with anxiety and panic attacks as well as with the seeming reticence from her
organization to allow her to transfer to another branch. Gwen struggled with re-
integrating into the work routines and with post-robbery strain, "guilt" with some of the
staff as there was a feeling that her aggressive behaviour may have put other staff at risk
during the robbery.
Internal Dynamics

These patterns represent another aspect of the respondent's experience after their robbery events. They seem to provide some clues as to some of what each respondent later experienced over time. They may be grouped loosely into seven categories: (1) immediately after; (2) longer-term (3) empathic failures: individual/corporate; (4) specific bio-psycho-social experiences, (5) well-encapsulated, diverted pattern (Alice); (6) striving towards normalcy (Jenny); (7) disturbing, persistent imagery.

Gwen experienced disturbing imagery while falling asleep at night following her robbery. She experienced sleep disruptions, agitated states, and became tearful at work "without knowing why." She took one month off work after several weeks following the robbery but the feelings remained, though on a quieter basis. Gwen’s concentration, attention, and focus was disturbed following her robbery. Gwen also experienced post-robbery "guilt" at the idea some staff thought she may have put them at risk by her behaviour: "He [another staff person] knew there was a lot of anger. He said to me 'I remember looking at you and thinking now just be calm.' I said I would never do anything to jeopardize anybody...I just couldn't seem to get past that anger."

Immediately following her robbery June experienced relief, and guilt at having to request staff get the robber money during the robbery. She experienced "panic" on a number of occasions in the post-robbery environment for a period of several months. A very disillusioning experience for June was her father’s seeming casual attitude towards her being held hostage and "coming within hairs-breadth of losing his daughter." June
states this was "almost worse than the robbery." June felt a keen sense of disillusionment with her organization: she felt they were disinterested in her - which she thought was unfair based on her ten-years of service. She felt they were unfairly critical of her - unfeeling towards her. June’s experience was similar to Carrie’s in this respect. Carrie "broke down" immediately following her robbery - crying uncontrollably. She had a premonition the credit union was going to be mad at her because "I just let this person walk out with one-thousand dollars and was unable to give him the bait-bundle." Carrie felt confused, scared, mad, and a sense of being alone both during and after the robbery. In a wave of what seemed like callous failed management empathy Carrie faced a wall of what she perceived to be management criticism and indifference following her robbery - and for a period of one year afterwards. Following Alice’s robbery she sought information about what the event was. She experienced an extremely powerful reaction to her robbery as she was huddled underneath her desk. The full impact seems to have been deeply encapsulated initially but came out in two stages about one-year apart. First, over seven years after her original robbery, following another robbery and then, during the course of the first research interview - over eight years after her robbery. Alice expressed "amazement" that "it’s still in me...the picture in my brain, it’s still there." Alternately, Catherine was very pleased with the support her branch received from the organization in the way of practical help following the robbery. This provides a positive example of corporate empathy towards staff trauma. She was in conflict with her manager (who was not present during the robbery) who gathered staff together several
days after the robbery and "told them how they should feel." This created resentment. Catherine became angry with repeated requests from others wanting to know what happened during their robbery - she felt this "was a little macabre." She resolved this view by eventually coming to the conclusion that maybe that is just others getting information as a means to learn what to do in the event they are involved in their own robbery. George questioned the quality of post-robbery support from management. He felt for the first few days he had to convince people what he experienced was a jolt. He felt disillusioned he was asked to just return to his duties immediately after the robbery. The court case following his robbery left him feeling embarrassed and "discredited." He felt he had lost some of his self-respect and felt lessened in the eyes of others. He felt the robbery was a violation - having his "right to work taken away" - a feeling of anger. Jenny attempted to follow normal patterns after her event. She was aware of a need to talk a lot. There was a trace of unease concerning the "final escalation" and the question of the robber breaking into their physical workspace, but these themes would not become more fully elaborated until almost one year later. Joe used the post-robbery period to reclaim his branch by immediately supporting staff and taking charge. He encountered a great deal of "insensitivity" from head office staff which set a very negative tone from that point until Joe quit the bank - some six months later. Joe anguished over his sense of "impotence" in the post-robbery environment for a time until the second robbery (two weeks later) during which he gave chase following the robbery and felt a sense of "redemption" to some extent - though the same conflict with head office negative
comments re-emerged following their return visit after second robbery as well.

Coping Immediately After

Coping following the robbery events revealed a broad pattern. Respondents reported a variety of strategies to be significant. These ranged from utilizing reassuring self-talk and specific defensive protective strategies, as demonstrated by Gwen - to receiving strong corporate empathic responding which served Catherine well as part of her coping in the post-robbery environment. Catherine also cites the group meetings and counsellor-led post-robbery staff debriefings as useful in her coping.

Coping after the robbery was varied. Gwen coped partly by making physical contact with upset staff; by "spiking" her keys through her fist - a security measure - when coming from the underground parking to the branch; by encouraging and appreciating "everybody being open [with] communications...and can talk about how they felt...was very helpful." She "places a high value on counselling. I don't think I would have gotten past the guilt without counselling." She also immediately "had to have a dog" after her robbery: a recovery, security measure. She also required medication for sleep and anxiety. Seeking information about what happened was central for Alice - who heard but did not visually witness her robbery. Joe's main coping after the robbery seems to have been sticking up for his staff against the "insensitivity" of the Head Office staff - which represented a vivid instance of a failure of corporate empathy from Joe's perspective. Joe also cites the social aspects of going out together as a staff following the
second robbery as central in coping and unifying the group. Both Joe and George coped partly by giving chase to their robbers following their respective events, though the possible dangers inherent in this activity were not lost on either of them. George cites talking with others who have had a similar experience as important for his coping. Jenny also cited the absolute value of talking out her thoughts and feelings as central in the immediate time-period following the robbery. She also noted the value of the counsellor-led group debriefings as important to her coping. Carrie coped primarily by many discussions with family and friends immediately following the robbery. Immediately after the robbery she kept saying repeatedly to the police officer "he said he would shoot me, he said he would shoot me, and I'd just break down...I'd never had my life threatened before." Like Joe, Carrie experienced a vivid demonstration of failed corporate empathy as her management seemed to react negatively towards her - in many ways - for a period of almost one-year, at which time she quit and moved to another financial institution. June sought "routines, a focus" with which to "return to normal."

Coping Long-term

Coping over time for the respondents consisted of a variety of developments ranging from needing to change environments (June, Joe, George, Carrie); short and longer term therapy (Gwen, Julie, Carrie, Alice); eventually having the pieces fall into place, as with Jenny's insight about how her robber's intrusion into her side of the workspace had affected her so deeply; and Alice's "catharsis" during the research interview -
eight years after her robbery event. It is clear that coping is not time-limited or discrete: each of the respondent's stated unequivocally that the event is "still with me." In some instances coping over time does not lead to recovery. Gwen's situation over one-year after her robbery is in some ways worsening as the imagery of her robber now appears frequently either at work, or in the vicinity around work: her vulnerability is greater now than it was shortly after the robbery. Gwen is fairly certain she will have to leave her job in order to shake the pervasive feeling of fear about how she would handle another robbery and the increasingly intrusive sense that the area around work is unsafe. In a sense Gwen is coping in the long-term by "anxious wishing," keeping her fingers crossed she is not involved in another robbery before she can quit. One aspect of Joe's long-term coping was to put aside hopes that he would have his dilemma understood by anyone and just try to carry on with life. This came out as he stated after the research interview that he felt tremendously relieved that finally it seemed his story, his reasons for his decision to stay in his office during his robbery - were understood. Where Joe had a need to have another understand and be able to provide some empathy others, like Jenny, Alice, and Carrie needed time to understand their own emerging feelings about various aspects of the robbery - which would only become available to them over time. Carrie felt better situated within herself when she "went down and positively identified the guy who robbed me...that made me feel like now I was in control again, I was in charge, it wasn't him anymore, it was me taking over."

Joe knew what he wanted understood but could not bring himself to communicate
it. Others could not communicate what bothered them because they could not yet themselves articulate the faint, abstract, dawning sensations until events later helped to crystallize and set in relief what their underlying concerns were as when, after over one-hour into the research interview - Alice noticed "little tears in my eyes" for which she was truly surprised but soon realized it was emotions she still had from the event eight years earlier that were being released as a result of the intensive, detailed discussion in progress.

Shifting Patterns

Certain patterns have been noted over time with a number of the respondents. These trends have the structure of initially faintly-sketched awareness which emerge over time or clearly noted instances during the robbery which shift with the passage of time. Their movement may be generally described as directional: from implicit to explicit, and as dialectical, from part to whole. Themes include disintegration of the borderzone of safety (Gwen); feelings of vulnerability, unsafety (Carrie); the sense of the impact of the depth of feeling of the spatial-relations intrusion - "rule-following" behaviour - which was only grasped over one year after Jenny's robbery; unresolved robbery fragments emerging over time to cast light on certain feelings (Jenny); a sense of impotence, role-loss experienced during the robbery submerged for lack of an empathic listener (Joe) only to be presented to an "listener" during the research interview; long-term effects of Carrie's "violation of the mind." Though some, like June and Gwen, simply validated what they
already knew about themselves (were capable; could function under pressure) others had experiences more revealing - discovery-based, both of themselves and the effects of the robbery dynamics.

These themes or discoveries represented facets of the robbery experience that tended to move from implicit to explicit. For example, over the course of one-year, Gwen’s visual imagery of the "intruder" shifted from its original dream-like, nocturnal niche to a more consciously experienced "presence" which the respondent also refers to as a "shadow." In recent times the "presence" is quite noticeable not only in the underground parkade and in the branch, but in the halls, in the surrounding area of the branch and even in the larger community of the neighbourhood where she works. When she is away from work there is a noticeable decrease in potency and intensity of the image - which consists of an image of the face of the weasel-like "rodent" wearing a kangaroo-hooded jacket. The visual imagery has shifted at home from night-time to intruding as she is at her dressing-table each morning as she prepares for work. Gwen’s images of the robber originally was faintly sketched, limited to vague night dreams. She also experienced a slow disintegration of her borderzone of safety. Initially she felt unsafe specifically at work or in the underground parking at work. Over time this feeling of vulnerability, unsafety increased and expanded to include the entire neighbourhood and surrounding community where her bank is located.

Jenny’s awareness shifted from implicit to explicit partly due to a recent event bringing into full relief the severe spatial-relations intrusion of her robbery compared with
similar dangerous robberies that did not violate the spatial-relations of the branch boundaries: the principle issue being degree of "rule-following." That this "entitlement" had always bothered Jenny is clear in her story but its meaning only became more fully clarified when she heard about a robbery at her branch - which occurred in her absence - that did not involve a violation of space but was still similar in type: it was still a "take-over type robbery...I understand there was a gun, there were some rules people were following, and so this guy [from the original robbery] wasn't even following the rules he was supposed to be following." The gradual realization of what the violation of spatial relations meant to her was brought into more clarity for Jenny after the second robbery. At first she thought it didn't seem traumatic because she was not there. Then she thought maybe it didn't have the impact because she was "becoming an old hand at this." In exploring her feelings with other staff who were directly involved in the robbery she discovered they also were feeling much as she: not that threatened by the recent robbery. It was still a branch take-over type robbery with the robbers ready with their guns displayed. The robbers still wanted all the cash, but something was different. She finally realized the difference was he didn't cross the defined work boundaries: "He stood on his side of the counter the whole time, so he didn't invade our space. The other guy [from the original robbery] would come behind the counter, would be directing more of our movements, like 'I'm in charge here.' And that seems to be a huge difference in how we've reacted to it...that was interesting, I hadn't really thought about that before." Jenny also realized that the final escalation over the locked cash drawer never did get
resolved. During the second interview she wondered, for the first time, if that could have some effect of her - could be lingering, unresolved, affecting her in some way: "I mean I wonder just in talking about it now - if I never...I didn’t in any way resolve that final escalation. It just ended. So I wonder if that has a residual effect." There is a haunting, menacing quality of 'not knowing' that had become rooted, embedded at the end-point of the robbery - one year ago. One of its effects was to create additional anxiety for Jenny’s sense of safety, exposure, vulnerability: "If someone has a gun they can do what they want..."

