A SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION OF STRESS WITHIN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

RENEE E. DU TOIT
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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Supervisor: Prof. M.F. Joubert
Date submitted: November 1997
To my parents,

who made this study a matter for prayer

and to my Saviour,

who was so faithful in answering those prayers.
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This study would not have been possible without the hard work and support of the following people to whom I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation:

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- All members of the emergency services who contributed to this study and were willing to share their feelings and ideas; and
- My father, for all the proof-reading.

Renée du Toit
November 1997
This report presents the findings of a study conducted in February-March 1995, involving 109 members of different emergency services from three regions: Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. The emergency services included in the study were three units of the South African Police Service (Visible Policing, the Internal Stability Unit and the Flying Squad), provincial fire and ambulance services, and municipal traffic services.

The aims of the study were to: (1) describe the underlying causes of stress in the emergency services; (2) establish how stress is currently being dealt with by members and identify the structures and support systems available to assist members with stress-related problems; (3) identify constructive and destructive, effective and ineffective mechanisms used by members to cope with their stress, and (4) suggest solutions to problems experienced in managing stress in the emergency services.

The study investigated stressors of SAPS members under the following themes: (1) public image of the SAPS, (2) management style in the SAPS, (3) communication in the SAPS, (4) working environment in the SAPS, (5) working conditions and remuneration packages, (6) distinct characteristics of the work of SAPS members, and (7) the priorities set by SAPS members that need to be addressed in order to reduce their level of stress.

The stressors of members of the fire and ambulance services were dealt with under the following themes: (1) utilisation of manpower in the organisation, (2) training provided to members, (3) management style in the fire and ambulance services, (4) distinct characteristics of the work of members of the fire and ambulance services, (5) remuneration packages, and (6) the priorities set by members that need to be addressed in order to reduce their level of stress.

The stressors of members of the traffic services were dealt with under the following themes: (1) the public image of the traffic services, (2) distinct characteristics of the work of traffic officials, (3) communication in the traffic services, (4) working conditions and remuneration packages and (5) the priorities set by members that need to be addressed in order to reduce their level of stress.

Regarding the support members of the emergency services receive within their organisations for managing stress, a number of sources of support were mentioned, such as social workers, psychologists and chaplains in the SAPS, support by supervisors, debriefing after traumatic events, stress management training, nursing sisters at ambulance stations, drinking and socialising, with the biggest form of support being "buddies".

Regarding the co-operation between members of the different emergency services, the perception was that there was a very good relationship and good co-operation. A number of problems experienced in their day-to-day contact with each other were however mentioned.
EKSERP

Hierdie verslag weerspieël die bevinding van 'n studie wat in Februarie-Maart 1995 uitgevoer is. Verskillende nooddienste van drie streke, Pretoria, Durban en Kaapstad, is by die studie betrek. Altesaam 109 lede van die volgende nooddienste is by die studie ingesluit: drie eenhede van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens (Sigbare Polisiëring, die Afdeling Binnelandse Stabiliteit en die Blitspatrollie), provinsiale brandweer- en ambulansdienste en munisipale verkeersdienste.

Die doel van die studie was om: (1) die onderliggende oorsake van stres in die nooddienste te omskryf; (2) vas te stel hoe stres tans deur die lede hanteer word en die beskikbare strukture en ondersteuningsisterne vir lede met stresverwante probleme te identifiseer; (3) konstruktiewe en dekonstruktiewe, effektiewe en oneffektiewe hanteringsmeganismes wat deur lede gebruik word om stres die hoof te bied te identifiseer, en (4) oplossings voor te stel vir probleme rakende die hantering van stres in die nooddienste.

Stressors van SAPD-lede is onder die volgende temas ondersoek : (1) die openbare beeld van die SAPD, (2) bestuurstyl in die SAPD, (3) kommunikasie in die SAPD, (4) die SAPD-werksomgewing, (5) werksomstandighede en vergoedingspakkettes, (6) kenmerkende eienskappe van SAPD-lede se werk, en (7) prioriteite (volgens SAPD-lede ) wat aangespreek behoort te word ten einde hul stresvlakke te verminder.

Stressors van lede van die brandweer- en ambulansdienste is onder die volgende temas ondersoek : (1) die benutting van mannekrag in die organisasie, (2) opleiding aan lede verskaf, (3) bestuurstyl in die brandweer- en ambulansdienste, (4) kenmerkende eienskappe van die werk van lede van die brandweer-en ambulansdienste, (5) vergoedingspakkettes en (6) prioriteite (volgens lede van die brandweer-en ambulansdienste) wat aangespreek behoort te word ten einde hul stresvlakke te verminder.

Stressors van verkeersbeamptes is onder die volgende temas ondersoek: (1) die openbare beeld van die verkeersdienste, (2) kenmerkende eienskappe van die werk van verkeersbeamptes, (3) kommunikasie in die verkeersdienste, (4) werksomstandighede en vergoedingspakkettes en (5) prioriteite (volgens verkeersbeamptes ) wat aangespreek behoort te word ten einde hul stresvlakke te verminder.

Ettlike beskikbare ondersteuningsbronne vir die hantering van stres aan lede van die nooddienste word genoem. Hierdie bronne sluit in: maatskaplike werkers, sielkundiges, kapelane in die SAPD, ondersteuning deur toesighouers, stresontlonting na traumaatiese gebeure, seminare oor stres-hantering, verpleegsters by ambulansstasies, alkohol verbruik en sosiale verkeer, asook die vernaamste bron van ondersteuning, *makkers* ("buddies").

Die algemene gevoel was dat daar 'n baie goeie onderlinge verhouding en samewerking tussen lede van die verschillende nooddienste bestaan. 'n Aantal probleme wat voortspruit uit hul daaglikse kontak met mekaar word egter uitgewys.
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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a country characterised by high levels of crime, violence and accidents. Members of the emergency services - such as the SAPS, the SANDF, the fire, ambulance and traffic services - have been exposed to extremely exacting situations over the past few years in the execution of their tasks. The result is high levels of stress that directly affect their work, and ultimately their personal lives as well. An increasing number of suicides, and members suffering from burnout and post-traumatic stress disorder are reported. One example of a newspaper headline relating to stress in the SAPS is "Stress-related trauma in cop ranks costs millions", in the Pretoria News (Friday, 5 January 1996).

To address this critical problem, this study aims to: (1) describe members' perception of the underlying causes of stress in the emergency services; (2) identify the perceived support systems available to assist them with stress-related problems; (3) identify both constructive and destructive, effective and ineffective mechanisms used by members to cope with their stress; and (4) suggest solutions to problems experienced in managing stress in the emergency services.

The study was divided into the following six phases in order to achieve these aims. **Phase One:** conducting preliminary - or focus group - interviews with small groups representing the different emergency services, and compiling a report on the results of the interviews, to be distributed for comment to those who took part in them. **Phase Two:** compiling a schedule for interviews to be conducted with members of the various emergency services, based on the information obtained in Phase One. **Phase Three:** conducting personal interviews with 120 members of different units of each of the services. **Phase**
Four: analysis and integration of the interview data. Phase Five: conducting feedback sessions with all participants on the established data (with the intention of giving them ample opportunity to comment on the results and to provide additional input about possible solutions). Phase Six: putting the findings in writing.

The emergency services mentioned above were approached, and all of them except the SANDF agreed to participate in the research.

The format of this thesis will be as follows: in Chapter Two a theoretical overview on stress will be given, in Chapter Three an outline, as described in literature, will be presented on stress in the emergency services. This will be followed by an explanation in Chapter Four of the theoretical orientation of the study, and in Chapter Five of the methodology used. In Chapter Six the results of the focus group interviews will be presented. Next a comprehensive discussion will be presented of the general themes identified during the interviews in terms of (1) stressors experienced by members of the emergency services, (2) support received within the different emergency services for managing stress, and (3) co-operation between the different emergency services. In Chapter Ten the findings of the study will be discussed with specific reference to the systems approach. Finally concluding remarks will be made.
CHAPTER TWO : A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW ON STRESS

A brief theoretical overview of stress is given in this chapter. First stress will be discussed in general, followed by a discussion of burnout, and finally post-traumatic stress will be reviewed. The main theoretical frame of the study is systems theory. However, stress, burnout and post-traumatic stress are not discussed in terms of systems processes and circular causality. An attempt is not made to translate the existing literature on stress, burnout and post-traumatic stress into systemic terms. This will be done only after the results of the study have been reported.

2.1 STRESS : A GENERAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The cost of stress

The cost of stress, both in human and economic terms, is incalculable (Michal, 1991). The apparent costs (illness, absenteeism, accidents, suicides, deaths) take their toll, but so do the hidden costs such as broken interpersonal relationships, errors of judgement in both the professional and private life, diminished productivity, increased turnover, poor creativity, low performance, labour militancy, and a diminished quality of health and well-being.

Everly and Lating (1995) quote the following statistics: excessive stress and its various physical manifestations account for more than 80% of all visits to health care professionals; it accounts for approximately 14% of all occupational disease workers' compensation claims; and benefit payments for stress-related disorders average roughly twice that of physical disorders. For this reason the authors
describe excessive stress to be "a virtual plague on society that has, indeed, reached epidemic proportions" (Everly & Lating, 1995:3).

In the emergency services the cost of stress among members is starting to cause serious concern. The article on stress in the SAPS, "Stress-related trauma in cop ranks costs millions", on the front page of the Pretoria News (Friday, 5 January 1996), is just one of many to this effect. In this article police psychologists reveal that 904 police officials have retired early on medical grounds during the first six months of 1994 (at a cost of R 250-million). Stress-related boarding constituted a high percentage of the total percentage of medical boarding. The article also states that, during the first six months of 1995 alone, sixty-four police officials committed suicide.

Nel and Burgers (1995:5) quote the following statistics to indicate the numbers of medical boarding of SAPS members between 1991 and 1995:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL BOARDED</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS</th>
<th>% OF TOTAL BOARDED</th>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1 166</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1 375</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3 846</td>
<td>1 192</td>
<td>31%</td>
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No figures could be obtained from the SAPS for medical boarding during 1995.
The high turnover in personnel also reflects the state of mind within the SAPS. About 23,362 members (10% per annum) left the SAPS during the period January 1991 to August 1994. These statistics, of course, do not reflect other symptoms of stress such as alcohol and drug abuse, divorce rates, loss of productivity and low morale (Nel & Burgers, 1995).

These statistics also reflect the situation in the SAPS only. Sadly, statistics are not available for other emergency services such as the fire, ambulance and traffic services. This could indicate that until now no, or relatively little attention has been paid to stress in these services. It can be speculated, however, that such statistics, if they were available, would also paint a rather gloomy picture.

2.1.2 The role of perception

Stress is subjective and personal (Michal, 1991). The same situation can be perceived totally differently by two individuals. One can perceive the situation as an exciting challenge whilst the other can perceive it as life-threatening. Furthermore, people perceive and react to the same events differently at different times, depending on their mood and physical state.

Meyerson (1994) explains that stress has been studied from a number of perspectives. Classical formulations of stress have revealed how mechanisms such as social support affect what people perceive as stressful. The result is that much research has been directed toward locating variables that moderate and mediate the relationship between objective conditions in the environment and experienced or perceived stress.

According to Meyerson (1994) strategies to cope with stress differ across social contexts. In order to understand stress it is, therefore, necessary to understand the social context. In some cultural contexts burnout and, by implication stress,
is interpreted as an individual problem, whereas in other cultural contexts, it is interpreted as a social phenomenon.

Barley and Knight (1992) suggest that stress operates differently across occupational spectrums. They argue that members of occupations that lack other sources of status and legitimacy will more likely claim to experience stress than members of powerful occupations. Meyerson (1994) points out that variation in the amount of stress among occupations may also be due to different cultural assumptions about what stress means, differences in norms about acknowledging and claiming stress. She points out that claiming stress may, in certain occupations, symbolise personal weakness and loss of control while, in others, it may indicate that one is working hard. The author states "...it may make sense to question the assumed normality of order and control. It may be appropriate to question the assumption that burnout and stress are pathological conditions that should be controlled. The current realities of organizational life - rapid technological change, multiculturism, massive restructuring - do not reflect a world of order, clarity, and control. In such a world, the experiences of stress, ambiguity, and burnout may be the norm. Control and order may be an illusion" (Meyerson, 1994:651).

When describing stress among members of the emergency services it is particularly important to understand the context within which they function. In an article in Beeld (Tuesday, 30 January 1996:11) Ms Margaret Steyn of the psychological services in the SAPS in Pretoria, explains that there is a culture of "cowboys don't cry" among members of the SAPS. To admit to experiencing stress amounts to admitting failure. As one member of the SAPS explains in the article: "Daar is baie polisiemanne wat weens die negatiwiteit wat aan sielkundige probleme gekoppel word, liewer selfmoord pleeg as om te erken hulle het 'n probleem." (There are many policemen who, because of the negativity associated with psychological problems, rather commit suicide than to
admit that they have a problem.) Although there is reluctance to admit to experiencing stress, members of the emergency services are constantly exposed to high levels of stress and traumatic incidences, which makes experiencing symptoms of stress, burnout and post-traumatic stress almost the norm.

Nel and Burgers (1995) point out that police officials (like all emergency services workers) are often described as secondary victims because of their daily exposure to critical incident stress (CIS). This causes uncomfortable emotional reactions that affect their short and long term behaviour. As part of their duties members of the emergency services are present in most situations that can be described as critical incident stressors. Nel and Burgers (1995) quote the following statistics for the first eight months of 1994, for the area which used to be referred to as the Witwatersrand area at the time: there were 4 181 armed robberies; 803 people were attacked in their homes; 3 685 incidents of rape were reported to the police; 19 942 people were robbed of their possessions; 22 112 vehicles were stolen (some motorists were robbed under life-threatening conditions) - and members of the SAPS (and the other emergency services) had to attend to these victims of crime.

2.1.3 Stress and management

The way in which stress is managed in organisations directly influences the quality of thought and performance related to the basic components of management: planning, organising, motivating and controlling (Michal, 1991). Furthermore, it is intimately linked to the mental and physical health of its staff, by far the most valuable resource of the organisation. Clearly the damaging effects of stress on members of the emergency services can no longer be ignored. However, the predominant attitude among members still remains that
they should be able to cope with stress - those who do not cope do not belong in the emergency services.