Joe continued to struggle with the loss of several roles during his robbery: his role as "protector," a sense of impotence at his inability to do anything during the robbery, and his lack of having anyone understand what he went through during his one-minute robbery one year ago. As he says "My other half of my world [work] just sort of stopped." The event disabled Joe’s protector role and rudely dispelled the idea that choice is purely an internal matter. The post-robbery activity helped him return to his "manager" role much as it did with Jenny. Joe’s typical-self - who he staked himself to be in his role as manager - was hard hit by this robbery event and the jarring dislocation he faced as he decided to stay in his office. The event "left a void" that may refer both to what got "torn" from him during the robbery and the apparent failure he has experienced ever since: "...the brave act that I felt I did - and no one understands this - that I did sit right at my desk and stared at the door and if they came in they’d get me and nobody else." This unseen, "unknown" role that Joe substituted for a more visible role
of entering the robbery drama seems insufficient to vindicate his own judgment that he acted in a "hiding" - less than manly, way. This is the area of maximum impact as Joe recalls the story: "The most memorable [part] about the robbery was just sitting there and feeling so bloody helpless while my staff was out there on [the] front lines, you know, being abused and intimidated and threatened...in a life-threatening situation - while I'm looking at the four ladies pressed against my wall in my office..."

Carrie retains some vestiges of feeling "punished" by the management from her former bank. She continues to feel a decreasing sense of safety in her life that ebbs and flows. She feels angry at the "violation of the mind" brought about from her robbery over two years ago - which consisted of the violation of the robbery then the violation from the "criticism and surveillance" she felt put under from the management in her old branch, which together constituted the feeling of "violation of mind."

Legacy

Continuing effects are present with all the respondents. Several patterns may be noted. All state that their various effects "Are still with me." Gwen's experience has worn her down over the eighteen months since the robbery. She is currently preparing to leave the bank in order to escape the constant imagery she experiences at, or around work, and to rid herself of the possibility of facing another robbery event. "I know the face better than I know my own...I'm still carrying this idiot around with me, he's everywhere I go, he's in my thoughts, he's an intruder...like he just won't come away."
Gwen's fear is not based on feelings of powerlessness or helplessness: her fear is that if another robbery occurs she will become so angry she will "lose it" and escalate an incident which could harm others. Her helpless feelings are based on not being able to shake the unsafe feelings the imagery evokes: "I feel helpless around it...there's nothing I do that's working." June has to push herself to go to work at times. There is still some resentment towards the organization, though lessened in past months, since she pushed for, and after "fifteen transfer requests," finally got her transfer to another branch. June feels the event has changed her and that she will never get over the robbery event. She sees herself as more self-reliant. She is more vigilant towards safety and security. She states clearly that: "It takes time to deal with it, but I don't think you ever get over it...It's changed me for who I am." Alice carried some aspects of her robbery eight years ago up to the time of the research interview when she "amazed" herself that "tears were coming...It carries with me, It's still in me." The robbery event is fixed, etched in her mind: "It's still in me...the picture in my brain, it's still there." Her impressions seemed stored somatically. A recent robbery brought everything back: hands shaky, sweating, flushed-feeling, tears: "same as after the first one."

Catherine felt positive about herself and felt the experience increased her personal sense of competence. Recent "smash-and-grab" computer thefts overnight at her branch have brought up tension, increased vigilance directed towards safety and security measures. After over one year Catherine says of the robbery "I get an upset stomach...I don't like to think about it." Speaking more inclusively, Catherine states that: "We [staff]
can't relax ourselves anymore. We have more of a violated feeling."

George retains a sense of increased empathy for others who experience robberies as a result of his own experience of lack of empathy from the management of his organization. Some aspects of the trial still create discomfort after over two and one-half years. George never knew the final outcome of the court case. The detective was supposed to inform him but that never happened. It was "disappointing" to him because "you...want to know the final outcome, you're kind of left in some sort of limbo." It was important for him to know if justice had been done, and whether "the guy is still out there." He was never able to find out about his case. "I didn’t hear back from him [the detective]...he said he’d get back to me...so I assume nothing more happened or he just forgot." George still experiences moments where he has a sense the first robber is still "out there" watching him: "it occurred to me walking to my car that I’m going to...that death was also in my dream, I remember that as well, walking to my car, and this guy coming out and getting me and shooting me...you wake up just before he fires the gun but at that point you do get cautious about it..." The court case darkened his hope for getting a sense of fairness and justice. This left him "angered." His hopes for vindication, "redemption" fell apart. At the present time if someone puts a piece of paper in front of him at work (he currently works in a "paperless" computer-based branch) it brings back some of the feelings from the original robbery: "...you gasp for a bit of breath, it's slowly becoming less and less...someone violates your space and violates you, then from there, there’s always something that’s going to trigger it back as long as I’m in that
environment, where I'm still face-to-face with clients, it's going to always be there. I have to completely decide to get away from this type of profession, if I want to rid myself 100% of that...I would sum it up to almost feeling like you're being raped.

Jenny still struggles with the removal of her manager's role during her robbery. This is directly linked with the robber's "entitlement" to enter their work area and just take over, threaten them with his gun, violate "following the rules." The question of what would have happened during the final confrontation, escalation over the closed cash drawer remains in her thoughts. As she says: "It didn't ever get resolved. It just ended." She also retains a sense that anybody, anytime could take over her life if the person had a gun. The spatial violations of her robbery event "blurred" the line between adhering to versus - breaching rule-following. The robber wasn't following the rules. Jenny's memory of the unresolved final escalation functions not as relief at surviving the life-threatening event but as an irritant exposing a permanently unfulfilled possibility that - at times - hovers over her like a storm cloud (she wonders if it didn't ever get resolved - "It just ended"). The "loss of control, that is my worst part. And that is threatening to me...feeling like I'm not in charge and that's the part that got carried forward for me particularly for me later"

In Joe's case "closure" seemed to have fallen short of redeeming his ego, pride, protector's role. The disruption he experienced to these roles seem not to have been assimilated, fully integrated into his sense of self. Joe was left with lasting feelings of "impotence...not being understood," and lack of closure in any complete sense: "It's still
there - I couldn't believe it." As he reflects over one year later: "The whole thing changes, you know, brings everything into perspective...you could be vulnerable. And I think that probably there was a crashing down of so many things. My other half of my world. My work world. It just sort of stopped."

Carrie states bluntly that: "Things are never the same now." She experienced routine decreases in feelings of safety. Disillusionment with the organization persisted one-year - until she finally quit. She has a sense of lasting alterations in how she thinks and feels in her community, especially regarding feelings of safety, security - there is a sense of loss of what was previously more a care-free attitude towards being out in the community. This sense of physical insecurity has heightened as a result of what she calls a "violation of the mind." Over eighteen months after her robbery she has a vivid perception of the part that had to do with the robbery and the role of failed empathy from management: "The robbery made it a violation. The treatment from management made it a violation of the mind." At the one-year anniversary of the robbery she became nervous, agitated, making many errors. Management was threatening to fire her. She felt alone, didn't have anyone to turn to. She felt "punished"; she felt "hostility" from management. She felt angry and confused: the robber robbed her - she felt she did well during the robbery, yet she paid a daily price for the event, facing a hostile management attitude day-after-day. She feels that the daily negative attitude from work forced her to go outside to communicate her feelings more effectively. She feels this was a gain as she did learn the importance of not keeping her feelings inside. In addition to feeling under
"surveillance" at work, she lost her sense of belonging, involvement from her previous high activity level at work. Constant criticism, threat of job loss, caused her to more and more "feel sick about going to work." She eventually quit which she considers "the best thing that happened to me."

The eight narratives contained a depth and richness of detail that may be further organized and presented in Table form as a summary of categories (Table 2 on the following pages).
Table 2. Summary of Categories

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| **1. Foreshadowing-Onset**<br>(Function: orients responding, "echo-location" device) | a) massive "disbelief"
  b) experienced but not apprehended
  c) "tip of the iceberg" (Carrie, Alice)
  d) apprehended but dismissed (Carrie)
  e) conjunction-disjunction with existing schemas ("commotion," "irate customer": Alice, Jenny)
  f) presumptions of "rule-following" transported whole into robbery event (Jenny) |
| **2. Principal Dynamics**<br>(Function: broad framework/meanings, network of relations) | During
  a) fear=control, anger=loss of control; "tug-of-war"; retaliation-loss; aggression-submission cycles (Gwen)
  b) escalation - de-escalation cycles; "monumental self-control"; loss of control (Jenny)
  c) "torn to pieces"; helplessness, "impotent"; sense of self/role loss (Joe)
  d) fear of making a mistake (Jenny)
  After
  a) conflict with management: failed corporate empathy (Joe, June)
  b) seeking event details: information (Alice)
  c) staff-relationship disruptions (Gwen, Carrie)
  d) empathic failures: in-branch management (Carrie, George) |
| **3. Internal Dynamics**<br>(Function: local meanings, moment-to-moment direction) | During
  a) trigger response in isolation from others (Gwen)
  b) detachment - event-vigilance cycles (June)
  c) "mostly all I took in was the gun" (Jenny)
  d) preservation of self versus required action for event "safe passage"
  After
  a) daily work pattern disruption: concentration, anxiety/panic, imagery
  b) "broke down": confused, mad, scared (of event, of management response)
  c) return to normalcy of routines (balance, reports, make tea, seek information)
  d) irritation with others (Catherine, George, Joe)
  e) event-related feelings of guilt (Gwen, June)
  f) support from management (Catherine)
  g) reclaim "ownership" of branch; intensification of role-loss "impotence" (Joe)
  h) fear, startle easily, anxiety (Gwen, Carrie, George, Jenny, Alice, Julie)
  i) short-term concentration and memory disruptions (Carrie, June): "I lost my memory. I felt very stupid." (Gwen) |
| **4. Coping** | During
  a) "safety of others" intentions
  b) event compliance (i) repetition, reassurance, reasoning statements; (ii) glaring, withholding, open defiance: dilemma's of choice
  c) use of objects: desk as concealment (Alice); desk as neutral "staging ground" for possible robber confrontation (Joe); handing robbers money, traveller's cheques; self as object/"tool" (June); counters as "boundaries"; office door closed served to "isolate" staff from event (Joe)
  d) "redemption": noting robber appearance for police report after (George, Carrie); challenging compliance (Gwen, George); decision to "take the hit" if robbers burst in office (Joe)
  e) sense that robber "believed us" (Jenny) |
### Table 2. Summary of Categories (continued)