2.1.4 Causes of stress

Research on stress has revealed a whole range of causes of stress. The most prominent causes of stress that are quoted in literature (Michal, 1991; Mitchell & Bray, 1990; Ray & Miller, 1994) can be divided into the following categories: (a) family stressors; (b) work stressors; (c) social and interpersonal relationship stressors; (d) environmental stressors; (e) financial and legal matters; (f) change stressors; (g) physical stressors; (h) stress caused by role conflict; (i) personal characteristics; and (j) interpersonal conflict.

a. Family stressors: In their list of stressors that emergency services personnel are exposed to, Mitchell and Bray (1990) specifically mention the stress that family relationships could place on members of the emergency services. Family members, on the other hand, are also detrimentally influenced by the work stress experienced by members of the emergency services. Mitchell and Bray (1990) state: "Most frequently, we find emergency services personnel 'dumping' the work-related stress into the confines of their home life ... since families tend to have far fewer conditions for acceptance and love than do their employers." (p. 24) Being safer does not, however, make it more correct or appropriate; it simply transfers the tension to home rather than maintaining it in the work environment.

b. Work stressors: Work stressors could involve different aspects such as overload, deprivational stress or boredom, lack of control, fluctuations in body processes due to jet lag or shift work, or low salary scales.
Mitchell and Bray (1990) point out that, apart from overloaded working conditions, emergency services personnel often tend to suffer from stress associated with boredom. Emergency responders are action-orientated people who have a need to feel involved, and have a need for action and adventure. Inactivity is perceived as a threat to their basic need for high activity levels.

The authors also state that: "one of the most consistently voiced concerns of emergency services workers is shift work. Shift work is inherently stressful. It disrupts everything from biorhythms to social life. It cannot be eliminated, so emergency services personnel must adjust to it." (Mitchell & Bray, 1990:25.)

c. **Social and interpersonal relationship stressors** : These include conflicts with fellow workers, conflicts with the administration, lack of appreciation from hospital staff (in the case of ambulance workers), abusive patients and members of the public, intoxicated patients and members of the public, and media at the scene.

d. **Environmental stressors** : These include aspects such as alarm tones, noise, dirt/dust, overcrowding at the station, temperature extremes, clutter, weather conditions, spectators in the way, speed on calls, confined space, lighting, pressures of rapid response and rapid decision making.

e. **Financial and legal matters** : The low salary scales of emergency services personnel, especially those of SAPS members, often make news headlines.
f. **Change stressors or stress of adaptation**: Currently significant changes are taking place in the structures of almost all the emergency services in South Africa, affecting most of the members personally. The stress of adapting to these changes is reflected in the numbers of medical boarding, suicides, treatment for depression, etc., found among emergency services personnel.

g. **Physical stressors**: These include aspects such as poor nutrition, vitamin and mineral depletion, excessive smoking and use of alcohol, lack of sleep and lack of exercise. It has to be pointed out that these aspects may cause stress, but could also be the result (symptoms) of stress.

h. **Stress caused by role conflict between work and private lives**: Due to the long hours and shift work that emergency services workers are required to work, role conflict between their work and private lives ultimately becomes inevitable.

i. **Personal characteristics related to stress**: A number of research findings imply that personality factors of emergency services workers play a significant role in determining the levels of stress they experience. These include aspects such as negative self perception, high frustration levels, and proneness to experience anxiety.

Mitchell and Bray (1990) state that recent research indicates that emergency services workers such as firefighters, paramedics, and police officials have very different personalities from the average person who has a far less risky or demanding job. Mitchell and Bray (1990) list some of the personal characteristics typically found among emergency services personnel, which may cause high levels of stress: they are quick...
decision-makers under pressure; they have a difficult time postponing
gratification and seek immediate results; they are action orientated (given
a choice between the scene of a disaster and sitting around at the
station, they will choose the former); they display high risk-taking
behaviour, frequently exposing themselves to danger as they attempt to
help others; they have a very strong need to rescue or help others; they
display extreme dedication; they are easily bored; they have an inability
to say “no”; they have a need to be liked; they experience guilt feelings
when they are not able to help or make mistakes, and anxiety over their
professional competence (they pride themselves on a perfect job and
become quite frustrated when they encounter failure); they have a
negative outlook on life and personal sensitivity to criticism; and they
have extremely high expectations of themselves.

In understanding the stress experienced by emergency services workers
it is important to take into account that the majority of members within
these systems may resemble the abovementioned personality traits. The
systems in which they have to function however, operate in ways that do
not always take into account the make-up and needs of their members.
This ultimately results in tension and internal conflict within these
systems.

Finally, Mitchell and Bray (1990) point out that usually, one of these stressors
alone is not sufficient to create a major stress response, but when combined, the
effect can be extremely destructive. The cumulative effect of small stressors
(normally referred to as the pileup effect) can easily be equated or surpassed by
the experience of a major distressing event, called a critical incident or trauma.
Palmer and Dryden (1995) divided the symptoms of stress into seven categories, namely (1) behavioural effects, (2) affective or emotional effects, (3) sensation effects, (4) imagery, (5) cognitive effects, (6) interpersonal effects and (7) physiological and health effects.

a. **Behavioural effects**

Behavioural effects associated with stress include the following aspects: emotional outbursts; eating disturbances; sleeping disturbances; alcohol abuse; tobacco abuse; abuse of medication; increased caffeine consumption; aggressive behaviour; sexual problems; restlessness; irresponsible behaviour; impulsive behaviour; social withdrawal; sulking behaviour; frequent crying; avoidance behaviour and phobias; compulsive behaviour and checking rituals; poor driving and accident proneness; poor time management; low productivity; loss of motivation and drive; increased work dissatisfaction; increased absenteeism; tics and spasms; clenched fists; teeth grinding; impaired speech and voice tremor; nervous cough; unkempt appearance; and poor eye contact (Michal, 1991; Palmer & Dryden, 1995; Sehnert, 1981).

b. **Affective or emotional effects**

Stress is associated with several affective or emotional problems: depression; chronic anxiety attacks; feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy; feelings of being rejected; increased feelings of aggression and anger; apathy; boredom; frustration; feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment; persistent irritability; moodiness; nervousness (being
flustered); morbid jealousy; and suicidal feelings (Michal, 1991; Palmer & Dryden, 1995).

c. **Sensation effects**

Palmer and Dryden (1995) list the following sensations that are often associated with stress: tension; headaches; palpitations; rapid heart beat; nausea; tremors; aches and pains; dizziness; feeling faint; indigestion; limited sensual and sexual awareness; butterflies in the stomach; spasms in the stomach; numbness; dry mouth; cold sweat; clammy hands; abdominal cramps; sensory flashbacks and pain.

d. **Imagery**

Palmer and Dryden (1995) also list the following images that are often associated with stress: images of helplessness; images of isolation or being alone; images of losing control; images of accidents or injury; images of failure; images of humiliation, shame or embarrassment; images of dying (self and/or other); images of committing suicide; images of physical or sexual abuse; nightmares or recurring dreams; and visual flashbacks.

e. **Cognitive effects**

The following cognitive effects are often associated with stress: an inability to take decisions; lack of concentration or poor concentration; forgetfulness; hypersensitivity towards criticism; a tendency to overreact; cognitive distortions of reality; an inability to solve problems; blaming of self; negative thought patterns such as "I must perform well"; and low
frustration statements such as "I can not stand it" (Michal, 1991; Palmer & Dryden, 1995).

Mitchell and Bray (1990) point out that: "Although most people can accept the outward, physical changes associated with stress, they can not associate their absentmindedness, forgetfulness, or inability to concentrate with the stressful event they are experiencing. They place a great premium on being in control of themselves. The thought that they may be losing control because of their stress brings out denial, anger and hostility." (p. 11)

f. Interpersonal effects

Palmer and Dryden (1995) list the following interpersonal problems that are frequently associated with stress: a tendency to be passive or aggressive in relationships; a tendency to be timid and unassertive; a tendency to be a loner and to have no friends (or to make friends with difficulty); competitiveness; a tendency to put the needs of others before one's own; sycophantic behaviour; a tendency to be withdrawn; a tendency to be suspicious and distrusting; a tendency to manipulate; and a tendency to gossip.

g. Physiological and health effects

Michal (1991) states that the stress reaction and its effect involve the brain and all other bodily functions. Stress intimately affects the perceptual senses, the nervous system, hormonal balance, the cardiovascular system, the digestive system, the respiratory function, the skin, urogenital tracts and the immune system.
Hobfoll, Banerjee and Britton (1994) point out that the link between stress and illness is much stronger for some individuals than others. This leads investigators to believe that individual and group differences in susceptibility to stress's pathological effects can be attributed, in part, to differences in levels of psychological risk factors and differences in levels of psychological resources. Those who possess greater resources, are less likely to be negatively impacted by stressful circumstances.

Michal (1991) points out that, when stress is first experienced, the immune system is actually enhanced. Only when stress is sustained the immune system is suppressed. During long-term stress, both the cell-mediated and humoral (circulating) immune responses are suppressed. Sustained stress impairs anti-body production. In this way, stress can impair the immune system, which explains the universal effect stress can have on a variety of disorders ranging from the common cold and flu to cancer (Palmer & Dryden, 1995). A common symptom of stress is mental and physical fatigue.

Diseases frequently associated with high levels of stress are cardiovascular disease; diabetes; skin disorders; ulcers; backaches and headaches; muscle tension; rheumatoid arthritis; allergies; asthma; menorrhrea; chest aches; and excessive urination. There are also strong suspicions that a correlation may exist between stress and cancer; flu and common colds; organic problems; constipation, diarrhoea and flatulence. Stress could also be responsible for different kinds of pain in the body; increased levels of bloodsugar; dryness in the mouth; extensive perspiration; and hot or cold flushes (Michal, 1991; Palmer & Dryden, 1995).
Mitchell and Bray (1990) state that, just as the physical changes associated with the stress response are designed to help us cope more effectively, our emotional and cognitive changes also have protective functions, although they are not always as readily apparent. The authors explain, "The emotions associated with these coping strategies are personal and available only to the person developing them. To others, many of whom may be concerned and want to help, the distressed person appears more detached, alone, and not open to emotional approach. This vicious cycle is completed when the distressed person perceives friends, coworkers, and family as cold, not caring, and abandoning in their behaviors." (p. 13) There are, however, benefits to the abovementioned reactions, and Mitchell and Bray (1990) continue: "Basically, the seemingly negative changes described above minimize the probability of emotional overload. The changes produce a psychological barrier which enables the person to function with a minimum of distracting emotional energy during a period of intense stress. Lessening the chances of emotional overload allows a person to concentrate his or her energies in the physical fight-or-flight response. This drive for physical survival usually outweighs the emotional and cognitive drives in the person." (p. 13)

2.1.6 Coping strategies of members of the emergency services

Maslach (1978) studied the social and psychological dimensions of stress in a variety of health and welfare organisations. She found that workers tend to cope with multiple demands made on them by a form of distancing, characterised by negative, cynical, and callous attitudes toward clients and themselves. Subjects lost emotional feeling for the persons with whom they worked, and began treating them in detached or dehumanised ways. This phenomenon occurs across a wide range of work settings to anyone who encounters continuous interpersonal conflict, and who is intimately and continuously involved with troubled human beings.
Pines and Maslach (1978) reveal that some health workers tend to reduce their stress by avoiding emotional involvement with patients. Others reduce their emotional stress by making sharp distinctions between their personal and professional lives, and through physical and psychological withdrawal from direct patient care (e.g., taking time off). The authors also refer to detached concern as a means of coping with stress. Detached concern occurs when the worker maintains a balance between dealing with patients in an objective, detached way, while at the same time maintaining a strong sense of caring and concern.

Hunter, Jenkins and Hampton (1982) emphasise that stress has debilitating effects on the professional and personal lives of those in service professions. In recent years, there has been much discussion about the possible causes and coping strategies necessary to deal with stress and the prevention of burnout. Health organisations should recognise stress and burnout, and should consider implementing preventive measures. Burnout is not necessarily inevitable when employees' and employers sincerely address psychological and physical needs.

### 2.2 BURNOUT

The word burnout is normally used to refer to chronic or cumulative stress (Mitchell & Bray, 1990).

#### 2.2.1 A definition of burnout

Maslach and Jackson (1986) define burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (p. 1). While emotional exhaustion is described by Mickler and Rosen (1994) as feeling
depleted of emotional resources, Ray and Miller (1994) describe it as "loss of feeling and concern, a loss of trust, a loss of interest, a loss of spirit" (p. 361). Depersonalisation, according to Mickler and Rosen (1994), refers to negative, callous attitudes toward those with whom one works. Ray and Miller (1994) describe it as "the negative shift over time in response to others" (p. 361). Mickler and Rosen (1994) see reduced personal accomplishment as negative self-evaluation, while Ray and Miller (1994) see it as "a loss of a sense of efficacy on the job" (p. 361).

Gilliland and James (1993) describe the historical definition of burnout as coming from the psychiatric concept of patients who were burned out physically, emotionally, spiritually, and behaviourally to the point of exhaustion. Being burned out means that the total psychic energy of the person has been consumed in trying to fuel the fires of existence. This energy crisis occurs because the psychic demands exceed the supply.

The bulk of writing and research that has been done on burnout has come from the helping professions. They have intense involvement with people and enter their professions highly motivated and idealistic. They expect their work to give their life a sense of meaning, and expect of themselves to be "all things to all people". They are then faced with harsh realities and low success rates. Grosch and Olsen (1995) state that working long hours has become almost a badge of honour among professional people. Their complaints about overwork are often mixed with a sense of pride in their dedication and importance - and perhaps a sense of entitlement, namely that their hard work justifies avoidance and indulgence in other areas of their lives. Grosch and Olsen (1995) point out that burnout is especially reaching epidemic proportions in the helping professions.

Dolan (1995) cautions that, in spite of the rise in popularity of burnout research, findings should be treated with caution due to contradicting conceptual and
theoretical views of this phenomenon. The author points out that on the one hand there are those (such as Shirom) who assert that burnout is not significantly different from other stress related psychological outcomes. On the other hand there are researchers (such as Garden) who argue that, if proper attention is paid to conceptualisation and level of analysis, burnout is clearly a distinct phenomenon worthy of independent research. Dolan (1995) suggests that, although burnout is becoming recognised as a compensable occupational disease, it is perhaps due to the abovementioned controversy that it has not been recognised as a defined mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, often referred to as the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Garden (1995) argues that energy depletion (or exhaustion) is the dimension of burnout for which there is most definitional agreement, irrespective of occupational setting. Therefore she prefers to keep to Shirom's argument that "the major conclusion which may be drawn from past validation efforts is that the unique content of burnout has to do with the depletion of an individual's energetic resources" (Garden, 1995:211).

Mitchell and Bray (1990) state that it has been popular to refer to chronic or cumulative stress as burnout. Overuse of the term has, however, made it less meaningful because it has been diluted. The authors explain: "People got the idea when others talked about burnout, they were just making excuses to avoid work. The term became a catch-all for every type of stress problem." (p.26) The authors argue that, for this reason, a much cleaner, clearer term is cumulative stress.

From the abovementioned it becomes clear that considerable controversy still exists around the term burnout.
2.2.2 The process of burnout

Gilliland and James (1993) describe the onset of burnout as slow and insidious. There is no one point or incident that is readily identifiable as the instigating trauma. Rather, it is a slow and steady erosion of the spirit and energy as a result of the daily struggles and chronic stress that are typical of everyday life and work. A crisis appears only when individuals are so defeated and exhausted by the environment that they take extraordinary means to find relief such as quitting a job or occupational field, developing a serious psychological disease, becoming substance abusers, or attempting suicide. Recovery from burnout is not always linear, and tends toward chaos and crisis as the individual attempts to come to grips with core issues such as vocation, personality, and relationships.

2.2.3 Causes of burnout

Research seems to indicate a number of causes for burnout. The most important causes for burnout described in literature are: (a) lack of sufficient support systems; (b) excessive emotional involvement; (c) gradual breakdown of energy; (d) socialisation; (e) personality traits; and (f) specific occupational stressors.

a. lack of sufficient support systems: Gilliland and James (1993) emphasise that stress occurs when there is a substantial imbalance (perceived or real) between environmental demands and the response capability of the individual. Burnout occurs when the stress becomes unmediated and the person has no support systems or other buffers to ease the unrelenting pressure.
Dolan (1995), however, points out that there is wide disagreement on how to both define and measure social support. Social support has been thought to buffer the impact of stress on employee responses. However, while the vast majority of published research indicates that social support reduces, or buffers, the adverse psychological impact of exposure to organisational or job stress, recent findings have found support to counter-buffer and amplify the stress response. Dolan (1995) concludes that, due to the multiple ways in which it can affect the availability of coping resources, the study of social support is a complex undertaking. Instant assumptions regarding the role of social support in moderating managerial burnout are not accurate.

b. Excessive emotional involvement: Maslach (1982a) states: "Understanding someone's problems and seeing things from his or her point of view should enhance your ability to provide good service or care. However, the vicarious experience of that person's emotional turmoil will increase your susceptibility to emotional exhaustion." (p. 70)

Miller, Stiff and Ellis (1988) distinguish between two types of empathy, emotional contagion, an affective response in which an observer experiences emotions parallel to those of another person ("feeling with another"), and empathic concern, an affective response in which an observer has a nonparallel emotional response, feeling concerned but not sharing the client's emotions ("feeling for another"). The authors speculate that empathic concern assists a person to communicate effectively, whereas emotional contagion hinders effective interaction and ultimately results in burnout.

Miller et al. (1988) also note differences in mean levels of empathy and burnout between workers with direct client contact and those in
administrative posts. This supports the argument of Pines, Aronson and Kafry (1981) that a distinction should be made between burnout (experienced by human services workers) and tedium (experienced by bureaucratic workers) because "tedium and burnout are similar in terms of symptomatology but different in origin".

Dolan (1995) found the emotional exhaustion component to be the most valid indicator of burnout for managerial populations. The determinants of emotional exhaustion reflect both organisational and personal demands placed on the manager.

c. **Gradual breakdown of energy by daily pressures and demands:** Bhagat, McQuaid, Lindholm and Sergovis (1985) point out that "Irritating, frustrating, distressing demands and troubled relationships that affect us day in and day out are often more salient than life events in predicting adaptational outcomes and psychosomatic strains" (p. 212).

d. **Socialisation:** Grosch and Olsen (1995) argue that research on burnout tends to concentrate on disillusionment with work, on exhaustion, or on the disappointments or strain on home life and the way it compounds work stress. However, the idea of examining the way in which the families of victims of burnout influenced their roles and scripts for living, is extremely important in understanding the causes of burnout. The imprint of a person's family sets up roles and unconscious expectations that continue to be played in marriage and the work environment. Overwork, for instance, tends to be passed on generationally.

e. **Personality traits:** Garden (1995) states that some authors have assumed that burnout is a stress response. They assume that those personality traits that influence an individual's response to stress, such as
the Type A personality, also represent the traits that cause burnout. Whether this can be empirically supported remains an open question. The critical fact that what is stressful to one person, may not be stressful to another, is also often ignored. The question exists therefore, whether various situational factors cited in the literature can be considered as causes of burnout, or whether they can be only considered as causes of burnout for some people and not for others. Similarly, the form in which burnout manifests itself is also usually considered independent of the psychology of the individual.

Garden (1995) points out that there is a considerable amount of evidence to support the notion that different occupations attract different personality types. This means that there tends to be an over-representation of certain personality types in certain occupations. These findings indicate that various characteristics and causes of burnout could be personality-specific. Different manifestations of burnout for different psychological types could be expected, irrespective of occupation.

f. Specific occupational stressors: Dolan (1995) points out several categories of job and organisational stressors such as role problems (conflicts and ambiguities), job content demands (workload and responsibility), work organisation (lack of communication and/or commitment), and physical environment (noise, temperature, safety).

Grosch and Olsen (1995) conclude that burnout is not caused by one factor. It is caused by a combination of environmental and work circumstances, emptiness and drivenness, and an exaggerated need to shore up the self at the expense of real communion with friends and family.
Emergency services workers often lack sufficient and healthy support systems due to the long and irregular hours they work. This results in them receiving most of their support from their buddies, who are all in exactly the same situation. The very nature of the work of emergency services workers is caregiving, and emotional involvement with clients' problems is almost to be expected. They often choose this type of profession because they want to help, and because they display personality traits that attract them to jobs where they can help people. Because of the long and irregular hours they work the gradual breakdown of their energy is also not surprising. Many of them complain that they do not have time for relaxation. It also has to be kept in mind that the nature of their work is very stressful, and sometimes dangerous. It becomes obvious therefore, that emergency services workers, for various reasons, tend to be particularly vulnerable to experiencing burnout.

### 2.2.4 Symptoms of burnout

Burnout is a multidimensional phenomenon, consisting of behavioural, physical, interpersonal, and attitudinal components (Gilliland & James, 1993). Behaviourally, it appears as a marked departure from the worker's former behavioural norm. Physically, burned-out workers feel worn out because of the extraordinary demands placed on their mental and physical resources, and they are drained below their former level of optimal and capable performance. Interpersonally, burnout pervades the worker's life, not only on the job site but also in other relationships and environments. Attitudinally, burnout represents a significant loss of commitment and moral purpose to one's work.

McKnight and Glass (1995) found that the indices of burnout and depressive symptomology showed significant associations, but their research does not support the idea that burnout is simply a form of work-related depression. The authors do not deny, however, that both may share a common etiology.
Gilliland and James (1993) list the following symptoms of burnout:

a. **Behavioural symptoms**

Behavioural symptoms may include reduced quantity and efficiency of work; increased absenteeism; clock watching; dread of work; changing or quitting jobs; increased risk taking; inability to cope with minor problems; lack of creativity; loss of control; complaining; loss of enjoyment; mechanistic responding; accident proneness; use and abuse of alcohol and/or illicit drugs; increased usage of medication; tardiness; vacillation between extremes of over involvement and detachment; suicide attempts; and homicide attempts.

b. **Physical symptoms**

Physical symptoms may include chronic fatigue; low resistance to illness; diseases occurring at organ weak points; colds and viral infections; migraine; ulcers; gastrointestinal disorders; flare-ups in pre-existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure, asthma or diabetes; missed menstrual cycle; increased PMS; insomnia; nightmares; excessive sleeping; eating disorders; sudden weight gain or loss; hyperactivity; facial tics; muscular tension; poor co-ordination; addiction to alcohol and/or drugs; increased use of tobacco and/or caffeine; injury from high-risk behaviour; and injury from accidents.

c. **Symptoms relating to interpersonal relationships**

Symptoms relating to interpersonal relationships may include the following: withdrawing from family, friends and colleagues; isolating oneself from or overbonding with staff; avoiding close interpersonal
contact; loneliness; reducing significant others to the status of acquaintances; breaking up long-lasting relationships; switching from being open and accepting, to being closed and rejecting; an inability to relate even to colleagues; maintaining control, keeping others subservient; increased expression of anger and mistrust; an inability to cope with minor interpersonal problems; immature interactions and keeping hidden agendas; being drawn to people less secure; overreacting to comments of friends; not separating professional and social life; allowing colleagues to abuse privacy of home by calls or visits at any time; a compulsion to do all and to be all to everyone; and not creating opportunity for or enjoying just being one's self.

d. Symptoms relating to attitude

Burnout symptoms relating to attitude may include the following: feelings of depression, emptiness, cynicism, callousness, guilt, boredom, helplessness, pessimism, hopelessness, and entrapment in job and relations; grandiosity; an air of righteousness; free-floating feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and incompetence; an attitude ranging from omnipotence to incompetence; self-criticism; paranoia; compulsiveness and obsessiveness; perfectionism; rapid mood swings; thoughts and feelings that terrify and paralyse; stereotyping; depersonalising; sick humour; distrust of management, supervisors and peers; and hypercritical attitude toward institution and co-workers.

2.2.5 Levels of burnout

Gilliland and James (1993) explain that burnout occurs at one of three levels: activity, state and trait.
Burnout may be *activity based*, which means that any activity that is performed over and over at an intense level, will invariably wear the armour off, even from the most *emotionally bullet-proof* person. At this level changing the routine may help to decrease the chances of burnout.

At *state level* burnout may be periodic or situational. However, over the longer term, such state events contribute mightily to anticipatory anxiety, which, if not dealt with, can precipitate total burnout.

Finally, at *trait level*, it is all-pervasive, encompassing every facet of the person's life. The person is completely non-functional. This level of burnout is serious and calls for immediate intervention.

### 2.2.6 Stages of burnout

Edelwich and Brodsky (1982) delineated four stages of burnout that are typically experienced by victims of burnout:

**Stage 1: Enthusiasm.** The person starts off a job or project with high hopes and unrealistic expectations. Gilliland and James (1993) point out that, as bright as the worker's potential appears, if such idealism is not tempered by orientation and training programmes that define what the worker can reasonably expect to accomplish, it will invariably lead to the second stage, stagnation.

**Stage 2: Stagnation.** Stagnation occurs when the worker starts to feel that personal, financial and career needs are not met. If intrinsic and extrinsic reinforcement does not occur, the worker will move into the next stage, frustration.
Stage 3: Frustration. The worker starts questioning the effectiveness, value, and impact of his/her efforts in the face of ever-mounting obstacles. Gilliland and James (1993) emphasise that the effects of burnout are highly contagious, and that one person's frustration is likely to have a domino effect on others. Direct confrontation of the problem is needed at this stage. If the problem is not resolved, then the final stage, apathy, is reached.

Stage 4: Apathy. Apathy is burnout. It is a chronic indifference to the situation and defies most efforts at intervention. This is a truly crisis stage: the individual is in a state of disequilibrium and immobility. Further compounding this stage are denial and little objective understanding of what is occurring. Psychotherapy is almost mandatory if reversal is to take place.

A concluding remark on burnout comes from Christina Maslach (Maslach, 1982b) where she comments on one of the popular truths that "you have to be on fire in order to burn out". She states: "The implication is that a person who is highly energetic, enthusiastic, and idealistic is the only person who is prone to burn out. In this particular image, there is an internal 'fire' that consumes the person, much like a candle is consumed by its own flame. However, in other images of burnout, the fire is external to the individual - it is the outside situation that is 'too hot to handle'...These different images suggest not only different causes of burnout..., but also different types of solutions...." (Maslach, 1982b:37.)

2.3 POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress represents potentially the most severe and incapacitating form of human stress known (Everly, 1989).
2.3.1 History of PTSD

Scott and Stradling (1994) point out that PTSD was only given official recognition as a general diagnostic category in 1980 when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) included the disorder in the third edition of its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III).

Although PTSD is a new-born category achieving official designation, it has, however, been in existence for a long time. Gilliland and James (1993) describe how Sigmund Freud formulated the concept of *hysterical neurosis* to describe trauma cases, which include symptoms of warded-off ideas, denial, repression, emotional avoidance, compulsive repetition of trauma-related behaviour, and recurring attacks of trauma-related emotional sensations.

World Wars I and II generated terms such as "*shell shock*", "*soldier's heart*", and "*combat fatigue*" to explain the condition of traumatised soldiers who had no apparent physical wounds. Freud, however, believed that the term "*war neurosis*" more aptly characterised what was an emotional disorder that had nothing to do with the prevailing medical notion of neurologically based shell shock (Everly & Lating, 1995; Gilliland & James, 1993).

In 1952 a diagnostic category known as "*Transient Situational Personality Disorders*", which included the category "*Gross Stress Reaction*", was included in the DSM-I. Everly and Lating (1995) point out that the description provided of gross stress reaction clearly reflects the influence of Freud's thinking about traumatic neurosis.

After World War II and the Korean War combat fatigue was recognised as a treatable psychological disturbance. Combat fatigue was seen to be invariably acute and treatment was best conducted as quickly and as close to the battle
line as possible. The idea was to facilitate a quick return to active duty. The prevailing thought was that time heals all wounds, and that little concern needed to be given to long-term effects of traumatic stress (Gilliland & James, 1993).

With the publication of the DSM-II in 1968 gross stress reaction was contained in the category "Adjustment Reaction of Adult Life", which Everly and Lating (1995) note, provided three short (and inadequate) illustrations. With the publication of the DSM-III in 1980 PTSD emerged as a separate diagnostic entity, and was placed among the anxiety disorders. In 1987, with the publication of the revised edition of the DSM-III, the diagnostic criteria for PTSD were also revised, and the numbers of symptoms were expanded to 17. The DSM-IV, published in 1994, reflects minor changes from the previous revision in 1987 (Everly & Lating, 1995).

Gilliland and James (1993) comment, however: "Although PTSD can and does occur in response to the entire range of natural and man-made catastrophes, it was the debacle of Vietnam that clearly brought PTSD to the awareness of both the human services professions and the public" (p. 165).

### 2.3.2 A definition of PTSD

Gilliland and James (1993) describe PTSD as a complex and diagnostically troublesome disorder to define. The DSM-IV (1994) defines PTSD as follows: "...the development 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 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 (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror...(Criterion A2)." (p. 424)
Scott and Stradling (1994) point out that from this definition it is clear that it is not necessary for a person to be a victim. Witnessing a tragedy may be enough to trigger subsequent PTSD. This highlights the need to consider more than the physically injured. Armfield (1994) emphasises that a traumatic event can be actual or perceived.