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| **4. Coping (cont'd)**         | **After: Short-Term**  
   a) tearfulness, emotional release; informal group commiseration; local acts of kindness  
   b) personal strategies: self-talk; personal security measures; positive empathic responding from others; information; talking  
   c) group debriefings by counsellors; staff sharing amongst themselves; maintenance of group cohesion  
   d) "rescuing" staff from management criticism, disrespect, blame  
   e) support from organization (Catherine)  
   **After: Long-term**  
   a) leaving the robbery environment: transfer, termination  
   b) therapy  
   c) encapsulating core elements of trauma (Joe, Alice, George, Gwen)  
   d) reluctant acceptance: "resignation" (George, Joe)  |
| **5. Robbery Type:**            | **Spatial Relations**  
   (Function: preservation of role and integrity of self; physical, psychological boundaries)  
   a) "contained" (one-on-one) robberies (Carrie, George)  
   b) "entitled" (take-over) robberies (Catherine, Jenny, Gwen, June)  
   c) "vicarious" (take-over) robberies (Alice, Joe)  |
| **6. Shifting Patterns**        | **During**  
   a) disjunction of cognitive schemas, relevance structures: current experience insufficient to meet problem with available stock of knowledge: "I just couldn't believe it"  
   b) shifting between removal, detachment, and presence (June)  
   c) attempt to alert - determination to handle in isolation (Carrie)  
   d) urge to flee, hide, "duck down" - determination to act to preserve safety of others (June, Catherine, Carrie)  
   e) invasion of space, loss of control, "not in control," yet "being in charge of him being in charge" (Jenny)  
   **After**  
   a) disintegration - reintegration of borderzones of safety  
   b) vulnerability, corruption - conservation, enhancement of work relations (Joe, Gwen, Carrie, June, George)  
   c) curiosity-based learning (Jenny); "hard-knocks" learning (June, Carrie, George)  
   d) shifting imagery: night to day (Gwen)  
   e) event insight ("entitlement") from comparison of present to past; residual effect of "final escalation" (Jenny) |
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| 7. **Controlling Principle of Narrative**  
(the heart of the experience) | **During**  
- a) robbery pre-history; outrage at event; aggression-submission cycles (Gwen)  
- b) dismissal of urge to hide - enaction of "safety of others" values (June, Catherine, Carrie)  
- c) fear of discovery; fear of death (Alice)  
- d) massive disbelief (Carrie, George, Joe); "redemption" (George, Joe); shattering of role - the "void" thus created: "impotence," "torn to pieces" (Joe)  
- e) "monumental" self control; reducing robber's escalation; fear of making a mistake; "not in control" (Jenny)  
- f) alone on "home" ground (Carrie)  
**After**  
- a) corporate empathic failures: "sanctuarial stress" (Carrie, George, Joe)  
- b) "discredited" at the trial (George) |
| 8. **Legacy**  
(The meaning today: six months to eight years after originating robbery) | a) durational versus chronological time: duration of impacts,"co-temporality"  
- b) increased empathy for others (George, Carrie)  
- c) "violation of the mind" (Carrie)  
- d) sense of safety/security: persistent/intermittent "border guard" vigilance (Gwen, Carrie, Jenny)  
- e) "ice in my veins": fear, jumpiness, startle easily at times  
- f) disruption of hope (Joe, Carrie)  
- g) "He's still out there watching me" (George)  
- h) "Things are never the same" (June, Gwen, Alice, George, Joe, Jenny, Carrie)  
- i) "what if's"; "coulda, woulda, shoulda" |
| 9. **Experience of Time** | **During**  
"a minute...it feels like a heck of a lot longer"; "sixty seconds but it feels a lot longer; "four minutes but it felt a lot longer"; "time stood still, frozen"  
**After**  
"It's gotta go away. It feels like it was yesterday" (Gwen, one-year after)  
**Components** (Function: time slows down creating its impact through the recording, encoding of "multiple frames")  
- a) "frame-by-frame" experience builds emotional event-tension  
- b) attracts, creates intense "points" of concentration  
- c) activates a compulsive consideration of the "etched" material  
- d) distorts the "normalcy" of the moments just before the robbery event  
- e) respondents experience extreme difficulty in making these "multiple frames" coalesce with the rest of their lives  
- f) "reversible continuity": Alice, instead of recreating her story returned to it - yet her presence in the room dramatically illustrated the merging of time senses that created meaning through the very manner of her narrative.  
- g) temporal experience not unitary, quantitative: "clock-time" - but more a manifold, slowed, qualitative experience: "robbery-time" |
Chapter VI.
Discussion

The brain is an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern, though never an abiding one; a shifting harmony of sub-patterns.

- Sir Charles Sherrington,
  \textit{(Man and His Nature, 1940)}

Traumatic Occurrences

Traumatic occurrences, once experienced, are established as rememberences. Physical, mental, emotional memories may be available or out of awareness. Memories may easily become inaccurate when new ideas and bits of information are introduced, when new information is added and constantly combined with old stocks of knowledge to form flexible mental schemas. As far back as 1889 Pierre Janet noted (van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991) that once a particular event or bit of information becomes combined and integrated in a larger schema it will no longer be accessible as an individual entity. It might be possible to extend Sir Charles' characterization of the mind as "an enchanted loom" to include the following manner of thinking. Experience abstracted from sense impressions interact with personal relevance structures - structures that imbue an event with meaning.

The context in which meaning is determined, interpreted by pre-existing
relevance structures, the demands of the new context, and the extent to which new experiences are assimilated, accommodated, created and re-created over time form the subject of the present chapter: the discussion of the results of the present study in light of research, existing theory, and the implications for counselling practice, limitations and further research.

The experience of time ("robbery time"), the origin and duration of robbery experiences, post-robbery environment conditions - such as management or corporate empathic failures which may lead to "sanctuarial stress," and the articulation of vicariously experienced robberies all constitute findings from the present study that extend or bring out different aspects of the robbery experience than are currently found in the published bank robbery studies. Differences in the experience of sense of isolation, effects of type of robbery on robbed staff, the timing of onset of the experience of shock and disbelief, some comments on gender differences, and dilemmas of choice, such as robbery compliance-noncompliance, are also examined in connection with existing studies and trauma theory.

**Bank Robbery Studies: Comparative Analysis:**

White (1990) presents a practitioner's viewpoint of robbery trauma with American bank staff. There are a number of points of agreement between his findings and those of the present study. White suggests a widespread trend for robbed staff to want to talk about their experiences afterward; some staff experience shaking and
crying for a few hours after the event; some experience isolation in some cases while some seek or respond favourably to social support. The present research is in accord with these observations. White made a distinction between one-on-one robberies and take-over robberies and reports differential impacts. In addition he placed some importance on the varied reactions which often occur to the same stressor. Differences in individual responding were based on immediate perception, personality and emotional style, and previous history.

White's study (1990) represents one of the few published bank robbery reports available in which the relationship of the robbed person is considered within the person-situation-environment perspective. A number of differences in both degree and kind may be noted in comparing White's (1990) study with the present study.

Listing typical post-event responses such as "sleep disturbances, hyperalertness, intrusive feelings" White (1990) concludes that "Most of course are somewhere in between [those who show little or no impact and those with much more difficulty], and experience mild to moderate symptoms from 1 to 3 days with lingering effects for perhaps a week" (p. 5). This is similar to Leymann's studies (1985; 1990) in which about 90% of his 219 subjects reported few or no symptoms three weeks after the robbery. White (1990) allows that occasionally someone would be adversely affected enough to "never want to attempt teller work again" (p. 5). Similarly, Leymann (1985) found a number of staff little affected as well as one's who were in three or more robberies who often felt "hopeless, more out of control...
without being able to do anything else but quit their jobs" (p. 529).

These results suggest a normal distribution curve where "some show little impact, and resume work with a fair amount of ease...others may never want to attempt teller work again" (White, 1990), with "most [robbed staff] of course somewhere in between" (p. 5). Wanting to "quit" or experiencing "mild to moderate symptoms for 1 to 3 days" after the robbery event did not occur in the present study in either an incidental, or a thematic way.

The results of the present study show a dramatically different pattern with most of the respondents clustered up against the right wall of the curve where the experience would be keenly felt - over time. After fifteen robberies - five years from the last one, a respondent in the pilot study for the present research reported she still feels "ice in my veins when I'm home on my own." June (R2) reported eight months after being taken hostage "you deal with it. But I don't think you ever get over it." After eight years Alice (R3) stated simply: "it's still in me...the picture in my brain...it's still there." When the perspective of duration of effects is pursued through the narratives of the present study a clear and abiding impact presence from the original robbery events casts a long shadow across all the respondent stories.

Leymann (1985; 1988; Leymann & Lindell, 1990) utilized a structured questionnaire format to obtain data from his subjects. White (1990) drew upon his practitioner's experience in working with numerous robbed bank staff for much of the material in his report. White's results are a little more "experience near" than
Leymann’s but none of this group of studies seeks a depth of respondent experience. Differences in results from the present study may be very much affected by these methodological data gathering differences.

Endresen et al (1991) demonstrated the chronic, high stress workload that contemporary bank staff are exposed to “mainly due to psychosocial stress and ergonomic problems” (p.218). Global banking de-regulation, increasing technology, and intensive competition due to relaxed trade barriers, homogeneity of financial institution products, modern retail sales techniques all make banking far removed from the traditional "nine-to-five" myth. These factors may contribute to a higher, normal base-line of stress for staff. When a robbery trauma occurs it does so from within the context of an existing "resting" high level of stress. What results may be seen to push staff into the right tail of the normal distribution curve, since the starting point was already far from the lower, more quiet left side of the tail. In other words, staff today have less distance to travel to get very highly stressed. Responding to a survey document questioning symptoms following a robbery - in the absence of careful, detailed discussion with the respondent, may not reflect with much precision the lived experience of the person robbed. Leymann’s (1985) pre-set list of 39 symptoms, presented to his subjects en masse, detaches the individual’s own experiences and creates a free-floating naming of "non-specific symptoms" from which the subjects must choose.

A perpetual high "resting" baseline may make it difficult to discern disturbed
emotional, physical, and behavioral patterns and may obscure their originality and clarity: post-robbery patterns may become less distinguishable against a very demanding, competitive high stress, high performance-pressure occupational background, which may tend to leave staff chronically "on edge."

Phenomenology is a methodology which explicitly seeks the voice of the experiencing person. Leymann's studies (1985; 1988; 1990) - reflecting the cannons of experimental psychology methodology in general, keeps the subject at a distance reflecting the positivistic belief that the "person" is a prime source of error. White (1990) approaches the trauma sufferer more from the person’s point of view but with a corporate slant: "The just-right-amount of response to employee trauma - between a destructive ignoring of the problem, and over-reacting to robberies which gives an anxiety arousing or confusing message to employees, and is a waste of time and money" (p.2). The commodification of "time" as a unit of value, productivity - is very much the lexicon of scientific business management. Part of the difficulty in finding a language to describe robbed staff experiences lies in this difference between language which describes "time" as homogeneous, where time units are equivalent and thought of as units of productivity, versus "time" thought of more as heterogeneous, where time units are experienced differentially, more as a manifold qualitative experience.

As may be seen in many of the meaning units in the present study time is described as "standing still," "frozen," or having a durational property, as when
Gwen (R1) described her robbery of one-year ago as "feeling like it was yesterday." White's (1990) comment on too much time being spent on robbed staff as "a waste of time and money" is a reality from the perspective of time seen as a commodity - as homogeneous units of productive work. The statement makes no sense, however, from the perspective of time experienced qualitatively, laden with trauma fragments, and can be even more confusing when experienced collaterally with corporate linear, "clock-time."

One of the principal findings in the present study is the widespread presence of the durational aspects of the robbery over the course of time. The eight robbery events comprising the basis of the present study ranged in time from sixty seconds to seven minutes. Tangible effects are present - in each respondent, ranging from the most recent robbery onset - one year ago, to the most remote in time, eight years ago. Metaphors based on time as a linear unitary, measurable entity - such as the "passage of time," "that was last month," "time heals," may not apply to the robbed person's qualitative experience of the event. The ground for conflict is partly the explicit or implicit requirement for "getting back to work," too much support being a "waste of time and money." Differences in the perception of temporality between the robbed person and the organization clearly warrants more study.

The experience of "time," the origin and duration of robbery experiences, and post-robbery environment conditions - such as management or corporate empathic failures which may lead to "sanctuarial stress" (Joe, Carrie, June), and articulation of
vicariously experienced robberies all constitute findings from the present study that bring out different aspects of the robbery experience than may be found in the currently published bank robbery studies.

One-on-one type robberies, considered by White (1990) to be less traumatic in comparison with the more visibly dramatic take-over type robberies, can prove to be very problematic but for different reasons than those cited by White. White (1990) notes "what is crucial to remember about solo robbery victims is their isolation." The consequence of this may lead to distressing feelings that "no one else present will share the individual's moment of terror" (p. 3). The elevation of "isolation" to "crucial" - in not having a "moment of terror" shared is at odds with the present study.

"Symptoms" are highly context-sensitive. An exemplification of this in the present study is Carrie (R8) who did experience a sense of feeling "alone" as she initially tried to make eye-contact with her colleagues at the robbery-event onset. Initially frustrated, "a little angry" her thinking quickly changed as she considered what would happen if she did recruit a colleague. Her concern was that it might interfere with her smooth handling of the event. She then strategically endeavoured to not have other staff become aware of the robbery in progress. She chose isolation. In a sense Carrie's "moment of terror" was what might happen if another staff person inadvertently drew the attention of the robber and escalated things - Carrie had already received two death threats from her robber up to that point. Certainly
isolation - having others "on-hand" but not "being with" them, was hard for Carrie. But it became desirable as the event continued. Far from being a source of comfort, the thought of attention or involvement from another staff person became a source of anxiety for her.

"Isolation" was seen by Carrie to be instrumental and not thematic in her experience of her four-minute robbery. A second one-on-one robbery in the present study did conform to White's (1990) thesis of isolation being crucial, but again for different reasons than White attributes. George did experience feelings of isolation but it was less "no one else will share the individual’s moment of terror" (White, 1990, p. 3) and more disbelief that other staff were not more alert - that they could miss what was going on, as if nothing was going on. George felt "some anger" towards other staff and stated that he "always tried to cover others’ backs" by being more aware, more alert to what was going on in the work environment.

The experience of being alone, isolated, is plainly not eliminated just by having others present. The robbery experience seems to force a distinction between "being with" others and having others being "on-hand." Carrie felt "alone in a crowd" on her own "home ground." A one-on-one robbery, if it is not witnessed by others, removes the robbed person from the relational matrix, the network of normal relationships that constitute one's taken-for-granted sense of belonging - one's sense of "being with" others. It reaches deeper than White's (1990) suggestion that "no one will share the individual’s moment of terror." In a sense the moment of terror may
amount less to the unobserved threat level and more to the forced removal of one's sense of belonging-in-the-world. This process was systematically examined in Carrie's narrative in which she bluntly stated that the "failure of management to understand...to be so negative and critical, to punish me...was far worse than the robbery...the robbery was a violation. Management's attitude was a violation of the mind...the robber didn't have anything against me personally. I could get over that."

White (1990) states that "The experience of take-over victims is usually more traumatic than those exposed to one-on-one's, thus we see that the type of robbery can obviously effect the nature of the trauma reactions" (p. 4). The mechanism for delineating staff experience is often based on the "type" of robbery: one-on-one, take-over, branch siege type, hostage-taking type, overnight break in (where the robbers are waiting inside when staff enter the branch in the morning). It seems equally important to also allow for a full measure of the person's point of view about his/her sense of the determination context and as much as possible about what meaning was/is being created from the robbery experience. According to the results from the present study there may be an over-determination of effects based on pre-cast symptom lists (Leymann, 1985; 1988; Leymann & Lindell, 1990) or robbery type (White, 1990) and an under-determination of effects based on the robbed persons own experience.

Rather than the "type" of robbery as the main determinant of staff experience, as suggested by White (1990), or the number of robberies, as suggested by Leymann
(1985), it may be more fruitful to look upon the respondent’s embattled sense of not being up to the robbery situation, the experienced tumult - as with Jenny, or Alice who experienced her robbery, vicariously, underneath her desk - from another part of the branch. In these instances the stable relations of orientation within the referential contexts of the familiar environment are very much disturbed. This is the sense of confusion, or role loss, or loss of authority over mental, emotional, physical functioning which more or less accompanies fear, in varying degrees according to the situation (more with Jenny, Alice, Julie, Joe, Carrie, Catherine - less with George, Gwen).

White (1990) suggests staff "immediately afterward...often experience shock and disbelief" (p. 3). The present study suggests that shock and disbelief - often a sense of "amazement," of the robbery being "unbelievable," do often occur, but these reactions are more related to event foreshadowing-onset and the "during" phases than in White (1990), Leymann (1985; 1990), Manton & Talbot (1990). "Shock and disbelief" certainly can be very noticeable "immediately afterward" but respondents in the present study consistently reported their origins at, or slightly before, the formal onset of the robbery.

The significance of the timing of occurrence of powerful, complex ensembles of experiences such as shock, surprise, disbelief, amazement is that these experiences become part of the original event, and not the offspring, issue of the event. Therefore, theoretically and therapeutically they would need to be considered very
differently - as direct contributors to the original experience, not a byproduct of the experience. They are less derivative of, and more contributory to, overall experience.

Many of the findings in the present study relating to the immediate post-robbery atmosphere are consistent with White's (1990) analysis in which he notes: "some [staff] may want to talk fairly continuously...some may sit, though quite agitated, and request to go home or contact close family members...Shaking and crying are not uncommon...Employees recount with animation and emotion their version of the incident. Hugging and crying...are common" (p. 3). This presents a very consistent picture with the present research findings. White (1990) ends his comments on the immediate responding of staff at this point and shifts his focus describing differences between types of robbery events. Extending White's analysis the present study revealed detailed accounts of the post-robbery environment. Two focal themes emerge from the data: (1) questions of robbed staff compliance, non-compliance during the robbery and, (2) corporate empathic failures after the robbery.

First, in addition to mutually supportive staff-responding, preliminary questions relating to the handling of the robbery begin to emerge and animate the early post-robbery atmosphere. These emotionally charged moments may be organized around many aspects of the experience, for example, the compliance - non-compliance structure. In the robbery foreshadowing phase the peculiar nearness of something coming, but not yet on hand, constituted the structure of the encounter and confrontation of this "detrimental thing." The structural moments of the partial, or
non-compliance occurred (as with Gwen and George) when the detrimental thing was identified as a "robbery" and when the robbed person determined a response in much more of a mixed, or angry manner. The manner of encounter of the staff-person with the robber occurs within the relational network of those present. There are always direct or indirect implications for the others that the robbed staff-person is "there-with." Gwen's direct defiance of her robber put others at greater risk. So much so that a special branch debriefing meeting was called by the branch management to address staff feelings towards Gwen's behaviour. This meeting occurred about one-week after the robbery. Gwen was involved in a take-over robbery. Her actions were very visible to everyone. The immediate post-event atmosphere was highly charged with open and harboured anger towards her behaviour. These aspects of Gwen’s experience constituted a core part of her post-robbery sense of guilt, anger, fear. She was attempting to "prevent emotional harm" to others during the robbery by trying to get the robber to take her on in isolation, though only later did she reflect on what really might have happened if the robber really had "lost it." George was involved in a one-on-one robbery. As far as he was aware no one other than he was aware of the robbery until after, when he called for someone to notify the police as he ran out of the branch in pursuit of the robber. His decision to comply minimally was held in check by his concern for the safety of others, though at several points he bluntly defied the robber’s requests.

Second, corporate empathic failures were clearly central in two cases: Carrie
and Joe. Both cases of "unbelievable insensitivity," (Joe) and "sarcasm, criticism, punishment, direct confrontation" (Carrie) introduced near impossible-to-overcome obstacles into the immediate and longer-term post-robbery recovery environment, for these two respondents. Experiencing significant disruption to the continuity of sense of self incurred during these robberies, Carrie and Joe both moved immediately into hostile "home" ground where corporate and in-branch management behaviour was depicted in one case as the "enemy" (Joe) and in the other case as "unbelievably confusing, negative, cold" (Carrie). Referring to her extended difficulty in getting her organization to agree to transfer her to another branch, to transfer her out of her hostage-taking branch, June referred to her experience as "extremely unfair and disillusioning." In attempting to overcome the inner disorganization of trauma, and to begin to integrate the traumatic event Parson (1984), notes that "no containing, facilitating, nor support can occur in a reception of hostility, abandonment, and blaming" (p. 12). "Containing, facilitating (Winnicott, 1965) requires at least some understanding and support, which in turn, would begin to facilitate a "good enough" post-trauma environment. If there is fragmentation of some aspects of the self - based on three direct death threats during the robbery (Carrie) and the possibility of sparking shooting in Joe's branch take-over robbery - then it is not surprising that these staff experience the confusion of hostile corporate responding as "in some ways worse than the robbery."

Alternately, Catherine cites her post-robbery recovery as greatly enhanced by
the positive response from her Organization in both emotional and practical ways. White (1990) refers to these failures of empathy as "second injuries" and warns against "disciplining an employee for violating procedures during a hold-up, such as having too much cash at one station" (p. 10).

Corporate responding, for better or worse, is an immediate contributing factor to staff post-robbery experiencing. A second, equally vital contributor to the immediate post-event experience is the question of staff compliance. These two aspects are indispensable themes in the individual respondent narratives and form part of the network of relationships that constitute the story. Because of its temporal proximity to the actual robbery event the immediate post-robbery environment may be powerfully influential in sketching, shaping, forecasting tendencies for recovery. Its succession in time fixes the branch milieu, immediately after the robbery event, as the first post-event context the robbed person experiences. For better or worse, the person’s formulated, and formulating robbery thoughts, feelings, experiences are taken from the robbery event to the post-event milieu. "Time and money" are always important considerations in business and need to be considered against possible decrements in productivity from staff who experience empathic failures on top of the often powerfully disturbing effects from the robbery event itself.

In discussing gender differences in response to robbery events Leymann (1990), has suggested that women "have the social competence needed to activate social support...men do not seem to possess the same level of social competence"
He defines social support as consisting of four types: (a) emotional support (esteem, affect, trust), (b) appraisal support (affirmation, feedback), (c) informational support (advice, suggestion, direction), and (d) instrumental support (aid in kind, money, labor, time, modifying the environment). Leymann (1985) also notes that "women's thoughts seem to be continuously occupied with the robbery...women are not only absorbed by this preoccupation at an earlier stage than men, their preoccupation also stays with them longer" (p. 532). He further states that "women do develop a state of anxiety more easily than men; women are more dependent on social relations and social support than men" (p.534). Finally, Leymann (1988) notes that "The reason for sex differences in reactions to extremely stressful events may well be that women tend to re-examine their experiences more often and for longer periods" (p. 131).