According to APA, in order to be identified as suffering from PTSD, a person must experience the following characteristic symptoms (DSM-IV, 1994 [Criterion B, C, D, E and F]; Everly & Lating, 1995; Gilliland & James, 1993; Scott & Stradling, 1994):

a. The person persistently re-experiences the traumatic event.

b. The person persistently avoids stimuli associated with the trauma and experiences numbing of general responsiveness.

c. The person will have persistent symptoms of increased nervous system arousal that were not present before the trauma.

d. Duration of the foregoing symptoms must be for at least one month. Acute, chronic and delayed PTSD is distinguished in the DSM-IV on the basis of both onset and duration of symptoms. PTSD is defined as acute when the victim has experienced symptoms for less than three months; as chronic when the victim has endured symptoms for three months or more; and as delayed when the victim did not develop symptoms until at least six months after the trauma.

e. The disturbance should cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

The following examples of stressors leading to PTSD are stated (DSM-IV, 1994; Scott & Stradling, 1994):

- an event posing a serious threat to one's life or physical integrity. The DSM-IV states that this includes, but is not limited to, military combat,
violent personal assault, sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging, being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, the sudden destruction of one's environment through natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness;

- an event which presents the possibility of serious threat or harm to one's loved ones or seeing another person injured or killed as the result of an accident or physical violence. According to the DSM-IV witnessed events include, but are not limited to, observing the serious injury or unnatural death of another person due to violent assault, accident, war, or disaster or unexpectedly witnessing a dead body or body parts;

- events experienced by others that are learned about include, but are not limited to, violent personal assault, serious accident, or serious injury experienced, learning about the sudden death of a family member or close friend, or learning that a family member or close friend has a life-threatening disease. The likelihood of developing this disorder may increase as the intensity of and physical proximity to the stressor increase.

Gilliland and James (1993) explain that psychic trauma is a process initiated by an event that confronts an individual with an acute, overwhelming threat. The inner agency of the mind loses its ability to control the disorganising effects of the experience and disequilibrium occurs. The individual's mind is unable to answer basic questions of how and why it occurred effectively, and what it means. This results in the individual experiencing a traumatic state lasting for as long as the mind needs to reorganise, classify, and make sense of the traumatic event.
If the individual is able to integrate the trauma effectively into conscious awareness and organise it as a part of the past (as unpleasant as the event may be), then homeostasis returns, and the individual continues to travel life's rocky road. If the event is, however, not effectively integrated and is submerged from awareness, the initiating stressor will re-emerge in a variety of symptomological forms months or years after the event. This is referred to as delayed or post-traumatic stress disorder. Armfield (1994) emphasises that symptoms may begin immediately after trauma, but often they lay dormant for weeks or even years after the trauma.

Armfield (1994) points out that military personnel are at particular risk for developing PTSD because of prolonged exposure to conditions "outside the range of usual human experience". This comment is also valid for all emergency services workers.

2.3.3 The question of pre-existing psychopathology

Being a victim of crime, war, or other types of human cruelty is not the equivalent of being mentally ill (Gilliland & James, 1993). Originally victims of PTSD were thought to have some pre-existing psychopathology or character disorder, but there is little evidence to suggest that PTSD is activated because of some pre-existing pathology.

Gilliland and James (1993) conclude that susceptibility to PTSD is a function of several factors: genetic predisposition, constitution, personality make-up, past life experiences, state of mind, phase of maturational development at onset, social support system before and after the trauma, and content and intensity of the event. This is supported by Armfield (1994) who states that "vulnerability to PTSD is enhanced by pre-existing psychological disorders (especially if related to prior trauma), low self-esteem, family problems, and poor coping skills".
He quotes the following example: "During a 6-week period in the Persian Gulf War, for example, the Israeli Defence Force reported that of 74 referrals for combat reactions, all but 2 were experiencing reactivation of previous stress." (Armsfield, 1994:740.)

Scott and Stradling (1994) warn that caution has to be exercised in generalising pre-trauma characteristics that predict victims' responses to trauma. They quote the following two examples of conflicting findings regarding predictors of PTSD. The first example involves a study of firefighters conducted by McFarlane in 1991. He found that the best predictors of who would progress from intrusive imagery to disordered arousal were the firefighters' neuroticism scores, and whether they had a family history of emotional disorder. This confirmed the findings of Friedman, who found in 1990 that between 40 and 60% of combat veterans with PTSD are also suffering from personality disorder. The second example however, involves a study conducted by Best in 1991. He studied rape victims and found that pre-trauma characteristics did not predict who would suffer from PTSD. Scott and Stradling (1994) do however admit that there is some evidence that those with an anti-social personality disorder pre-dating the trauma are more likely to suffer PTSD after a trauma.

2.3.4 Incidence of PTSD

Various studies have indicated that approximately half of the 3 million service personnel who served in Vietnam have severe psychological problems (Gilliland & James, 1993). According to Scott and Stradling (1994) the incidence of PTSD in the general population is approximately the same as that of schizophrenia, affecting about 1 percent of the population at any one time.

Everly and Lating (1995) state that four in every ten Americans have been exposed to a major traumatic event before the age of 30; of these, one in four
develop PTSD. The authors also argue that, given the events that are usually associated with post-traumatic stress, it is safe to say that the prevalence of PTSD in the general population is probably underreported and underdiagnosed. It should be pointed out that, in a society such as South Africa, that is characterised by violence and crime, the incidence of PTSD could be expected to be much higher. This is especially the case among certain groups of the population (such as emergency services personnel) who are continually exposed to crime and violence.

2.3.5 Importance of the trauma type

One of the interesting phenomena of PTSD is that there is a marked distinction between natural and man-made catastrophes. Acts of God create far fewer victims of PTSD than do man-made ones because, in natural disasters that affect the whole community, everyone becomes a survivor. Everybody helps the others and there is no blaming of the victim. Man-made acts of trauma, on the other hand, create even more victims of PTSD when the trauma directly affects the social support system of the family (Gilliland & James, 1993). Armfield (1994) confirms that man-made traumas such as imminent or real combat are more dangerous to the human psyche than are natural disasters.

Gilliland and James (1993) point out that the following variables relating to trauma type seem to influence its impact on victims: degree of life threat; degree of bereavement; speed of onset; duration of the trauma; degree of displacement in home continuity; potential for recurrence; degree of exposure to death, dying and destruction; degree of moral conflict inherent in the situation; role of the person in the trauma; and the proportion of the community affected.
2.3.6 Response to trauma and symptoms of PTSD

At this point various aspects of human beings' response to trauma, and some of the symptoms of PTSD will be discussed.

a. Re-experiencing the event

One of the major symptoms of PTSD is that the victim re-experiences the event. It is necessary to comment briefly on the retention of the event(s) in the memory.

Bower (1981) proposes that, since the traumatic event was stored in memory under completely different physiological (increased heart rate, higher adrenal output) and psychological (extreme fright, shock) circumstances, different mood states will markedly interfere with the recollection of specific cues of the event. Therefore, the important elements of the memory that need exposure in order to promote anxiety reduction are not accessible in the unaroused state. These can only be remembered when that approximate state is reintroduced by cues in the environment.

Intrusive-repetitive ideation begins to dominate the individual's existence (Gilliland & James, 1993). Intrusive thoughts generally take the form of visual images that are sparked by sights, sounds, smells, or tactile reminders that bring the repressed images to awareness. Accompanying emotions of guilt, sadness, anger, and rage occur as the thoughts continue to intrude into awareness. The individual may resort to self-medication such as alcohol or drugs, which may temporarily relieve depressive, hostile, anxious, and fearful mood states. The ultimate outcome is increased dependence on the addictive substance.
b. Avoidance (denial) or numbing

The second major symptom of PTSD is avoidance or denial, and numbing. As individuals attempt to cope with catastrophes, they become passive (immobile and paralysed) or active (able to cope with the situation). According to Gilliland and James (1993) individual reactions fall into three major groupings: momentary freezing, flight reaction, and denial or numbing.

In the prolonged stress of a combat situation, denial or numbing is the most common response. It allows the soldier to cope and live with the experience in three ways: by believing he is invulnerable to harm, by becoming fatalistic, or by taking matters into his own hands (becoming aggressive). This allows the victim to get through the trauma and cope with it without losing complete control. Typically, survivors of trauma will let down their defence barriers and will have acute stress disorders immediately after the trauma, but will recover. For those who do not, continued emotional numbing and repression can have severe consequences. Shunted into the unconscious for a long time, trigger events in the form of everyday stressors can pile up and cause emotional blowouts when the individual is least prepared for them. What the individual needs most is to bring these thoughts into conscious awareness and come to grips with them so they can be resolved. Yet, the individual is more likely to deny their existence and use a variety of avoidance responses to escape from the situation (Gilliland & James, 1993).
c. **Increased physiological arousal**

A third major symptom of PTSD is physiological arousal. Researchers have discovered that neurotransmitters, hormones, cortical areas of the brain, and the nervous system play a much greater role in PTSD than was previously suspected (Gilliland & James, 1993). When a person is exposed to severe stress, neurotransmitters, hormones, and specific cortical functions designed to deal with the emergency are activated. Although the person may be removed from danger after the traumatic event, the nervous system may continue to function in an elevated and energised state as if the emergency were still continuing. This may cause the individual extreme physical and psychological duress long after the traumatic event but also explain why people do not "get over PTSD" (Gilliland & James, 1993).

d. **Maladaptive patterns characteristic of PTSD**

According to Gilliland and James (1993) PTSD involves five common patterns: (a) death imprint, (b) survivor's guilt, (c) desensitisation, (d) estrangement, and (e) emotional confusion.

i. **Death imprint** : The traumatic experience provides a clear vision of one’s own death in concrete biological terms. There is normally a continuing preoccupation with death after the event.

ii. **Survivor's guilt** : A second pattern is guilt. This is experienced over surviving when others did not, over not preventing the death of another, over not having somehow been braver, over complaining when others have suffered more, and also that the trauma is partly the victim's fault.
iii. *Desensitisation*: Desensitising oneself to totally unacceptable events and then trying to return to a semblance of normalcy in a peaceful world is another characteristic pattern of PTSD. Victims tend to feel emotionally dead inside.

iv. *Estrangement*: A fourth pattern is that severe interpersonal difficulties occur. Victims tend to become estranged from their peers and social support systems because "they don't understand", and indeed, they do not.

v. *Emotional confusion*: There is a continuous struggle after the event to find any significance in life. Emotional fixation takes place. Although victims love their family members, they can not help pushing them away and hurting them, especially with their aggression.

e. **Family responses**

One of the keystones for bridging the gap between traumatic events and a return to adequate and wholesome functioning is a strong support system that is most generally based within the family (Gilliland & James, 1993). In many cases, however, social support systems for victims are lacking. Dependency issues quite often arise that tend to alienate and push away those on whom the victim would be dependent. Trauma victims display a tendency not to *feel* because exposure of feelings invariably makes them vulnerable to further pain. The victim may also become so dependent on the stabilising person (usually the spouse) that the victim's needs breed resentment in anyone else who demands time and effort (usually children).

The outcome of this spiral is what the victim may fear most from the support system - rejection (Gilliland & James, 1993).
In conclusion it can be stated that people's basic assumptions about their belief in the world as a meaningful and comprehensible place, their own personal invulnerability, and their view of themselves in a positive light account to a great extent for their individual manifestations of PTSD. Even in the most well-integrated persons, who have excellent coping abilities, good rational and cognitive behaviour patterns, and positive social support systems, residual effects of traumatising events linger (Gilliland & James, 1993).

Scott and Stradling (1994) state: "Whether the disorder is maintained will probably depend on the efficacy of the individual's coping responses. If, for example, the coping strategy is to turn to drink the symptoms will persist even if the experience of them is anaesthetised, whereas if the coping strategy is to continue to engage in pre-trauma activities there is a better chance that the condition will be ameliorated.... maladaptive coping responses fuel the feedback loop whilst adaptive coping responses may break the cycle and enable exit from the loop." (p. 6)

2.4 SUMMARY OF STRESS, BURNOUT AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

In this chapter a general background was presented on stress, followed by a discussion of burnout, and finally of post-traumatic stress.

It was pointed out that the cost of stress in human and economic terms is incalculable, because there are apparent, as well as hidden costs involved. The subjective nature of stress was discussed, and it was explained that the same situation can be perceived totally differently by two individuals. It was argued that, because its staff is the most valuable resource of an organisation, it is important that stress be effectively managed to ensure the well-being of staff members. This was followed by a brief discussion of the ten major categories of sources of stress, as well as the seven major categories of symptoms of stress.
In the section on burnout different definitions of and viewpoints on burnout were presented. This was followed by a brief description of the process of burnout, highlighting that the onset of burnout tends to be slow, and that recovery is not always linear. Next the major causes and symptoms of burnout were discussed. Finally the different levels and stages of burnout were described, indicating that burnout occurs at three levels: (a) activity level, (b) state level and (c) trait level. It also occurs in four stages: (a) the enthusiasm stage, (b) the stagnation stage, (c) the frustration stage and (d) the apathy stage.

A short description was given of the history of PTSD, indicating how the terms used for this disorder changed over time, as well as how it was finally included in its present form in the DSM-IV. This was followed by a definition of PTSD. The question of pre-existing psychopathology, and its influence on susceptibility to symptoms of PTSD was considered, indicating the conflicting views that exist in this regard. Next the incidence of PTSD was discussed, indicating that the prevalence of PTSD in the general population is probably underreported and underdiagnosed. In terms of the importance of trauma type there appears to be a marked distinction between natural and man-made catastrophes in creating victims of PTSD. Finally five aspects of human response to trauma were discussed: (a) re-experiencing the event, (b) avoidance behaviour, (c) increased physiological arousal, (d) maladaptive patterns characteristic of PTSD, and (e) family responses.

In Chapter Three a literature overview of stress in the emergency services will be given.
CHAPTER THREE:
STRESS IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES
- A LITERATURE OVERVIEW

In Chapter Three a literature overview of stress in the emergency services will be given. Much has been written about stress experienced by emergency services workers, especially by police officials. For the purpose of this study a discussion of the most relevant literature is presented, and where possible South African literature was used. It should be pointed out that there seems to be considerably more documented research on stress in police services than on stress in other emergency services such as fire, ambulance and traffic services.