The present study suggests experiences are examined, off-and-on, by both males and females. Though gender differences in responding to robbery events was not exclusively a focus of the present study, at times all respondents noted that aspects of the robbery events still persisted. Joe, a twenty-two year banking veteran states: "I can't believe it's still with me"; "It's clear, the value of calling support resources and talk over any problems"; "I've matured from it...life's too short to take any chances...even at my ripe old age"; "I've thought this over for a long time. It brings everything into perspective and what's important and what isn't." Joe seems to have understood the value of social support, has reflected deeply on his experience of one-
year ago, has given direction and support to others since who have been in robberies: "I phoned him at home and said 'listen, I know what you're going through...you should talk to a counsellor...I'll be glad to come over and talk with you'." There is a clear value placed on both accepting, and providing social support in Joe's case.

George states that "I go out of my way to support other staff who I know were in a robbery...I know what that's like...I can be of some help...guide them, listen to them." George relied on his family and his friends for the first while after the robbery to help him get settled. He was very disappointed the management in the branch "was not more aware of what I was going through...what had just happened to me...a few days after he [manager] apologized for not being more supportive after the robbery...then it was okay." Carrie places the same value on helping others: "You just go to them, help them, support them...how you feel might not be how someone else feels...listen to them, how they feel."

Individual differences in responding following traumatic events no doubt do exist. Gender differences no doubt do exist. However, the present study - based on anecdotal comments by study respondents, tend not to fit comfortably with Leymann's (1985; 1988; 1990) sketch. The two males in the present study seemed able to both get and give social support: emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental. The females in the present study, especially June, Catherine, and Jenny appear to not have become "continuously occupied with the robbery...absorbed by this preoccupation." Reflection was manifest with all respondents. Preoccupation was
not. Gwen may be the exception, where her constant imagery has an insomniac quality that never seems to rest. It was not noted that males in the present study were less anxious than the females. June (the woman taken hostage) appeared to recover more quickly than most others, despite her extreme high exposure to violence. Joe and George both commented that they "still get jumpy": George, if someone suddenly shoves a piece of paper at him while he is at his wicket; Joe is particularly responsive to certain types of loud noises in his branch. Finally, there did not appear to be a gender difference in the degree to which males and females "re-examined their [robbery] experiences more often and for longer periods," as predicted by Leymann. It was noted in the present study that the female respondents were not reluctant to utilize social support - though this was not uniformly true: Gwen had to be continuously encouraged, coaxed into talking with a therapist and taking some time off work, following her robbery. She is "used to handling things myself."

Nothing in the present study could be considered definitive regarding gender differences. The differences noted are a response to Leymann’s review which are based on structured interviews and survey forms. Methodological differences seem important in understanding the differences between the present study and Leymann’s group of bank robbery studies.
Implications For Trauma Theory

Referring to the effects of multiple robberies experienced, Leymann (1985) states that "victims" may either get accustomed to them or that the effect is further exhaustion. He cites Seligman's (1975) "learned helplessness" concept in support of the latter theory. Leymann notes that individuals who have experienced several "frightening events" show a much higher incidence of certain stress symptoms than those who have experienced one or two robberies. The increased symptoms include nightmares, vague sense of fear, irritability, insecurity, headaches, concentration problems, weeping, restlessness, feeling of isolation. Leymann (1985) cites these "cognitive processes" as being more intensified for multiple robbery staff and concludes that people seem to find their situation more hopeless, more out of their control, the more often they are involved in robberies, where "they are victimized without being able to do anything else but quit their jobs" (529).

Seligman's (1975) "learned helplessness" concept suggests that when an individual's response to a situation seems independent of the outcome the person may feel helpless, ineffective, feel a loss of authority over effective functioning. Seligman (1975) initially proposed three primary effects from a state of learned helplessness: (1) decrease in motivation which may undercut one's desire to respond, (2) slowed learning capacity (cognitive deficits), (3) an emotional state of depression. Results from the present study do not conform to Seligman's learned helplessness model, nor Leymann's (1985) utilization of learned helplessness concepts, as applied to robbed
bank staff. Respondents described a much more complex ensemble of thoughts, feelings, behaviours than Leymann's (1985) more linear formula which reads:

frequency of robberies leads to listlessness, enervation, decreased hope which leads to loss of sense of control and ends with robbed staff having very few choices, the main one being "[un]able to do anything else but quit their jobs." Many of the meaning units in the present study contradict the strength of Leymann's (1985) findings. Based on the texts in the present study Leyman's findings may underestimate the human will, determination, and the power of the human imagination to heal. He seems to discount the powers of human creativity and originality. An exemplification of this from Carrie (R8) after her third robbery brings these points home with clarity: "I feel strong again now and that I'm not going to let anybody take my work away from me" - then, switching banks to rid herself of failed management empathy, she states: "It's probably the best thing I've done. I've been involved in two more robberies since then...the branch has pulled together..I've been promoted...I'm doing a lot better...this new organization shows they care for people."

No respondents in the present study quit their job as a direct result of the robberies. Each respondent has been in three or more robberies, except Joe, who had two robberies. Failed empathy afterwards is cited as a much richer explanatory device for understanding post-robbery difficulties than are incidents that occurred during the robbery events, or simply the frequency of robbery events, or the type of robbery. Effectively delivered corporate responding following a robbery is cited as a
key post-robbery recovery factor in Catherine’s case (R4).

Seligman’s reformulated learned helplessness model (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978), which is not cited in Leymann’s studies, introduced attribution of cause to experiences in which one’s response and outcomes are independent. The reformulated model suggests a debilitating loss of self esteem under conditions of continued ineffectiveness. Loss of self esteem is considered in some cases in the present study, however, no instances of debilitating severity seem to occur. Carrie and June, for example, both managed to overcome their post-robbery difficulties with support, "stubbornness," lots of talking, and persisting in the belief that solutions were possible. The question of learned helplessness was simply not a factor despite overwhelming robbery trauma and obstructed empathic corporate responding, in June’s case, and one-year of "punishment" from management, in Carrie’s case. Both June and Carrie experienced three or more robberies.

Freud (1920) stated that the aftermath of trauma consisted of the repeated return of traumatic material fuelled by the repetition compulsion - as the activating principle, and alternating with defense against remembering or repeating the trauma - as the explanatory schema. This seems consistent with Alice’s (R3) experience where, for years she would pre-occupy herself with "gardening, night school, her daughter." During the research interview, Alice’s affect from the robbery eight years ago coalesced with her specific verbalized memories of her robbery horror - hiding underneath her desk "waiting to be harmed or killed." She commented specifically
on the occurrence by stating clearly - in a surprised tone: "...tears coming out of my eyes...I feel this way now. It [the research interview] brought everything back. It's still there. That incident is still there. It carries with me. It's still in me...the picture in my brain, it's still there." Though it is not possible to say with precision what defenses she may have used over the course of time, it seems likely that the concept of repression may offer an understanding of Alice's experience. Isolation spares the idea but banishes the affect. Dissociation keeps both affect and idea in consciousness but the significance of such associations is obscured through converting trauma fragments into physical symptoms, or associations become murky through memory disruptions. In repression the idea is banished from consciousness while the affect associated with the idea is preserved. Freud's (1939/1953) concept of the return of the repressed may apply in Alice's case.

Horowitz (1986; 1993) has taken Freud's fundamental ideas of tendency to repeat the trauma and the tendency to defend against these repetitions and translated them into information-processing language. In his theory "intrusion" (repetition), and "denial" (defense) oscillate until cognitive processing of the trauma can be completed. Horowitz's (1986) completion tendency of cognitive processing is equivalent with Freud's (1949) repetition compulsion, but focuses less on the importance of infantile neurosis and disorders of early ego, and more on the role of imagery and thoughts which lead to painful affects, which leads to "controls" (defenses). Gwen (R1) in the present study exemplifies this intrusive, cognitive re-experiencing both in thought and
visual imagery. Her imagery is very vivid, persistent, and becoming increasingly intrusive. It has shifted from pre-sleep, sleep occurrences (hypnagogic in Horowitz’s terms) to fully conscious, wake states (hypnopompic, in Horowitz’s terms). Her imagery is well encapsulated and functions as disruptive primarily at her work place, or in the immediate geographic area around her branch location. Gwen believes the image got "cemented" when she assisted with the police sketch artist’s rendition of the robber in order to prepare "wanted" posters. During this "gruelling" three hour process she reports having "squeezed my eyes shut to bring up the exact details of his face many times." She can relate the potency of the image partly to an earlier experience in her family, and partly to her later realization that her defiant, sometimes aggressive behaviour towards the robber could have caused him to "lose it and really do some damage to staff." In addition to Gwen, some degree of intrusive thoughts were experienced by some respondents though, except Gwen, not "debilitating" as the literature suggests. In accordance with both Freud and Horowitz, repeated recollections and expression of painful affects associated with the robbery, coupled with support from others, seemed to help most respondents master the disturbing trauma elements. However, with workplace bank robbery, these response patterns may not be as prominent in traumatic situations as suggested by the literature. June, taken hostage for seven minutes during her robbery, experienced little in the way of re-experiencing, intrusive thoughts or images, or disruptive cognitive thoughts. After, she did experience anxiety related to being enclosed in an elevator, or being
"cornered" at work. She was also very avoidant of the "business service desk" which was her location at the moment she was grabbed by the robber and taken hostage. This would be consistent with "avoidance of symbolic reminders" (Horowitz, 1993, p. 53). June did report a prior history of "anxiety/panic bouts." The quality of her description of her post-robbery experience seems to be relatively free of expected trauma responding, given the very violent nature of her being taken hostage. The present study does not allow for systematic examination of personality factors, such as stubbornness, resilience, and so on. It is difficult to determine how much of her responding may be due to personal variables. But the nature of her experience and her fairly uncomplicated return to full functioning does seem to provide a "negative" instance of what might be expected from someone in such an intensive, volatile hostage-taking situation.

Several assumptions made by Constructivist Self Development Theory (McCann & Perlman, 1990) are relevant for the present study. CSDT states that the trauma, by definition, requires accommodation, or a modification in cognitive schemas, beliefs, presuppositions. Because the disruptions induced by the trauma occurs in psychologically central areas (the self, the psychological needs, cognitive schemas) the accommodation process is difficult and painful. The effect of the disruptions are that "In essence...trauma disrupts one's central needs and alters, disrupts, or disconfirms one's beliefs, assumptions, and experiences in those central need areas" (McCann & Perlman, 1990, p. 61). Effects from upset beliefs are vividly
Joe stated that following his robbery he experienced a "... big crash down...my work world...it just sort of stopped." His self capacities, which in CSD theory would serve to regulate self esteem consisting of the ability to tolerate strong affect, ability to be alone without being lonely, to calm oneself, and to regulate self-loathing - these capacities remained intact. His ability to regulate interactions with others (ego resources in CSDT) were more of a concern. Some factors constituting ego resources such as ability to introspect, willpower, initiative, ability to take perspective - these seem to have been preserved through his robbery. He states jokingly of himself that "my ego...is probably twenty too high..." This reference suggests something about the core issue which has to do with his "impotence" at having to sit helplessly in his office, where he later referred to himself as "hiding," being "wimpy." The area of psychological needs and cognitive schemas seem to be the areas hardest hit. Drawing on the work of Julian Rotter (1954) McCann & Perlman (1990) posit "frame of reference, safety, trust/dependency, independence, power, intimacy, esteem" (p. 17) as comprising core features of psychological needs. In these terms Joe was devastated in his loss of authority over his branch during the robbery and his core ability to provide for, and meet, the safety needs of staff. His beliefs about himself as "immune" from a robbery occurring to him, his "[work] world crashing down" on him after the robbery, his sense of being "torn apart" at the anguish during the robbery, and his encounter with the "void": all these represented
potent threats to the way he organized his experience of himself and his world. This is very consistent with Constructivist theory. CSDT proposes that "disruptions in schemas are most disturbing to individuals when they occur in need areas that are most central to them" (p.55). This is consistent with Joe's experience.

Joe did not experience what Constructivist theory, and many other trauma theories - consider to be the hallmark of post-trauma reactions: he did not note reexperiencing occurrences, either imagery or intrusive recollections which left him feeling as if he were reliving the event (McCann & Perlman, 1990; Horowitz, 1986; Brett & Ostroff, 1985). Instead, his focus was occupied with deciding whether or not he should try to tell someone his story, his experience of being trapped - and, he focussed on his determination not to "ever let that happen again." Danieli (1985) noted the importance of not viewing all people who have experienced trauma as suffering from the same, or a similar syndrome (p.297). In Joe's case, though he did not experience traumatic imagery or similar common trauma disruptions this may simply suggest these effects are not uniformly necessary in order for traumatic experiencing to occur.

Though much is said about individual differences in responding to trauma, June's hostage-taking robbery would be, by most objective standards, harrowing for most people, to say the least. By all accounts she experienced only minimal disruption in the spheres trauma theory predicts (effects to major, or lessor, cognitive schemas; self capacities; ego resources; psychological needs; reexperiencing episodes;
intrusive imagery, thoughts, memory). Her main concerns were dealing with the failure of her organization to approve a transfer for her to another branch and - what for her was regarded as "worse than the robbery" the empathic failure of her father to "recognize he came within a hairs breadth of losing his daughter." This is more than just a case of someone who may just have a "strong constitution" and may just "be resilient" to upheaval. Though June's post-robbery hostage-taking experience was fairly quiet, uneventful, she was greatly affected by two empathic failures: one from her company, one from her father. To an extent this suggests she was not just too numb from the event to experience feelings. It may be that, like Carrie, George, and Joe's experience of corporate failed empathy, the expectation of support from these quarters is so taken-for-granted that the shattering of that belief - the disruption to a core belief, constitutes a powerful disillusioning moment. Carrie, June, and Joe state the post-robbery failures of empathy were much "worse than the actual robbery" events. Whatever impacts may be attributed to the robbery events per se, they seem secondary to the post-robbery atmosphere of failed empathy for Joe, Carrie, and June.

Janoff-Bulman's (1985) "shattered assumption" model proposes that trauma disrupts one's three basic assumptions about self and world. These assumptions include viewing one's self in a positive light, the belief in personal invulnerability, and the belief in a meaningful, orderly world. These beliefs seem to apply to some extent to respondent stories, particularly in instances of empathic failures from the organization or branch management. Janoff-Bulman (1985) cites three factors that
distinguish "victims from non-victims": (1) victims view themselves less positively, (2) believe chance or randomness accounts for unfortunate outcomes, (3) view the interpersonal world as less benevolent. In this model schemas about self and world are disrupted: the disruption of important beliefs, assumptions is one of the hallmarks of trauma.

Though there are points of convergence, these criteria seem not to fit comfortably with the respondents’ experience in the present study. For example, Carrie seems to have gotten through by developing, or drawing upon, a realistic, positive overarching philosophy ("bad things can happen anytime"), and by responding to the trauma - and its extended legacy, by pushing ahead into new growth areas, such as counselling, learning the value of communicating feelings, refusing to be "punished" at work, and refusing to let the robbery, or the failure of management empathy, "take away my chosen work." There were very clear signs of disruption in Carrie’s beliefs about her work environment which "confused" her and made her "angry," but there seemed not to be a shattering, a dis-abling of responding. She did not view herself less positively, she did not seem to account for the experience by chance randomness, nor did she view the world as less benevolent - though she clearly viewed her work environment as less benevolent than she would have ever estimated before her robbery. Her schemas about self and world were disrupted but there was a level of functioning present, perhaps a sense of purpose, that seemed to serve as an over-arching protection against damage at the level of "shattering." The
same seems true for Joe, George, and June, all of whom experienced life-and-death situations - all of whom experienced post-event organizational empathic failures. None of these staff bear the description of "victims" the literature suggests would be present following such dramatic events. Even though the literature squarely accounts for the person as the decider of what is traumatic and what is not, there may be an underestimation of both the duration of effects of workplace trauma and the ability of traumatized people to sustain, and localize, traumatic effects, while functioning well in many other spheres. The idea of co-temporality may account for such discrepant-seeming functioning. Integration may be far more time-consuming than is currently described in the bank-robbery studies, particularly in the context of failed empathy in the post-robbery period. This proposed structure links the robbery experience directly with the "pose" to be found in the environment immediately following the robbery. This is merely one factor and may be central (negative: Joe, Carrie, George, June; positive: Catherine) or peripheral, as with Gwen, Alice - both of whom received positive post-robbery management support, but both also experienced extensive difficulties despite this. Empathy, corporate or personal, may represent a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for recovery.

Trauma theory attempts to describe how things "really work." Re-experiencing is the activating principle followed by a semi-causal logic which describes events as moving from re-activated memories to painful affects to either decreased motivation, defense, controls, or resistance - depending on the theory.
Theory is necessarily interpretive because it attempts to fill in the gaps between what we know and what we don’t know.

Description and interpretation both have as their aim the clarification of meaning. The process shifts from experience "near" to experience "far" the more the activity shifts from "thick" description obtained directly from the experiencing person to the more remote, or "thin" description based on the researcher’s assumptions, hypotheses, theoretical beliefs about the respondents experience.

The present study has shown how the nine study categories, obtained directly from the respondent’s experience of bank robbery, carefully describe experiencing of life-and-death workplace dramas and suggests that the experience may include - but does not require, "persistent re-experiencing" in order for the event to be traumatic. The respondents’ narratives have revealed that the process experienced was often more a cycling between and within the categories and that this natural process could very well bring up painful rememberences, painful feelings - but descriptions generally did not use the lexicon of "persistent re-experiencing" which would include: recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, perceptions; recurrent distressing dreams about the event; reliving experiences as with illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, and so on (DSM IV, 1994). The stories were represented very much more as a natural part of a whole process of lived experience - working through event aspects that had become sedimented during and after the event. Descriptions from the narratives show
that respondents are very actively engaged in coping and creative decision-making right from the event onset, even slightly before with respondents who had a foreshadowing of the event before it was actually declared as a robbery. Respondents sometimes reported feeling helpless, but not hopeless (which is where one may put the line of demarcation between a person who may take action - but just feel helpless, versus one who is truly a "victim" - and is therefore hope-less). Respondents were not experiencing "maladaptive passivity" (Peterson & Seligman, 1983, p. 103) as posed by learned helplessness theory: "the thesis here - is that learned helplessness is a model of some maladaptive responses to victimization..." (Peterson & Seligman, 1983, p. 107). Intrusive imagery was evident with Gwen but the other respondents seem not to have experienced this "expected" phenomenon for trauma sufferers. Five of eight respondents experienced from moderate to severe forms of "sanctuarial stress" as a result of failed corporate empathy following their robbery events. Several of the respondents stated bluntly that the negative response from the organization following the robbery was worse than the robbery itself. In June's case (taken hostage in a full choke-hold with a gun jammed into the back of her head for over seven minutes) failed empathy from her father afterwards was "worse than the robbery." The role of empathy - familial or workplace needs to be taken into account more for a fuller theoretical understanding of these complex events. The respondents did not refer to themselves as "victims." This is considered to be an important finding because current theory often incorporates the word "victim" into its
expression. Descriptively, this word did not appear from respondents in over fifteen hours of detailed robbed-staff interviews. Peterson & Seligman (1983) state that "learned helpless...is proposed as a model for the emotional numbing and maladaptive passivity...victims may learn during the victimization episode" (p. 103). This theoretical perspective, from learned helplessness theory, does not reflect any of the voices in the present study.

The present study may serve to point out that some aspects of trauma theory may need to be adapted - at least for workplace related incidents including bank robbery traumatic experiencing.

Implications For Therapy

A primary goal of the counselling process is to foster increased understanding within clients through effective listening and responding. This requires some comprehensive framework which may be utilized as a kind of "map." For people experiencing traumatic incidents, or multiple trauma over time, guidelines which may illuminate aspects of the robbery trauma experience would be valuable. In the present study a number of facets were identified: event foreshadowing, experience of time, effects of type of robbery, effects of number of robberies, stable relations of orientation, vicarious robbery experiences, timing of onset of feelings of shock and disbelief, compliance patterns, post-robbery empathic environment, gender differences, and duration of effects. For the therapist, this may provide a provisional map accounting for a broader, richer context within which clients may explore their
thoughts, feelings, behaviours.

The nine general categories derived from the respondents' reports in the present study should fairly accurately reflect, and respect, robbed-staff sensitivities over a wide range of experiences. New categories would be developed as unique client experiences are presented. Existing categories for framing trauma experiences become changeable, but not dispensable. As may be seen in the respondent narratives from the present study, discoveries were not made ad hoc, but by the process of cycling back and forth, systematically, between various temporal aspects of experiencing, using the categories that were made explicit from the pool of respondent narratives.

In Figure 1 (p. 282) the categories have been distributed in a continuous band, or disc, as a way of illustrating an interaction in a phenomenal field. Information about the robbery is, therefore, spread across the entire surface of the field. Each "piece" also contains the full story of the robbery event, though the smaller pieces would be less salient at the moment and thus may present an image that is less distinct or "blurred." In the Figure 1 example Foreshadowing represents the most prominent or most likely entry point for the client, at the moment. Each of the separate categories ("pieces") has its own internal structure. Each is structurally related to the whole. These structural relationships may serve to both unify variation in thoughts or feelings, through generation of detailed, "thick" description; help reconcile real or imagined discrepancies of the event sequence or substance; and may help to
Figure 1. The therapy process reflects renewed inquiry of the study categories
generally expand and amplify the whole experience more fully. The "band" or field may be accessed from any of the categories. Since, like a hologram, each category separately contains the full semantic and somatic "record" of the event - it does not really matter where the client starts - any piece will be capable of projecting the entire "event image" with the "reference beam" perhaps being the therapists good listening and empathic responding skills. From a therapist perspective this provides a provisional theoretical "map" which allows both therapist and client to collect and organize data descriptively, thus minimizing sweeping interpretations that may be grounded more in abstractions from trauma theories than in the client's voice. The client has a place of primacy in this process and, with categories created from a pool of respondents with similar experiences, may move through the therapeutic "field" of inquiry with increased confidence because they are working within a bank of concepts which represents a context that would be credible, trustworthy, derived from unimpeachable sources.

Risk-taking is an integral part of the therapeutic process. The risks should generally be self-caring and responsible. Therefore, a "map" for the client is crucial and should minimally include a comprehensive framework within which initial questions may be discussed and where preliminary client understanding may first try out its "legs." The nine categories, outlined as Table 1 in Chapter IV and presented here in different form as Figure 1, constitute a preliminary attempt at providing a more comprehensive framework for therapists working with staff involved in bank
robberies. These provisional categories need to be rigorously investigated and compared with other first-person accounts of bank robbery experience. Comparisons with experimental research studies of bank robbery staff might be fruitful.