3.1 BACKGROUND

Although occupational stress has received much emphasis over the past decades, it is only recently that researchers have focused on the stress of emergency workers. These include police officials, firefighters, traffic officials and ambulance workers. According to American researcher, Thomas (1988), work in the emergency services is typified by causes of stress such as relatively low pay and status, inadequate resources and little opportunity for career development. American researcher, Whitehead (1985), points out that this work also involves role conflicts and ambiguities not typically found in other human service jobs. This is the case because members of the emergency services are usually under time pressure. The public also tends to have unrealistic expectations of emergency services.

In this study the assumption was made that the stress experienced by members of the different emergency services would differ and be unique to each service, but that there would also be significant overlap and similarities
in some of the stressors. In order to investigate whether this assumption is supported by literature, a survey of the stressors experienced by members of the emergency services is reported here.

The literature study focuses on stressors experienced respectively by police officials, ambulance workers, firefighters and traffic officials. First, however, it is necessary to make a few general remarks on stress in the emergency services.

American authors, Holgate and Clegg (1991), found that personality factors, coupled with organisational factors, produce burnout in younger emergency services workers, whereas organisational factors are the primary determinants of burnout in older emergency personnel. These authors therefore suggest that, in dealing with burnout in emergency services workers, both organisational and personal contributors to burnout (which depend on the age and career stage of workers) should be taken into account.

American authors, Lord, Gray and Pond (1991), argue that research findings on stress have serious implications for policy and practice in organisations. For this reason considerable care should be taken when developing and selecting instruments that purport to measure stress among emergency workers. The serious implications and impact of stress measurements on the careers and lives of members of the emergency services cannot be overemphasised.

Trends in research on stress in the emergency services conform to the common trend in stress research: the identification of the causes of stress with the aim of designing programmes and environments with minimal stress (Mackay & Cooper, 1987). This type of research, however, results in three major problems: (1) the emphasis on stress as a pathological
condition; (2) the classification of stressors into seemingly separate entities; and (3) the search for a linear cause-and-effect relationship between stressors and the consequences of stress (Mackay & Cooper, 1987). The authors point out that the components of stress are far more complex than linear models of cause-and-effect would suppose. In the case of emergency services personnel, for instance, it is dangerous to assume that less exposure to accident scenes or shooting incidents will necessarily reduce members' stress levels.

Although substantial similarities are found in stressors in all the emergency services, the unique stressors in each of the emergency services investigated in this study warrant discussions under separate headings.

3.2 STRESS EXPERIENCED BY POLICE OFFICIALS

3.2.1 Introduction

According to Nel and Burgers (1995), cycles of violence places members of the SAPS in constant contact with victims, while they often become victims themselves or are forced to use violence against criminals. This overexposure to death and disaster often results in high rates of suicide, medical boarding and hospitalisation, many with the diagnosis of PTSD, with massive costs to society. Nel and Burgers (1995) point out that many members of the SAPS experience their present circumstances as traumatic. New policing regulations and roles, as well as the rate of socio-political change taking place in South Africa, contribute to their distress. They are currently also more likely to communicate their distress than before. These authors argue that the SAPS, society's guardian of power, has become the symptom bearer for a society in the painful process of adapting to change.
3.2.2 The five main causes of police stress

American authors, Crank and Caldero (1991), identify five causes of police stress: (a) organisational stress, (b) task environment, (c) personal and family concerns, (d) judicial concerns, and (e) the government.

a. Organisational stress

It was found that organisational issues are often identified by police officials as an important source of stress, with problems relating to superiors as the most frequently cited stressor. Shift changes is the second most frequently selected stressor.

Crank and Caldero (1991) list eleven elements under organisational stressors. Among these are problems relating to superiors, promotions, favouritism, performance appraisals and peer pressures. Promotions especially tend to present problems in police organisations. There are limited ranks in such an organisation, with the result that only a few members are able to make it to the top, as is the tendency in bureaucratic organisations.

American researcher, Fodor (1976), found in his research that supervisors who are subjected to stress reveal a greater tendency toward authoritarian leadership styles than supervisors who are exposed to neutral conditions. These supervisors were also found to grant lower pay increases and lower performance evaluations to compliant members of a simulated work crew as opposed to supervisors in a neutral condition. From this it can be concluded that an authoritarian management style may be symptomatic of stress among managers of an organisation. These findings can be reasonably expected to be also applicable to managers in the SAPS.
Mtshelwane (1995) points out that, in the South African situation, dissatisfaction over working conditions prompted black members of the SAPS and prison services to take to the streets. On 23 January 1995, hundreds of POPCRU (Police and Prisoner Civil Rights Union) members staged nation-wide marches in support of their demands. The author notes that voicing demands could also be regarded as a form of authoritarianism (an authoritarian negotiation style), indicating that even the trade unions dealing with the SAPS tend to become authoritarian when under pressure. Some of the demands POPCRU tabled were:

- the immediate reinstatement of all POPCRU members dismissed during the apartheid era;
- the establishment of an interim promotions board to review all promotions; and
- elimination of all victimisation and harassment of POPCRU members.

POPCRU also staged a sit-in at the regional SAPS offices in Braamfontein (Johannesburg), demanding clarity about the status of assistant police officials.

American author, Stotland (1991), indicates that police officials with low workloads tend to focus on the relations in their departments, and tend to suffer from high levels of stress when these relations are negative. This author also explains that police officials with high workloads tend not to be susceptible to stress from this source, because they tend to be more crime-fighter orientated. They are, however, susceptible to stress from difficult work-related or other problems they encounter, more so than those with low workloads.

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From these findings it appears that effective management skills could reduce or increase general stress symptoms, depending on whether members perceive them to be effective (in which case stress will be reduced) or not (in which case stress will increase).

American researchers, Crank, Regoli, Hewitt and Culbertson (1993), report on determinants of role-stress among police executives. They found that lower stress was reported for executives with greater autonomy and those who perceived that they had control over the recruitment process. This study highlights the need for human beings to feel in control of their job and life in order to experience healthy stress.

b. Task environment stressors

Traditionally, task environment stressors have been regarded as the most stressful to police officials. Such stressors refer to the dangerous aspects of police work, which include backup calls, robberies, high-speed chases, shooting and violent deaths. Concerns over occupational danger, widely thought to be the most important source of stress among police officials, were however among the least frequently identified stressors in a study by American researchers, Crank and Caldero (1991).

Crank and Caldero (1991) report that, in addition to the above-mentioned aspects, the negative attitude of the public towards the police is seen by police officials as a major source of stress. Police officials are often seen by the public not as protectors but as perpetrators. The way in which they are treated by a large sector of the public reflects the negative attitude towards members of the police.
Police officials seem to become victims of the people they serve (Nel & Burgers, 1995).

De Kock, Schutle, Ehlers and Schnetler (1995) found, however, that more than two-thirds of the respondents in their study (members of the South African public) believed that SAPS members perform their duties in a satisfactory manner, that they have a positive attitude towards people in the community, and are capable of solving and preventing crime. The authors also found that 92% of the respondents had changed their view of the SAPS since the 1994 elections, and that they now view the SAPS in a more positive light than before. The proportion of respondents who perceive members of the SAPS to be performing their duties in a satisfactory manner also increased between 1990 and 1994. This was especially the case with black respondents.

To De Kock et al. (1995), however, the fact that almost one in five South Africans believes attacks on members of the SAPS to be justified is a cause for great concern. It appears that most of their respondents believed the reason for these attacks on members of the SAPS to be of a political nature.

The contradictory findings stated above about the public image of the police indicate that the process of changing public attitudes towards the police in South Africa is a very slow one. Ambivalence about the public image of the SAPS can therefore be expected.

Recently researchers have become more aware of PTSD symptoms resulting from the experience of traumatic situations. Police officials are normally exposed to various traumatic experiences in their job. Martin, McKean and Veltkamp (1986) identify various traumatic experiences police officials can encounter. To mention but a few,
these include shooting at someone, being shot at, working with child or spouse abuse and rape victims, and being threatened (or family members being threatened). Attacks such as arson, assault, attempted murder, bottle-throwing, damage to property and explosions are often also suffered.

Weiss (1990) states that when police officials shoot and wound or kill another person they tend to suffer from a stress reaction that can also be called psychological violence, violence scarring, or after-burn. The support or lack of support received from police organisations, peer groups, supervisors, legislation, reprisal news media, friends, family and the general public increases or reduces this stress reaction, depending on whether it is perceived as constructive or destructive by the individual involved.

c. **Personal and family stressors**

Crank and Caldero (1991), as well as British authors, Alexander, Walker, Innes and Irving (1993), identify personal and family concerns as a source of police stress. The nature of police work significantly limits the time that members have available to spend with their families. Shiftwork in particular keeps members away from their homes and disturbs family patterns. It is difficult, sometimes impossible, for families of police officials to provide support to them because of the complex and demanding nature of their job. A situation arises where police officials receive insufficient support from their families, and their families receive equally insufficient support from them. Wives of police officials often complain about having to raise the children virtually on their own. Families of police officials also do not receive sufficient support from the organisational structures.
German researcher, Kirkcaldy (1993), argues that organisational structure and climate, the home and work interface, and relationships with others are the main causes of stress that should be taken into account to understand police stress. The family, the community, and the management of a police service do not provide sufficient support to sustain members in their job. Members try to cope on their own, in fear of criticism and of making mistakes, because mistakes in the police environment normally make headlines.

d. Judicial stressors

Liability is another source of stress often mentioned by police officials. According to Nel and Burgers (1995), members of a police force/service do have the responsibility of preventing crime. They have to do this, however, without matching support structures from the judicial system in terms of dealing with arrested criminals, to assist them in managing these responsibilities. Frustration results when police officials make mistakes under pressure. Judicial stressors are evident where the law does not prosecute people believed by members of the police to deserve punishment. This demoralises them, resulting in the perception that the law protects the criminal rather than the victim of criminal activities. Public anger also tends to be directed at the police in such instances, as SAPS members are the ones dealing directly with members of the public as regards their legislative experiences (Nel & Burgers, 1995).

Kappeler, Vaughn and Del Carmen (1991) analysed state court decisions in the United States on police liability for negligent failure to protect detainees from self-inflicted injury and suicide. It was found that, if foreseeability is present, law enforcement officials are required to take extra precautions to prevent suicide. If special precautions are
not taken, these law enforcement officials can be held liable for breaching their duty to prevent a detainee from committing suicide or other self-inflicted injuries. The need for a clear definition of responsibilities and for legislative criteria to reduce confusion and stress is evident from this article.

e. The government

Nel and Burgers (1995) point out that South Africa has experienced a time of political change since 1991. Especially members of the SAPS have experienced high levels of stress during this period, because the SAPS is a government department. The role of the SAPS is determined by the government of the day.

According to De Kock et al. (1995), the assumption that a democratically elected, legitimate government automatically also legitimates all the institutions of the state (such as a police service) could not be sustained in South Africa for up to six months after the elections in April 1994. A strong indication was found, however, that the function of the SAPS to maintain law and order has a negative influence on its function to combat crime. Respondents in their study believed, though, that better training of members of the SAPS, increased community involvement and a problem-solving approach by the SAPS, should increase the acceptability of the SAPS.

3.2.3 Suicide in the SAPS

Suicide in the SAPS has received considerable attention in the media recently. The SAPS has lost a considerable amount of human potential in this way over the past few years.
Van der Westhuizen and Sunkel (1991) state that it is common knowledge that individuals with high risk careers, such as police officials, are more prone to suicide than individuals with careers that do not involve danger and daily encounters with death. Pieterse (1993) points out that the suicide statistics within the SAPS correlate with those of overseas countries - for some reason police officials all over the world commit more suicide than members of any other career group. A comparison of the 1991 statistics of suicides in the SAPS with those of the South African population in general reveals the seriousness of this problem in the SAPS. In comparison to the 5 out of 100 000 South Africans who committed suicide during 1991, 60 out of 100 000 members of the SAPS committed suicide during this same period.

Statistics for suicide in the SAPS are quoted by Nel and Burgers (1995) in Table 3.A.

**TABLE 3.A : SUICIDE AMONG SAPS MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Nel and Burgers, 1995:5)

The suicide rate among members of the SAPS for 1995 was 154. In an article entitled "Stress 'drives police to suicide'" the Sowetan (22 April 1996) reports the suicide rate among members of the police in South Africa to be 200 for every 100 000 members, compared with only 22 in a country
such as the United States. In this article Police Commissioner George Fivaz is quoted to have said that "the strain of the police’s fight against crime was driving extraordinarily high numbers of them to suicide".

Van der Westhuizen and Sunkel (1991) caution, however, that national suicide figures are not always reliable. Suicides often tend to be masked to enable dependants to claim insurance money.

The question should be asked: "Why was the suicide rate so high during 1994, the time shortly after the elections?" This was at a time when the country was in a state of celebration and jubilation about the elections and the peaceful way in which these elections took place. A possible explanation could be that, during this period members of the SAPS, for the first time in years, had the time to take stock of their own well-being, and of the price they had paid in order to maintain law and order during the period preceding the elections. Many of them were now experiencing burnout and, in many cases, discovered that their marriages were falling apart. Members were also confronted during this time with major changes, not only in the country, but in the organisation as well, and many of them experienced difficulty in adapting to these changes.

Although limited data is available to prove this, it has been suggested that the incidence of suicide within the SAPS is not an individual problem, but a problem of the police subculture as a whole. This suggests that definite changes should be made within the organisation and its subculture in order to address this problem. Van der Westhuizen and Sunkel (1991) believe there seems to be a need for more tolerant policies in the SAPS with regard to individual needs.

A number of proactive and reactive measures have been implemented in the SAPS to combat suicide. According to Van der Westhuizen and Sunkel
(1991), one of the reactive measures implemented was the *SFQ* (*Suicide Follow-up Questionnaire*), a questionnaire through which personality traits and environmental circumstances of the deceased (or victims of attempted suicide) can be analysed.

### 3.3 STRESS EXPERIENCED BY AMBULANCE WORKERS

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

Traditionally researchers saw the work of ambulance workers as unexciting and highly demanding, with continuous exposure to major injuries and death being responsible for most of the stress experienced by these workers. In recent years, however, health authorities were increasingly pressurised to acknowledge the effects of stress on their employees. Stress affects physical and mental performance and is costly to both employee and employer. American authors, Pines and Aronson (1980), explain that it is costly in terms of wasted training for those who quit their jobs, and it is costly in terms of the psychological price those who stay have to pay. It is not only costly for the organisation in terms of lost talent and poor performance, but also for clients, patients and consumers.