The process of the research itself seemed to provide several respondents with a natural sequence, a guideline which they both co-created, followed, and could learn from. Two interviews with intensive reading of transcribed audio-taped interviews between the two meetings provided the framework. There is also a sense in which respondent's felt that their situations may help others. An exemplification of this process from the present study may be seen from Alice's comments: "It's a release, you know [the interview process]. I felt relieved that I did something for myself and also gave you something so that it's put to good use, to a good cause. You may be able to find a rule about it. When I was going through it I realized these things stayed in my mind, it's imprinted in my mind, because I was lacking understanding as to what happened. Now I understand why I felt the way I did, that's the key point."

Similarly, Jenny commented that: "I think the whole process has actually been quite helpful for me, it sort of put some different pieces together and maybe filled in some pieces so that it doesn't feel disjointed, it feels more cohesive and I can get somewhere with it. It helped me see better how my reactions after tied into what happened...especially seeing the comparison that certainly clarified the thing about expecting people to follow rules."

The process of spending particular, focussed time clarifying the ground right
before the traumatic event along with careful attention to "first-awareness" seemed to give the interviews a foundation for the detailed experiences that followed in the narratives. Many times experiences that were only vaguely sensed at the time of the trauma could be made to stand out in relief after the respondent had read the transcribed first interview. Often these insights helped clarify original confusion, or provided fresh material that the respondent simply was not consciously aware of at all. Many meaning units reflect this discovery process. An exemplification of the type of realization that may occur from reading the transcribed audio-taped interviews may be seen from Jenny's comments. She did not realize until the reading of the transcript that the unresolved "final escalation" from her "unfinished" robbery - in which the accomplice called the robber away just as he was increasing his demand-threat that Jenny open a locked cash drawer - to which she did not have the security key. Jenny had not realized the incident was still with her, affecting her continuing sense of "loss of control" which, for her, was "the worst part of the robbery." She had spoken many times about the "final escalation" but had never before linked it with her continuing feelings of weakened sense of security in general. Discussing her feelings about the specifics of the incident helped her realize that throughout the robbery the robber "seemed to believe me." This formed a basis for speculating that even though that cash drawer could not be opened, he likely would not have taken the extreme measure of shooting her over it. However, there is always the doubt. But, the speculation is founded in her remembrance ("He seemed to believe me").
Therefore, its heuristic value increases.

Examining the status of the event-relationship with the robber gives a ground for necessary, meaningful speculation. This process has its roots in, is founded upon, the respondent narratives.

Therapists who work with traumatized clients may benefit by the detailed stories given by the respondents in the present research. Of particular interest may be the "map" the nine categories provided, which were brought out during the text analysis in an attempt to organize respondent’s narratives from beginning to end.

Implications For Organizational Practice

Findings from the present study may be of interest to the banking industry. There may be a benefit for organizations to reflect upon the positive and adverse effect of successful and failed corporate empathic responses to workplace traumatic incidents. The one instance of effective corporate responding (Catherine) was cited a number of times by her as an important part of the post-robbery recovery environment. Published bank robbery studies claim symptoms last "1 to 3 days...sometimes several weeks...rarely longer than 6 months." According to the present study these findings greatly underdetermine both the nature and the duration of effects for staff. Being trapped in a confined space, with guns flashing (Jenny, Gwen,) or a machete brandished menacingly (Carrie), with multiple death threats uttered, or even the vicariously experienced trauma experienced by Joe, Alice, did
produce aftereffects: thoughts, feelings, behaviours - that had a duration in the present, far surpassing Leymann's results based on neurophysiological symptoms that may last "24 hours...1 to 3 days...three weeks...occasionally longer." Leymann (1988) concludes that "groups of stress symptoms occurring in connection with the shock [robbery] developed and disappeared in a relatively short period of time" (p. 124).

"Robbery time" is different from "work time." The question of different perceptions of "time" (experienced, qualitative time versus corporate, linear "clock-time") seems important and may provide one useful entry point into the heart of the experience. The profusion of image-building, meaning-making, and emotion-generation that accrues in seconds or minutes, but is experienced as if "it took forever," or as if "time stood still" seems founded partly on the robbed staff-person's perception of the temporal aspects of the experience. Placed in a therapeutic context, a return to the "slowed down," qualitative version of the experience could prove helpful in finding submerged trauma currents, reducing and clarifying areas of confusion, and in providing fresh contexts for linking past and contemporary mental, physical, and emotional material that may have been determined, but placed in a different strata, as the individual attempts to function in both linear and qualitative time simultaneously. Exclusively, or primarily, linear-time approaches may miss the person's experience of "robbery-time." A plurality of temporal structures is proposed, each with its own meanings for the respondent, for other staff, and for the
organization. Some failures of responding empathically may be due to mis-understood
temporal frames. The experience of "time standing still," or of what the respondent
Catherine refers to as "being on a different time," has a different set of relationships,
structures, associated with it than does serial, or chronological time. One key
difference is that chronological time is divisible into discrete units of measurement.
Time standing still, slowing down, or lasting an eternity is not divisible into units and
chunks. It is qualitatively different.

The narratives suggest both a reasoning through of the initial robbery
awareness and an emotional knowledge (or sense) that - at times, seems prior to the
reasoning process. One significance of this possibility would be its importance to the
therapeutic process: the starting point would not be how one felt after the robbery, or
during the robbery, or even when one was first aware - but slightly before that point
where emotions may inform reason just before reason makes itself evident. This way
of putting the early awareness - or event foreshadowing, seems consistent with
what may be referred to as "intuition," "tacit knowledge," or just "a gut feeling that
something was about to happen."

As a clinician having facilitated over several hundred bank robbery debriefings
with staff over the course of the past fifteen years I am struck by both the consistency
and the variation of the respondents accounts in the present study. Some of my
thoughts, presuppositions indeed were confirmed. But, by far, more new knowledge
emerged as I listened to and analyzed, re-submitted to the respondents and re-
analyzed, their stories. It is a source of wonder to me that as someone who thought he knew "a great deal" about the experience staff have of bank robbery that I had so much more to learn. For this I am truly grateful. This lesson in taking a second look at what you think you know ("common sense") has, for me, been a richly rewarding - if at times difficult, legacy from the application of phenomenological methodology to a research topic of interest.

Limitations

The results from the present study are tied to the narratives based on respondent accounts and descriptions. They are not generalizable in the sense of nomothetic lawfulness. However, accounts acquired and animated by first hand "thick" description, careful scrutiny of the researcher's written analysis of respondent stories, both from the respondents themselves and two outside raters, with the respondents validating the language of the final event summaries - accounts developed in this manner certainly have a credibility that has a place in other bank robbery trauma contexts. For example, the finding related to failed corporate empathy could certainly apply in a general sense.

It should be noted again that respondents were volunteers all of whom had more than one robbery. The study did not include any "first time" respondents. It did not include any "reluctant" respondents - who may have had something different to say about their robbery experiences.
The present study reported in-depth narratives from respondent trauma experiences in the workplace. It may be productive to utilize multiple case study approaches to learn more about the network of interactions between the corporation, the branch unit, and the staff team as robberies impact all levels of organizational tiers. The nine categories identified in the present study emerge from, are explicated within, and are directly tied to the text material. Themes of most interest for the present study have received primary attention. Other themes, equally as valuable, have undoubtedly been left unidentified or unexamined.

It took me some time to realize that respondents drew on both a vocabulary of chronology and conjunction, while, at times, invoking a lexicon of disruption, desynchronization, duration. Both forms tell a version of the lived experience. Bank robbery events occur in the workplace: in a corporate environment. Yet the experience is intensely personal. But it is also public. The demands of the corporation are no less rigorous than the needs of the individual. In attempting to better understand bank robbery experience from the individual perspective, several currents always flow at differing depths in the narratives. The understanding of the events depends very much on the source and destination of the current pursued at any one time.

A single instance, or even multiple instances constituting what might contradict current theory need to be viewed with caution. Instances where counter-examples are presented are just that: counter-examples. Their value would seem to lie
in either creatively challenging theorists to stretch existing explanatory schemas or in leaving some doubt about the robustness of theory in encompassing, accounting for, critical questions raised by the phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is interested in lived experiences in the broadest sense: representing, judging, sense perception, envisaging, and so on. There is no special desire to be "at court" when adjudications are made in determination of the adequacy or frailty of theories. Finally, a respondent reflecting upon experience, verbalizing, disclosing, describing his/her meanings to a researcher, then the researcher’s reflections upon the data, removes the researcher from the actual flow of the respondents experience by a factor of two or three times. This is exactly why a second interview was conducted after respondents had an opportunity to thoroughly study all verbatim texts, transformations, event summaries. The attempt at remaining true to the respondents’ descriptions is a rigorous attempt to reduce missed understandings, error. One study, therefore, would seem hardly definitive in detailing sufficient understanding of the complexities of traumatic experiencing.

As Time’s memory gets “loomed,” by shuttling back-and-forth across time, the question of memory disruption, decay, needs always to enter the discussion. It would require a preponderance of accounts before abidingly clear signals would emerge. The present study presents descriptive accounts tied directly to respondent narratives with elaboration at points where the text stories attempt to move in two or more directions at once. Such points represent the site of the narrative’s maximum
potential yield.

Further Research

The overarching "frame of reference" schema, which is thought to be broader than many less central beliefs - therefore more resistant to change when damaged - may not be as prone to trauma as the literature currently suggests, with regard to bank robbery trauma. These broad schema, which organize experience of self and world reflect the need to develop a stable and coherent framework for understanding one's experience. Several respondent's in the present study experienced what would unarguably be considered direct damage to these core frameworks. However, their responding - as in June's hostage-taking event, or Joe, who experienced a damaging blow to his "ego" and who was "torn" and "impotent, "wimpy" as he sat in his office listening to his staff get abused by the take-over robbery team - did not seem to lead to a sense of loss of the "just world" hypothesis (Janoff-Bulman, 1985; 1989) - or to global effects to self identity as many trauma theories would predict. The effects were much more local. They seemed to be contained within the work sphere. Many factors may contribute to the "regionalization" of what are currently considered more overarching schema, organized patterns of beliefs about self and world. A study of this aspect of trauma may make a positive contribution to both theory and counselling.

It may be that there is a subtle cushioning effect from experiencing life-and-death events in the setting of the workplace. The workplace may be perceived as containing
the properties of familiarity, trust, sense of belonging. A traumatic shock in such an environment may be less damaging than the same traumatic shock in an environment perceived as hostile.

The relationship between initial awareness of the trauma (foreshadowing-onset), the experiencing during the trauma, and later learning (self-knowledge) may be worth pursuing. An in-depth study of these complex processes may shed light on not just what one learns, but how the recovery occurs. In the present study the accidental discussion with a colleague helped one respondent (Jenny) realize, discover, that the key to her feelings of loss of control resulting from her robbery were embedded, layered in, the type of robbery, the spatial breach ("entitlement") that was part of the robbers commanding them from the staff side of the counter. This took Jenny one-year to piece together. It was central to her mental, emotional, psychological integration of her experience of robbery.

It would be very valuable to develop detailed robbery experiences from the robber's perspective as this is lacking in the literature. Since many respondents experience long-lasting, internal debates based on the "what-if's," a robber perspective of his/her thoughts, feelings, intentions, in-depth, may contribute to increasing and expanding the stock of knowledge available for both pre-robbery training of staff and usage during the post-robbery counsellor-led debriefings.