Despite the stressful nature of the work of ambulance and rescue workers, minimal research has been conducted on their occupational stress (Grigsby & McKnew, 1988; Hammer, Mathews, Lyons & Johnson, 1986; Palmer, 1983). The research that has been done suggests that burnout among paramedics is a complex phenomenon, and that stress is associated with a wide range of organisational and job characteristics (Carlson & Wertelka, 1985; Grigsby & McKnew, 1988). With a few exceptions, however, the research does not provide in depth examination of the nature of the stressors specific to this type of occupation (Cox, 1980; France, 1988; Hammer *et al.*, 1986; Mason, 1982; Metz, 1981).

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American author, Patrick (1979), asserts that excessive work demands that require long hours and high levels of performance, such as the work of ambulance workers, can lead to burnout. On the other hand, a work setting that is dull and monotonous, with little or no visual stimulation and variation, can elicit boredom, fatigue and lack of interest, which may also lead to burnout.

According to South African researcher, Sparrius (1992), ambulance workers experience outpatients and patients with minor complaints as more demanding than critical care patients. It was also found that ambulance workers gain a great sense of achievement and job satisfaction from emergency work. Consequently, a slow shift during which there is little action, especially a night shift, is perceived as more stressful than a busy shift full of emergencies.

3.3.2 Main causes of stress for ambulance workers

In the literature the following unique stressors have been identified for ambulance workers:

a. Organisational stress

Sparrius (1992) identifies a range of negative stressors for ambulance workers. A similar trend to that in the police is seen in studies of stress among ambulance workers. Despite the presence of some unique individual, intergroup and extra-organisational stressors, the most striking finding is the level of negativity accorded by the respondents to organisational stressors. Organisational design, management style and disciplinary procedures of ambulance services are more dominant negative stressors for workers than any other stressors to which they are exposed. In particular, perception of the
structure and operation of the organisation as being paramilitary, with a rigid system of discipline, lack of communication and absence of worker participation and motivation, is a common theme in the interviews conducted by Sparrius (1992). Respondents blamed organisational structure for slow promotion and salary increases, for limiting autonomy and initiative, and for a rigid and harsh system of discipline with a plethora of rules and regulations. They also mentioned that, while the use of initiative is emphasised during their medical training, they are reluctant to apply initiative in their work for fear of contravening the disciplinary code of their organisation.

It is apparent from Sparrius's (1992) research that the areas traditionally viewed as being stressful for ambulance and rescue workers are experienced as less crucial by these workers than the structure and functioning of their organisation. Consequently, organisational characteristics have to be understood and taken into consideration in dealing with the stress of these workers.

These findings have important implications for any stress intervention and prevention programmes that are introduced for ambulance and rescue service workers. It will not be sufficient to concentrate in these programmes on individual and extra-organisational stressors if the working environments of these workers contain organisational stressors over which the individual has very little control. Intervention aimed at reducing or preventing organisational stressors is essential (Murphy, 1988).

b. Management style

Sparrius (1992) found that ambulance workers tend to perceive management as being uninvolved with them and not motivating them.
They feel that management does not recognise the work being done by operational staff and administrative workers, that they do not treat workers with respect, and that they do not understand their problems and difficulties. Respondents in Sparrius's study who were senior officers appeared to be aware of this criticism, but at the same time they perceived workers as being unable to cope with the recent rapid professionalisation of ambulance work, and as lacking in self-awareness. These clashing perceptions point to a lack of communication between management and workers. This conclusion is supported by the predominance, in Sparrius's (1992) interviews, of complaints about problems in upward, downward and lateral communication.

c. Ineffective communication

In dealing with the many complaints received about ineffective communication, American authors, Hunter, Jenkins and Hampton (1982), maintain that the development of assertiveness skills among ambulance workers and management may be one way of achieving clear communication channels in the ambulance services. Clear communication channels afford the opportunity for managing conflict in an appropriate and constructive manner, without necessarily producing feelings of animosity. Seminars and workshops for staff members should be held regularly, addressing the importance of recognising stress and its effects, in order to facilitate early interventions.

d. Stressors relating to patient care

Sparrius's (1992) research reveals that ambulance workers tend to experience stress caused by minor complaints of victims, slow shifts,
physical danger like driving at high speed at night, ill-equipped vehicles, poor road conditions, long distances, unpredictable work or flexi-shifts, unrealistic deadlines, lack of job description, and role conflict.

Hunter et al. (1982) point out that ambulance workers are continuously faced with direct patient care responsibilities that are a heavy drain on their emotional resources. They also have to deal with a diversity of patients and their families, who are not always aware of their technical training and skills. Because of this ignorance, ambulance workers are often subjected to physical and verbal abuse from family members and bystanders.

e. Low job status and remuneration for great job responsibilities and high workloads

Sparrius (1992) found the low occupational status accorded to ambulance workers by the public and within the South African health services to be a prominent stressor among these workers. They see themselves as professionals, whereas they perceive the public to see them as "a glorified taxi service", or even as people who could not find employment elsewhere. Some of Sparrius's respondents reported that their families share this opinion of low occupational status, and that family support for their work is lacking.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents complained that their salaries were not commensurate with the responsibility they carry. The most common method stated of supplementing their income was through working overtime.

Linked to low status and low pay are two further stressors for senior officials: the lack of suitable applicants for filling vacancies, and a
shortage of dedicated workers. The stressors of low status, low pay and lack of dedicated personnel have been identified by other American researchers as well (France, 1988; Metz, 1981; Mitchell, 1988). The lack of family support and the use of overtime and second jobs, however, are stressors that have not emerged in previous studies.

f. Lack of support systems and personal coping skills

Hunter et al. (1982) note that ambulance workers lack self-awareness, because they are sometimes insensitive to stress within themselves. Yet they have sufficient training to be aware of their needs and those of their families. The authors suggest that ambulance workers become so involved in their work that they fail to recognise the emotional and physical changes occurring within themselves. Consequently they may be unable to prevent burnout.

Hunter et al. (1982) conclude that, in coping with stress and preventing burnout in the ambulance services, workers need social support - from family and friends, the general public and hospitals. However, the authors feel that the greatest preventive measure is the enhancement of self-awareness.

3.3.3 Summary of stress experienced by ambulance workers

Stressors unique to ambulance workers, according to Sparrius (1992), include: low occupational status; low pay and thus a lack of dedicated workers; lack of recognition for the job they are doing from family, the community and other health workers; working overtime, and doing part-time jobs to supplement their salary. A boring and uncomfortable feature of the work, as revealed by Sparrius (1992), is satelliting: waiting in a vehicle
at a predetermined location for despatched calls. Respondents in Sparrius's (1992) study also referred to the stress of being placed in physical danger as a result of their work. An example of this would be driving into black residential areas at night, and finding themselves in the middle of a crowd of rioters. In addition, when assisting a patient, the crews are often on the receiving end of physical and verbal abuse from bystanders. Workers also complained about ill-equipped vehicles, the poor conditions of roads and the long distances they often have to travel. These conditions make heavy physical demands on ambulance crews.

3.4 STRESS EXPERIENCED BY FIREFIGHTERS

3.4.1 Introduction

Traditionally research on the effects of disasters has focused on the immediate or primary victim(s) of the disaster. Rescue workers, however, are exposed to both the stress of the event itself and the stress of their role in providing help (Raphael, 1986). In responding to a disaster they may become one of its hidden victims. Firefighters are repeatedly exposed to mutilated bodies, mass destruction, life-threatening situations and physically demanding activities. Repeated exposure to trauma can put rescue workers, especially first responders such as firefighters, ambulance workers and police officials, at increased risk of developing PTSD (Breslau, Davis, Andreski & Peterson, 1991; Durham, McCammon, & Allison, 1985; Keating, Blumenfield, Reilly, Pine & Mittler, 1987). For this reason the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control has declared firefighting to be the most hazardous and dangerous occupation in the United States (Hildebrand, 1984).
3.4.2 Nature of the work

In a study conducted by Raphael (1986), firefighters reported feeling helpless and overwhelmed by the magnitude and unexpectedness of disasters, the smell of dead bodies, the anguish of relatives, the suffering of the injured and the extreme pressure of the work.

American researchers, Fullerton, McCarroll, Ursano and Wright (1992), investigated the psychological responses of firefighters participating in air disaster rescues and performing rescue missions in large cities. They found that these firefighters identified strongly with disaster victims and with the victims' families. They reported particular difficulty in dealing with child victims, partly because they compare these victims to their own children. Identification with the victim may heighten the disaster trauma experienced by firefighters (Ursano & Fullerton, 1990; Ursano & McCarroll, 1990).

Raphael (1986) also claims that firefighters expressed feelings of helplessness and guilt for being unable to do more for victims because, in times of disaster, the needs of victims overwhelm the available resources. Raphael (1986) hypothesises that the feelings of helplessness often expressed by different types of rescue workers are a response to the victims' unspoken request to return to life as it was before the disaster. Victims and rescue workers may, in fact, share this unspoken feeling. Rescue workers' helplessness and guilt may, in part, reflect the desire to make this happen, as well as the impossibility of doing so.

In the study of Fullerton et al. (1992) firefighters were found to experience extreme fatigue and physical exhaustion. Fatigue is an important and usually unmeasured aspect of rescue work as well as of stress. Many of the firefighters complained of intrusive images and smells following
exposure to death. Some of these workers had difficulty in sleeping, nightmares, and images of the dead during the night.

3.4.3 Coping strategies used by firefighters

a. Sense of humour and the buddy system

Fullerton et al. (1992) state that all the firefighters in their study indicated that support from buddies was important to them. Many of them indicated that support from fellow workers was particularly important in decision making. They also indicated that working with a buddy helps them to stay calm and to remember their training. In addition, it tends to provide reassurance about decisions that have been made.

These firefighters also described humour as an important aspect of sharing and supporting each other. They tend to use humour as a way of coping with repeated exposure to the dead and the dying. Humour provides an emotional sharing of the experience of trauma, and also serves as an expression of membership of the rescue team. Those outside the group may not share these insider jokes, particularly the gallows humour. The use of humour may thus establish boundaries between rescue team members and those outside the group. This results in a shared closeness and alliance between team members, which can be very valuable in terms of recovery. Closeness (or group cohesion) can, however, also interfere with sharing with people outside the group. All the firefighters in the study of Fullerton et al. (1992) indicated that supportive interaction with individuals who had not directly experienced the disaster was difficult. They experienced difficulty in sharing the traumatic experience with their families. This reluctance to share, however, does tend to change with time.
Group support by leaders

Group recovery from a traumatic event may depend on the ability of key leaders to help others mourn the losses that have occurred. American researcher, Ingraham (1987), who studied leadership in fire services, describes the importance of the role of *grief leadership* in the recovery process. The leader's own expression of grief helps others express their feelings. When one of the leaders expresses grief, it opens the way for others to express their own sorrow openly.

Rituals are often used by groups for the mental organisation of a traumatic experience by attributing meaning to this event (Ursano & Fullerton, 1990). Burial of the dead, for example, is one such ritual. In the event of a disaster, however, there is often an absence of meaning. In the absence of meaning, groups tend to create meaning through the construction of shared beliefs (Dollinger, 1986). Such beliefs are an aspect of social support and enhances the cognitive integration of the present traumatic experience with one's past views of life. Rituals help individuals manage the fear of the unknown during times of chaos and confusion. This is illustrated by the anger and discomfort expressed by several firefighters in the study of Fullerton et al. (1992) when dead bodies were left on the runway overnight.

c. Training

Fullerton *et al.* (1992) point out that training prior to a disaster plays an important, and often overlooked, role in determining response during a disaster event. Recollection of training is important for keeping calm during a disaster or traumatic event, for successful performance and for feeling active and in control during rescue work. When the effect of training is missing, rescue workers' experience of the disaster is
more likely to be one of loneliness, guilt over poor performance, feelings of being out of control, and feeling like a victim. This is illustrated by a firefighter who felt guilty because he had been unable to get his truck to operate in order to respond to a call. Fullerton et al. (1992) emphasise that training for rescue work of all types should include methods for maintaining communication, interaction, and involvement with co-workers and other social support networks so as to cope with emotions and with stress.

3.4.4 Summary of stress experienced by firefighters

It is evident that social support, an important buffer against experiencing stress, can contribute to the coping behaviour and mental health of firefighters exposed to disaster. Training rescue workers in diminishing their identification and emotional involvement with victims may be effective in preventing post-traumatic stress. Following a disaster, it is also important to provide the opportunity for rescue workers to share their feelings of guilt and helplessness, and to gain reassurance from their peers and leaders.

3.5 STRESS EXPERIENCED BY TRAFFIC OFFICIALS

3.5.1 Introduction

Traffic officials have a particularly difficult task in enforcing the law on the roads, outside the protective environment of an office. The perceptions of members of the public that traffic offences are not criminal makes their job even more difficult (Botes, 1993). A fair amount of attention is paid to improving the public image of traffic officials. However, no matter how courteously and professionally traffic fines are issued, some people will always feel offended, because they have to pay for their mistakes when being caught by a traffic officer (Bornman, Prinsloo, Schurink & Skawran,
1988). It seems that most road users are more worried about being fined for committing a traffic offence than about being involved in a traffic accident (Botes, 1993). The negative attitude of most South African road users towards traffic officials and traffic law enforcement is reflected in the many South African jokes about traffic officials. The low job status of traffic officials and hostile feelings from the public have the potential to increase their job stress dramatically if they happen to depend on acceptance by other people for a positive self image (Van Heerden, Smit & Potgieter, 1983).

South African society is currently undergoing changes that are revolutionary in scope and awesome in magnitude. These changes affect all social institutions, thereby creating new relationships between citizens and society's institutions, particularly the police. As a result, providing traffic services during the nineties is more difficult and demanding than ever before in South African policing history (Herman & Cloete, 1991). One unique phenomenon on South African roads is the minibus taxi. As a major driving force, the minibus taxi industry places special demands on traffic officials, as will be discussed in the next section.

3.5.2 Minibus taxis

Almost overnight the urban black taxi appeared on the transport and criminological scene, and it was soon apparent that this phenomenon had various sociological, cultural, political, economic and legal dimensions. This created new perceptions and attitudes, which affected every South African, particularly traffic officials who are, among others, responsible for the prevention of traffic crime. It was soon realised that the way in which traffic policing is done had to be altered if this service was to remain relevant in meeting the challenges presented by rapid social change (Herman & Cloete, 1991). The following incident described by O'Grady (1995) is an
illustration of the stress that traffic officials face regarding the South African minibus taxi industry:

A senior KwaZulu Natal traffic officer slammed the announcement by KwaZulu transport minister, S'bu Ndebele, that 11 000 warrants outstanding against taxi drivers are to be reviewed in 1995 by the Attorney-General, as "totally unacceptable".