In research on corporate responding to staff trauma a variety of themes and interactions between the company, the staff-person, and the context could become the
focal point of interest. The present study focussed on the person. This way of framing the research inquiry would need to rely on multiple sources of findings and would be ideal for the case study approach. The increased understanding from an inquiry of this type would benefit the organization by detailed attention to a variety of aspects from a view of the company system, as well as the work group and person perspective.

Research on robbed-staff perceptions of "time" during the event - "robbery time" - may contribute to a greater understanding of the complex ensemble of thoughts, feelings, actions, meanings that are co-created, co-determined within the context of the event. Time has been described as cyclical, manifold, and qualitative based on the experience of the respondents in the present study. Respondents state that: "I keep going back to that one part"; "I just thought of my family...my whole life flashed before my eyes"; "I could hear my heart pounding in my ears." This seems to be roughly similar to Sherrington's (1940) metaphor of the brain - conceived as an "enchanted loom" with "a shifting harmony of sub-patterns." Increased understanding of just what this experience consists of, what it is for robbery respondents, may open a fresh view-point, or provide a new foothold, for reaching new understanding of the complexities of workplace trauma. As the phenomenon of "robbery time" collides back into corporate time ("clock-time"), the immediate post-robbery moment may profoundly shape the course of the individual's experience. If a plurality of temporal structures do exist, "experiencing" in the different structures
may lead to a variety of different meanings. This would conceptually widen "meaning of the event" to include both chronological time as well as "robbery time."

Summary

In the present study trauma has been described as an event, or event series, that is sudden, unexpected, or non-normative - which exceeds the individuals perceived ability to meet the trauma demands (even though "somehow functioning through" the event occurs) and which disrupts the person’s central psychological, physical, emotional, mental needs. To this account might be added Figley’s (1986) concept which represents trauma as an emotional state of tension, discomfort, stress resulting from "memories of an extraordinary, catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor’s sense of invulnerability to harm" (p.xviii).

The present study is based solely on memory, recall, recollection the principal aim of which is to present past experiences in language form, in the present. At times respondents were seized by, rather than selecting, their memories. Such moments are structurally defined by a reversible continuity of time in which the person’s presence in the room dramatically illustrated the merging of time senses: past and present. In these instances, meaning was created through the very manner of the narrative which was no longer a re-creation of a story but more a returning to a piece of the plot of the story, and living it in present-time.

The respondents stories often revealed memory’s confrontation with details
embedded in moments of trauma. In these moments "time" seemed experienced as slowed, cyclical, qualitative - folding back onto particular instances: "robbery time."

These moments represent an other experience than what is usually associated with a chronology, or sequence: linear, or "clock time." As a listener one had the sense that the narrator was experiencing a temporal "bending back" or folding back of time on itself. This suggests that the respondents' most complicated recollections from their robbery experiences are unrelated to time, in the usual sense.

What happened during robbery events seemed to remain raw. At times of solicited, or unsolicited, recall it invades the respondents' consciousness and may deeply disturb sense of safety, security, self. At times the trauma "sense" retreats - only to be reactivated, like a temperate virus, under certain conditions of stress. As a chronological event bank robberies have a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a lived experience some aspects of robberies simply ignore time's chronology and bear the distinct mark of something 'bundled' tightly together that seems enduring: feelings, thoughts from the robbery experienced in the present with alarming clarity, robustness. The hallmark of experiences characterized by durational time is the lasting, enduring properties which become an indisoluable part of the person - sometimes functioning within, yet separate from the unified sense of self. To ignore this is to sadly mis-hear the fullest, most resonant sound of the respondents' meaning of their experiences. As the stories repeatedly made evident, co-temporality was a controlling principle within the narratives.
At the level of *story* the narratives progress sequentially: "I was at work, I was robbed, thus and so happened, it ended, life goes on." However, at the level of *plot* respondents' are almost seized by, instead of selecting, details embedded in moments of the trauma. This may be one reason the recounting of their stories seems never plainly chronologically sequenced in the re-telling. At times instead of recounting their stories respondents sometimes *returned* to them. Sub-plots within the larger story can emerge and return respondents to particular moments in the plot. At times in the re-telling a doorway seemed to suddenly appear. This is not an uncommon experience for robbed staff and perhaps signals a potent, symbolic "gateway" drawing the person back to the robbery experience - like being sucked into a vortex or being pulled by some unseen force through a knothole in a fence after a quick, unsuspecting peek. These represent startling, un-welcome, durationally potent rememberences, which only seem to want an indicator, or a trigger, to facilitate their recall.

Vicarious robbery experiences, where the respondent was not in the main staging area of the action, received detailed examination two cases in the present study. Little exists in the published literature which attends to these fairly common experiences. The richness and detail of narratives related to vicarious experiencing, and the profusion of thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and aftereffects are stunning. These staff suffer the dual trauma of hearing the event with the full flush of imaginings which serve to animate and etch thoughts, images. Yet not "being there"
in the trauma, not belonging to the population of robbed staff, created clearly defined, dramatic effects, including being both part of the event and set apart from it.

Overly optimistic declarations, uninformed by the experiencing person, relating to the duration and course of "symptoms" provide a frail foundation for understanding the virulent nature of the workplace robbery trauma experience. The impact at the policy level - the corporation, may have profound implications for expectable "recovery trajectories" which staff are expected, more or less, to follow. This may put corporate recovery time-tables at odds with what robbed staff experience, need.

Corporate or management empathic failures have been revealed, in depth, in four of the respondent narratives from the present study. In three of the four instances they were considered "worse than the robbery." Respondent discussions of their experience suggest the robbery event has the ability to dislodge them from their taken-for-granted, implicit sense of "being with" others. The state of "being with" is presented as meaning, as reflecting, a fundamental state of belonging. It is contrasted with a state of merely having others "on hand." Returning to the post-robbery environment the robbed person may require something that does not impinge of his/her sense of self, something equivalent to sanctuary: a safe harbour or a "good enough containing, holding environment." "Impingements" may cause the staff person to retreat within - or rage outward, and may deepen or spark a sense of fragmentation, may lessen the sense of self-as-whole. The task for the robbed staff
would be to find a place where re-integration of psychological, physical, emotional, mental needs could proceed without further impingement, threat, or demand.

"Sanctuarial stress" may result when the robbed person is met, in the post-robbery milieu, with hostility, indifference, irritation, with empathic failures. This has been described by one respondent as the feeling one would get "If you were drowning and somebody you trusted threw you a concrete block."

The tension created by the present narratives arose at points of divergence and convergence of experienced meanings - the point at which the stories reached their maximum expressive power. This is the place where the broadest range of meanings may be attributed to the stories. Such moments in the narratives always bear the mark of deeply felt meanings, unanswered questions, instances of doubt, anger, guilt, always of uncertainty - an abiding sense of leaving respondents questioning some aspect of the trauma: "I wonder if that could have an effect on me now, afterward."

These experiences left enduring legacies for all respondents. None of the respondents use a lexicon of emotional remoteness or event-distance: none say "surpassed," or "over," or "no more symptoms." All say "It's still with me"; It's still there"; "You deal with it. But I don't think it ever goes away"; It's still in me. The picture in my brain. It's still there." All respondents appear to be functioning in normal, healthy ways. The two respondents that quit their banks as a result failed corporate empathy both have been promoted in the past year, in their new banks. At the final interview respondents reported getting on with life. They reported their robbery experiences
were a part of their lives now, just as any significant occurrence may be mixed in to the chemistry of day-to-day life: it is just that these experiences are a little more discretely present.

Expressions like "I thought he would kill me"; "I've never been threatened with death before"; "I remember thinking 'does it hurt to be shot'?"; "I just thought about my kids, my family and thought 'I've had a good life'" - these expressions raise to consciousness an implicit, seldom fully articulated, deeply disturbing current to be found throughout all the narratives. The simple fact is that each of the respondents must grapple with the realization that when their robbery ended - they had just returned from a lethal encounter with life, never able to return to "life before it" - to the way things were. The "shifting harmony of sub-patterns" of Sherrington's "enchanted loom" must now include the threads from the entire robbery story.
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APPENDIX D

MEMORANDUM

To: Dan Stone
From: Len Millis
Re: Meaning Unit ratings
Date: March 13, 1997

This is to provide some general comments which may clarify the meaning units' evaluations which I provided to you relating to your bank robbery interviews.

The principal task was understood to involve rating Meaning Units B with respect to how well they reflected reasonable summaries of, interpretation of, and analysis of Meaning Units A. In order to get a sense of how the ratings related to the interview tapes and scripts, I chose to listen to one of the tapes completely (Interview 3A). This was done essentially to determine if the transcription of the tapes involved taking any liberties with respect to correcting grammar, paraphrasing comments, or otherwise modifying the comments. It is notable that the written transcript of the tape was indeed highly accurate, reflecting the exact words used by the respondent. There were a small number of typographical errors. No errors were detected which represented an intent to modify the actual text in any way. Even pauses, "uhms" and other nuances of speech appeared in the transcript. Not all the tapes were checked by this rater, however, it was clear from reviewing a sample tape that there was near perfect integrity of content of the typed scripts derived from the audio tapes.

One of the tape scripts (3A) was also examined to get a sense of the degree to which Meaning Units A reflected actual comments found in the tape scripts. The general sense that I got in doing this is that there was a high degree of correspondence between Meaning Units A and the tape script. The development of Meaning Units A from the tape script appeared to be primarily an exercise in selection and organization, with little or no interpretation required to make that selection. I have provided specific comments and an evaluation relating to this step. The evaluation and comments highlight several minor deviations from the script, however, there was such a high degree of integrity that the evaluation became essentially an exercise in trying to find possible deviations even if they were trivial in the sense that they did not alter the meaning of the statement. For example, as I note in #4 of the notes I on interview 3A, I indicated that the tape script says ".I'll passed out", whereas Meaning Unit A states ".I'll pass out". This appears
to be a rather inconsequential correction of grammar. Based on examination of Meaning Units A for interview 3A, my view is that the derivation of Meaning Units A from the tape scripts show a very high degree of integrity in relation to the tape script.

All primary interviews were reviewed to assess the integrity of the transition from Meaning Units A to Meaning Units B. All of the Meaning Units for interviews 1A, 2A, and 3A were assessed, and approximately one third of the Meaning Units for interviews 4A, 5A, 6A, 7A, and 8A were assessed. A Likert scale with a range of 1 (strong disagreement with the transition) to 5 (high agreement with the transition) was used for the ratings. For interviews where one third of the Meaning Unit transitions were assessed, every third Meaning Unit, starting with number 1, was selected for assessment. The minimum score for the various interviews was 4.2, the maximum was 4.8, and the mean was 4.6.

My qualitative assessment of the transition from Meaning Units A to Meaning Units B is that the integrity of the transition is very high, perhaps significantly higher than the assessment numbers might suggest. Where discrepancies occurred, it appeared to be because the information used in the transition from any particular Meaning Unit A to Meaning Unit B was taken from more than one of the Meaning Units A.

In summary, I am confident that the Meaning Units have a high degree of integrity with respect to reflecting the actual expressed and documented words of the respondents (Meaning Units A) and with respect to the extent to which Meaning Units B reflect the text content selected for Meaning Units A. The detailed comments provided with each assessment are intended to clarify where potential discrepancies exist. The comments also occasionally offer other observations or comments which you may find useful.
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SUMMARY OF MEANING UNIT ASSESSMENTS

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