Mr John Bannerman, chairman of the Port Natal Edhodwe co-ordinating traffic committee, and commander of the Umhlanga Protection Services, responded in turn, that this amounted to "political interference with the normal processes of law". Mr Ndebele stated that Attorney-General Tim McNally had been asked to review the warrants in consultation with eight taxi representatives, as a means of avoiding a massive taxi blockade in Durban by aggrieved taxi drivers.

"Why has this special privilege been granted?" asked Mr Bannerman. "Should we, the traffic police, continue to apply our time and place our lives in extreme danger in dealing with the minibus taxi violators if they are going to be granted special privileges that the normal road user is not afforded?" No one was more aware that the taxi drivers were capable of "violent confrontation" than "my colleagues and I who face the sharp end dealing with these road pirates on a daily basis", he said.

O'Grady summarised the situation as follows: "The situation had deteriorated to the point where single officials could no longer safely deal with 'these unguided missiles on wheels' and special heavily armed taxi patrol units had been formed in some areas to deal with them. Traffic officials were trying to control unruly and anti-social behaviour by taxi drivers, but we cannot do so without strong support from the courts and the politicians who are now being held to ransom by the same road
criminals. Let us end this ongoing stupidity now by applying the provisions of the law laid down for the protection of all road users and stop capitulating to the violators' demands, undemocratic blockades and threats of violence." (O'Grady, 1995:16.)

3.5.3 Summary of stress experienced by traffic officials

It is suggested that traffic crime prevention begins at local level; therefore the relationships in the various liaison committees will require highly skilled management. These skills should be acquired as a matter of urgency. According to Herman and Cloete (1991) there is a need for further research to develop a model for promoting constructive interaction between all parties involved, in conjunction with aggressive law enforcement to prevent traffic crime. The urban black taxi fleet cannot be allowed to destroy itself through internecine violence and traffic crime.

In certain local authorities, special training is provided for traffic officials in dealing with minibus taxis, because they are a major driving force on the South African roads. The minibus taxi industry requires special legislative accommodation. It is vital, however, that road users and traffic officials have good relationships. Traffic officials are dependent on public support to function properly, and road users are dependent on efficient traffic services to arrive safely at their various destinations. This interdependence underlines the importance of a positive public image for traffic officials to promote road safety (Van der Vyver, 1988). Traffic officials experience stress when subjected to public hostility, especially when they are not sure of receiving organisational and managerial support in this regard (Van Heerden, 1990). It should also be mentioned that many of the stressors experienced by members of the SAPS also apply to traffic officials, since they do police work in the traffic environment.
3.6 SUMMARY OF STRESS EXPERIENCED BY MEMBERS OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES, AS HIGHLIGHTED IN LITERATURE

From the literature it is clear that unique stressors are experienced by members of the different emergency services. Police officials particularly find judicial stressors problematic, including stress arising from their role as a government institution. Members of the ambulance services experience unique stressors relating to patient care. Firefighters experience stress owing to the specific nature of their job, which is physically exhausting and dangerous. Traffic officials find it stressful to enforce the law in public, and to deal with minibus taxis.

There are, however, also a considerable number of stressors that are shared by members of all the emergency services. It is clear that the low status of members of these important services (reflected by low salaries, long working hours and inadequate recognition and support from organisational structures and the public) has a negative impact on the quality of services rendered and on the lives of emergency services workers. Members of most of these services are also subjected to organisational stress, problems relating to management style and ineffective communication, personal and family stressors (resulting in lack of sufficient support), and lack of coping skills.

Literature indicates that if the emergency services provide a poor quality service the public will ultimately suffer when experiencing crises. The obvious interdependence between the needs of the public and emergency workers, of management and workers, as well as of organisations and individuals, is underlined constantly.

In Chapter Four the theoretical orientation of the study will be discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR : THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter the theoretical orientation of the study, the systems approach, is discussed. Stress within the emergency services can not be understood or managed without a thorough understanding of how these systems function. Any attempt to address the stress levels of individuals would be ineffective if the systems in which they function are not understood. The aim of the study is, therefore, not to determine the levels of stress of individual members of the emergency services, but to determine (1) the causes of stress (both positive and negative) within these systems, (2) how individual members cope with their stress within these systems, (3) what support is provided to members by these systems, and (4) how these systems are connected to one another. Clearly the focus is on the systems, and not on individuals. Although it is not the intention of the study to focus on the effect of members’ stress on the emergency systems, reference to this effect will be made in Chapter Ten. Recommendations that result from the study will be directed at changes that will have to be made by the systems, and not by individual members. The stress experienced by individual members of the emergency services can therefore, only be adequately explained by the systems approach.

This argument is supported by Campbell, Goldicott and Kinsella (1994) who point out that much of the focus of systemic thinking is in trying to understand the contexts wherein people find themselves and the meanings attributed to various activities. This makes it possible to locate the problems where they really belong, and when the picture of different contexts becomes clear, solutions are easier to find. Campbell et al. (1994)
believe that many failed solutions result from an insufficient understanding of the myriad contexts that shape and maintain a problem.

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Miller and Miller (1992) explain that in the second half of the twentieth century, two conceptual systems theories, cybernetics and general systems theory (GST), attracted adherents among scientists, particularly in the engineering, biological, and social sciences. These theories described living beings as systems similar to nonliving natural systems and human artefacts. In the course of time the two became integrated into a single theory known as cybernetics in Europe and some other parts of the world, and general systems theory in the United States and elsewhere.

For the purposes of this study these two important theories will be discussed briefly. As the concepts of autopoiesis and organisational closure are regarded by some authors (e.g., Bailey, 1992) as important in systems theory, these concepts will also be discussed briefly. According to Wheatley (1992) the contribution of a later development in systems theory, chaos theory, is useful in understanding organisations. For this reason chaos theory will be discussed in 4.3.

4.1.1 Cybernetics

Cybernetics and GST date primarily from the 1940's. In 1948 Norbet Wiener published his work, Cybernetics, in which he defines cybernetics to include both nonliving systems (machines) and living systems (animals and humans). It emphasises the control of systems through the monitoring of flows, principally energy and information.
Cybernetics is responsible for popularising a number of concepts widely used in the academic language. One such concept is the feedback loop, often now abbreviated to merely feedback. Morgan (1986) feels that the core insight emerging from this early work was that the ability of a system to engage in self-regulating behaviour depends on processes of information exchange involving negative feedback. Negative feedback is defined by Kast and Rosenwieg (1972) as "...informational input which indicates that the system is deviating from a prescribed course and should readjust to a new steady state" (p. 22).

According to Bailey (1992) the new approach in sociocybernetics, or new cybernetics, gets away from the machine and circuit imagery of early cybernetics, and adapts an explicit, actor-orientated, action theory approach. Keeney (1983) defines it as "part of a general science of pattern and organization" (p. 6). It focuses upon the study of information, communication and control, and views information as constructed and reconstructed by an individual interacting with the environment. It also contributes towards linking the individual with society. This approach can be viewed as much more subjective and sociological than the classical cybernetics approach with its emphasis on control.


4.1.2 General systems theory (GST)

General Systems Theory developed, based mainly on the work of the Austrian-American biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1902 - 1972). Together with a number of researchers such as Monge (1977, 1982) and
Fisher (1982), von Bertalanffy started adapting the general systems theory from a biological to a social perspective. They did this because certain structural similarities were noticed in terms of the analysis and interpretations of certain phenomenon in the biological, behavioural and social sciences. Monge (1977) viewed this adaptation process of the systems theory as a revolution.


The stated goal of GST was to further interdisciplinary integration via the systems perspective, mainly through searching for similarities between seemingly diverse disciplines.

4.1.3 Autopoiesis and organisational closure

The concepts “open and closed systems” (as used in the structural systems model) and “organisational closure” are sometimes used interchangeably. To avoid confusion it is necessary to distinguish between these concepts, and to explain what they mean in this study.

“Open and closed systems” relate to the structural theory of family therapy described by Minuchin (1974). The theory relates to the permeability of boundaries. If boundaries are totally impermeable (which is only theoretically possible in living systems) then the system encompassed by the boundaries can be understood as closed to information from outside. The more a system is closed, the more rigid and impermeable the boundaries are seen to be. The more open a system, the more permeable
the boundaries. If boundaries are totally permeable the system is seen as enmeshed with its surrounding environment or other subsystems. The term “enmeshed” is used by Minuchin (1974) to refer to families in which individuality is not tolerated and subsystems are seen to be “mixed up” with each other, e.g., there may be no clear boundaries between parental and child subsystems. Here “openness” and “closedness” are also used in terms of the accessibility of a system to an outsider. If a family is tight-knit and suspicious of outsiders, rigid boundaries exist between the family and the “outside world”, in which case it may be difficult for a therapist to enter the system or to have an impact on it.

The emergency services can be seen to be closed in terms of the boundary concept, i.e., it is difficult for outsiders to gain entrance, and strangers are allowed to enter only through hard work and after gaining credibility. This is discussed in more depth in Section 5.4.

The second concept, “organisational closure”, was suggested by the biologists Maturana and Varela (as referred to in Kotze, 1994). They note that living (biological) systems always retain their organisation. If the system’s organisation alters, the system is destroyed. These ideas are important in clarifying how systems can or can not be influenced from outside. Maturana and Varela (1980) conclude that systems can only be perturbed by forces outside themselves. The perturbation may prompt the system to reorganise, but it can only reorganise according to its own organisation. To overcome the solipsism implied in these ideas, Maturana and Varela (1980) state that systems (persons or organisms) can find a “consensual domain” or through “structural coupling” separate systems can find a “fit” with each other, and thus “communicate” in some way. These ideas are often discussed under the heading of “constructivism” (Keeney, 1983). “Autopoiesis” is the term used to refer to systems that
are only able to reproduce themselves, i.e., nothing from "outside" can be added in reproducing the organism or system.

Many authors confuse "constructivism", as used in the biological metaphor, with what came to be known as "social constructionism" (Joubert, 1997).

When dealing with human social systems, the ideas of social constructionism are much more useful than those of autopoiesis and biological constructivism (Joubert, 1997). Social constructionism states that objective reality does not exist as an independent entity (Kotze, 1994). It can only exist in the way it is seen and described by an observer. Human beings share language, and whatever realities come to exist for an individual do so through a process of social construction or co-creation that takes place between or among persons. Language is the medium or means through which people engage with their fellow human beings and therefore social constructionists state that reality is created by and through language (Anderson and Goolishan, 1988).

The meanings that members of the emergency services ascribe to their experiences can be seen as socially constructed. However, this study does not use the recent model of social constructionism, as a methodology based on social constructionism normally requires such detailed analysis of the reality constructions of the research participants that only a small number of participants can be used, and no generalisation of results is possible. As this study tried to understand the larger systems involved in the emergency services, a larger number of participants was required.
In terms of the “openness” and “closedness” of a system, this study uses a structural understanding of these concepts, as developed by Minuchin (1974).

The ideas of organisational closure and autopoiesis do not seem applicable to this study, and are mentioned only for the sake of comprehensiveness.

4.2 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND BASIC CONCEPTS IN SYSTEMS THEORY

For an understanding of systems theory it is important that certain underlying assumptions of this approach be explained.

4.2.1 Systems

The concept system is an important concept in the systems approach. A system implies a stable structure, consisting of two or more components that are organised in a reciprocal relationship with each other, and are interdependent on each other in their functioning. Von Bertalanffy (1968a) viewed systems as "a complexity of interacting elements" (p. 55), or "a set of elements standing in interrelations" (p. 141). A system, therefore, is the organisation of interrelated and interdependent components that are in such a relationship to each other that they form a whole.

It is this very aspect of the systems approach, the whole with interdependent components, that makes this approach ideally suited to investigate and analyse a complex phenomenon such as stress in the emergency services. This phenomenon influences individuals, groups, each one of the different emergency services as a whole, as well as the interaction between the different emergency services.
4.2.2 Open and closed systems

As was mentioned in 4.1.3., systems can be classified according to the extent to which it interacts with its environment. As the amount of information that is exchanged between the system and its environment increases, the system becomes more open. Von Bertalanffy (1968b) distinguishes clearly between open and closed systems. Openness and closeness can be seen as two poles on one continuum of a scale, where a system is situated in a specific position at a given time. Openness, therefore, is not constant, but changes all the time.

a. Open systems

Open systems have the ability to exchange information, energy and objects or materials with their environment (which is referred to as the supra-system). Von Bertalanffy (1968a) describes an open system as "a system in exchange of matters with its environment, presenting imports and exports" (p. 141). He uses this model to explain the growth, adaptation, regulation and change of living organisms. All living systems, such as organisations, are classified as open systems. The components of an open system are not tied to the system and can, therefore, leave or enter the system. Any change in the system changes the structure and functioning of the whole system.

Miller and Miller (1992) emphasise that "systems can only be relatively open or closed, never absolutely, but living systems are more open to inputs and outputs than most nonliving systems" (p. 13).
b. Closed systems

Per definition a closed system has no interaction with its environment, admits no matter from outside itself, and has rigid, impenetrable boundaries (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972).

As was mentioned before, to refer to a totally closed system is a theoretical construct only. It is recognised today that it is not possible for a social system to be totally closed.

The emergency services can be described as systems that have traditionally been fairly closed. Each one of these services has developed a culture (and even language) of its own. They have definite boundaries in terms of the exchange of information with outsiders to their systems. These systems are, however, in a process of change. They are pressurised by communities to become more transparent and service orientated. Visible changes are noted, especially in the SAPS, in becoming more open systems.

4.2.3 Subsystems

Any system can be subdivided hierarchically into subsystems, which can in turn also be subdivided into subsubsystems, components, units and parts (De Greene, 1972). These subsystems function in two ways:

- **horizontally**: subsystems equal in status (e.g., colleagues at the same level, or officers of the same rank) influence each other; and
- **vertically**: subsystems at a higher level in the hierarchy of the system, as well as the supra-system influence subsystems at a lower level in the hierarchy.
All living systems consist of subsystems. An organisation such as the SAPS (the system), for example, has different divisions or departments (subsystems), such as Visible Policing, the Internal Stability Unit and the Flying Squad. These subsystems again, consist of various units (subsystems of subsystems). The ISU, for instance, consists of different units such as unit 9 in Durban, unit 10 in Cape Town and unit 1 in Pretoria. Individual subsystems interact with each other, and the overall efficiency of a system depends on the quality of the interaction between the subsystems. For instance, should ISU unit 9 in Durban require additional manpower during periods of unrest, they might request assistance from unit 1 in Pretoria. If these subsystems do not interact with each other on a continuous basis, and assist each other in performing their duties, the SAPS as a system becomes inefficient.

Ahituv and Neumann (1986) explain the interaction between subsystems in an organisation as follows: "The subsystems interact and contribute to the common purposes of the organization. The effectiveness of these subsystems considered collectively as a system may be greater than the sum of the effectiveness of each subsystem considered separately. This phenomenon is labelled synergism. The synergistic effect is described by Aristotle’s statement, 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.” (p. 75)

These authors warn, however, that one of the attributes of modern organisations is their increasing complexity and the specialisation of their subsystems. Each organisational unit has its own objectives and can thus lose sight of how their activities and goals interrelate with those of the organisation as a whole.
4.2.4 Supra-systems

Each system functions and develops in a particular environment (which is referred to as the supra-system). Ackoff (1972) explains that the "environment of a system is a set of elements and their relevant properties, which elements are not part of the system but a change in any of which can produce a change in the state of the system" (p. 84). De Greene (1972) points out that an open system can be influenced by its supra-system, but may also influence the supra-system. For instance, the way in which policing is done by the SAPS (the system) in a specific community (the supra-system), is influenced by that community's attitude towards policing as well as the pressure that that community puts on the SAPS. The effectiveness with which the SAPS manages to maintain law and order in that specific community, on the other hand, influences the safety and stability of that community. This specific community, in turn, forms part of a larger supra-system (society).

Levine and Fitzgerald (1992) state that systems at each level have systems at a lower level (subsystems), and systems at a higher level (the supra-systems of their component systems). The division between levels, however, are not always clear. A system is classified as a supra- or a subsystem in terms of its relationship with another system. Each system therefore, is a supra- and a subsystem of another. The nature of the functional relationship between the system and the supra- or subsystem develops as a result of the flow of information across the boundaries of the open system. It influences the structural-functional behaviour of the system.
4.2.5 Inputs and outputs

Each system has a process of exchange with its supra-system or environment. This is referred to as input (from the environment, or supra-system, to the system) and output (from the system to the environment, or supra-system). Easton (1972) explains that "A transaction or an exchange between systems will, therefore, be viewed as a linkage between them in the form of an input-output relationship" (p. 183).

The fire service, for example, receives a phone call that there is a fire in a certain area (input from the environment to the system). They respond to the call by sending out a fire team to the scene (output from the system to the environment).

There is a marked difference between the matter or information which enter the system and that which ultimately leave the system - a transformation process or process of development takes place within the system. Bekey (1972) quotes the following example: "...from a systems point of view, man can be viewed as an information-processing device. He converts sensory inputs into appropriately coded muscular outputs." (p. 128)

Ahituv and Neumann (1986) explain the process of transformation which takes place in an organisation as follows: "A system accepts input resources. Typically, the input resources of an organization are capital, personnel, information, energy, materials, inventories, machinery, and the like. The system's components process these inputs and transform them into outputs." (p. 84) These authors continue: "A system produces outputs that are used to achieve its purpose. A manufacturing firm produces goods and services; a theatre produces shows; a transportation system produces passenger-miles and freight-miles." (Ahituv and Neumann, 1986:84.) In the
case of the emergency services, inputs, such as personnel, capital and equipment are used to produce a protection and rescue service to the public.

4.2.6 Boundaries

All systems have boundaries through which inputs and outputs have to move. Boundaries divide the territory between a system and its environment (supra-system). Jacobson (1994) states that these boundaries can be physical, but in human systems they are often conceptual. The boundary serves the function of determining what belongs where.

Some boundaries are more permeable than others. Jacobson (1994) explains that an impermeable boundary implies that there is no or very little interaction between a system and its environment. An example of this would be if members of one of the emergency services saw themselves as a team, and refused to co-operate with the other emergency services. The boundaries of an open system would be far more permeable. In such a case the members of the emergency services would have frequent interaction with each other. They would attempt to continually adapt to the needs of the other emergency services in order to improve the overall standard of emergency services in South Africa. All open systems are semi-permeable in such a way that the boundaries allow certain inputs and prevent others from entering. Boundaries maintain a system's equilibrium and as such distinguish the system from the environment.

Hall and Fagen (1968) state that "If every part of the system is so related to every other part that a change in a particular part causes a change in all the other parts and in the total system, the system is said to behave as a whole or coherently. At the other extreme is a set of parts that are completely
unrelated: that is, a change in each part depends only on that part alone....Such behaviour is called independence..." (p. 85). Hall and Fagan (1968) also point out that all systems have some degree of wholeness, and of independence.

A system with a high degree of independence is referred to as a degenerate system. Instead of the terms wholeness and independence the terms entanglement and disentanglement are sometimes used. In the entangled (or whole) system there is a lack of individual identity and on the surface each member appears to be undifferentiated from the other. The “us” is stronger than the “I”. Any attempt by an individual member of this system to facilitate change or to break away is perceived by the system as a threat to the system and is, therefore, resisted. The disentangled (or degenerate) system is exactly the opposite. On the surface no apparent ties between the individual members are visible. There is very little intimacy and interchange, and every person knows his/her place and sticks to his/her role. There is a lack of cohesion in this system. For a system to function well a balance between entanglement and disentanglement is needed. Florin, Chavis, Wandersman and Rich (1992) confirm this when they state: "Organizational boundaries that are too rigid prevent the identification or acquisition of resources from the environment, whereas overly fluid boundaries weaken structures and dissipate internal resources." (p. 220)

4.2.7 Communication and information

Communication takes place between social systems, as well as within systems. It is a process whereby the system, the supra-system and the subsystems exchange inputs and outputs.
Wiener (1968) places particular emphasises on the importance of communication. He states: "Information is a name for the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it, and make our adjustment felt upon it. The process of receiving and of using information is the process of our adjusting to the contingencies of the outer environment, and of our living effectively within that environment. The needs and the complexity of modern life make greater demands on this process of information than ever before... To live effectively is to live with adequate information. Thus, communication and control belong to the essence of man's inner life, even as they belong to his life in society." (Wiener, 1968:32.)

Buckley (1968) explains that "the relations among parts and between the whole and its environment are more and more mediated by information exchange taken in the modern broad sense, thus making possible higher levels of flexibility, complexity, and dynamic interchanges with the environment" (p. xxiv).

Jacobson (1994) emphasises the subjective nature of communication. "In an interactional system each participant sees and hears what he is structurally determined (by his ideas and beliefs) to see and hear. Therefore there can be no communication which can be objectively determined to be a specific thing. It does not matter how many people are in the room to hear and see a particular communication, since not one of them has the capacity to determine objectively what was communicated. If they agree about what it is, it is on the basis of consensus that they do so, not on the objective correctness of anyone's version." (p. 55) An example of this is the criticism that is often voiced against the SAPS by members of the public who perceive them to be too aggressive. Members of the SAPS, on the other hand, argue that they deal with dangerous criminals, and that they have to
protect themselves. They have to be aggressive in some situations in order to maintain law and order. None of the parties are objective in their arguments because they have different realities.

Living systems are often geared to receive only appropriate inputs. Faulty inputs (or inputs that may upset the internal equilibrium of the system) may damage or destroy the system. Boulding (1968) explains that, according to the principle of equilibrium or homeostasis, certain states are preferred by individuals within a system. He adds: "Behavior is described in terms of the restoration of these preferred states when they are disturbed by changes in the environment." (p. 6) The output from a system is also input to the supra-system to which it belongs. When systems only accept selected inputs, it will necessarily follow that the outputs to the supra-system should be acceptable to those supra-systems as inputs. The requirements of the supra-system are, therefore, critical for the system in processing outputs to the supra-system.

4.2.8 Feedback

Keeney (1983) provides the following definition of feedback, as formulated by Wiener (1954/1967): "Feedback is a method of controlling a system by reinserting into it the results of its past performance..... If the information which proceeds backward from the performance is able to change the general method and pattern of performance, we have a process which may be called learning." (p. 66)

Kast and Rosenzweig (1972) state that the concept of feedback is important in understanding how a system maintains a dynamic equilibrium. Through the process of feedback, the system continually receives information from its environment that helps it adjust. The maintenance of homeostasis, or
balance, in a living organism, depends on a continual feedback of information to that organism from its environment. Members of the SAPS, for instance, have been appointed to represent the SAPS on community forums. Through these forums feedback is obtained from communities in terms of the service required from the SAPS. Feedback is also provided to the communities in terms of the service provided by the SAPS.

Levine and Fitzgerald (1992) point out that, in a systems model, a network of feedback loops represent the dynamic structure of the system. Associated with that structure are one or more models of behaviour, such as growth, collapse, oscillation, and inhibition. Goal seeking is a very important facet of human behaviour. These authors suggest that knowing how to represent and analyse feedback mechanisms, which go hand-in-hand with goal seeking behaviour, is of extreme importance.

Florin et al. (1992) explain that the presence of the feedback loop internal to the organisation indicates how the quantity and quality of the participation that is mobilised can, in turn, affect other organisational elements. The quantity of participation mobilised can impact on organisational structure and functions, whereas the quality of members' participation can impact upon members' skills and attitudes, a resource of the organisation. The external feedback loops in the framework indicate how the functioning of the system impacts on environmental factors that will, in turn, affect its own functioning.

Campbell et al. (1994) distinguish between loose feedback and tight feedback, and explain: "...in some organizations there is a quick, direct, and relevant response to action in another part of the system. The feedback loop is tight because the response matches the original action without a lot of intervening events which may not be directly relevant. On the other hand
loose feedback is that which is not seen to be immediately or directly responsive to an action. Most organizations that are not functioning well exhibit examples of loose feedback, particularly around the problem they face.” (p. 14)

Feedback can, however, be both positive and negative.

a. **Negative feedback**

As was mentioned earlier, Kast and Rosenzwieg (1972) define negative feedback as "...informational input which indicates that the system is deviating from a prescribed course and should readjust to a new steady state. Feedback is of vital importance in the complex organisation. It must continually receive informational inputs from its environment. Management is involved in interpreting and correcting for this information feedback" (p. 22). Campbell *et al.* (1994) suggest that although both positive and negative feedback is valuable, negative feedback can be more helpful in times of complexity and change, since it suggests possible direction in which the system could shift in order to be more responsive to its environment.

Keeney (1983) explains that the system, therefore, monitors its own performance and is selfcorrective. This maintenance of a range of fluctuations represents a process where feedback opposes the direction of the initial change that produced the feedback. This process, called *negative feedback*, is simply a circular chain of causal events, with somewhere a link in the chain such that the more of something, the less of the next thing in the circuit. Negative feedback, therefore, works to correct deviation in the other direction.
Keeney (1983) points out that corrective action is brought about by \textit{difference}. The system is technically \textit{error activated} in that the difference between some present state and some preferred state activates the corrective responses.

b. **Positive feedback**

Joubert (1987) explains that, according to the cybernetics approach, positive feedback is information that causes a system to continue to change in the direction it is already busy changing. Keeney (1983) states that wild range oscillations in corrective action brought about by the system are usually the result of uncoordinated feedback. The difference between seeing a range of deviation as controlled or amplified is seen by some authors as deviation-counteracting (negative feedback) and deviation-amplifying (positive feedback). Keeney (1983), however, argues that this view too easily depicts change and stability as a dualism of polar opposites. Stability can not be separated from change - both are complementary sides of a systemic coin, and stability will always be rooted to underlying processes of change.

Keeney (1983) explains that complex systems involve a hierarchical arrangement of feedback. With this perspective the dualism that otherwise arises between \textit{positive} and \textit{negative} feedback is avoided. What sometimes appears as so-called \textit{positive feedback} is actually a part of higher order negative feedback. He states: "What is sometimes called 'positive feedback' or 'amplified feedback' is, therefore, a partial arc or sequence of a more encompassing negative feedback process." (p.72)
One characteristic of open systems is that a balance is maintained between the maintenance of equilibrium (negative feedback) and structural change (positive feedback).

Keeney (1983) emphasises that, according to the cybernetic view, the unit that is focused on is not individuals, couples, families, neighbourhoods, or societies. Instead, cybernetics focuses on mental processes - on seeing these underlying patterns of feedback process.

4.2.9 Structure and order

Each system has a definite structure, and without such a structure the system would not be recognised as such. Ahituv and Neumann (1986) explain: "The systems approach requires that the system analyst and designers consider the system as a whole. The system may be too complex or too large for detailed analysis. Therefore, the system is factored into subsystems. This process of factoring and defining more narrow boundaries is continued until the subsystems are of manageable size. At this point some subsystems are considered black boxes, with no internal structure. The factoring process, which comprises a careful study of the emerging boundaries and interfaces of the subsystems, determines the structure of the entire system that will result. The factoring process generally leads to hierarchical structures." (p. 87)

The extent to which systems are structured differs from system to system. When there is a high degree of structure in a system, with clear differences in status relationships and roles, and with well-defined rules and regulations, it is fairly easy to predict a system's behaviour. The emergency systems, for instance, are characterised by formal roles and structures, as well as well-defined rules and regulations. The behaviour of members within these
systems can therefore be easier predicted than the behaviour of members of the informal sector. The extent to which the system is structured, determines the extent of order that exists within the system.

Ahituv and Neumann (1986) explain that the structure of a system is composed of a complex hierarchy. Keeney (1983) describes the hierarchy of levels of order as follows: "When we speak of a cell being a different level than a whole organ, say a liver, we do not think of a liver standing on top of a cell. Instead, we see an organ engulfing its component parts. The trick to seeing orders of recursion in systemic hierarchies is to view them as a cascade of Chinese boxes - systems within systems within systems."

4.2.10 Circular Causality

Von Bertalanffy (1968a) describes linear causality as a situation where communication or action has implications in one direction only. There is only one cause and one effect. It implies that incident A causes incident B to happen, but that incident B has no influence on incident A. The direct opposite of linear causality is circular causality. Circular causality implies that each component or subsystem in a system co-determines the behaviour of every other component or subsystem. The system acts as a whole. It implies that incident A does not only influence incident B, but that incident B also influences incident A. When incident A happens there is a probability that incident B might also happen, but the direction of this relationship is not known.

A member of the emergency services who does not adhere to the specified regulations in a specific situation may put all his colleagues in danger. As a result he/she might be disciplined by the commanding officer, which, in
turn, may cause this person to react with rebellion. In this example the rebellious attitude of the member may be the result of being disciplined, but could also have been the cause of him/her being disciplined in the first place.

Keeney (1983) uses the term *recursiveness* instead of circular causality. He explains: "One way of thinking about recursiveness is to imagine the mythical creature Ouroborous, the snake that eats its own tail. Each time the creature swallows itself, we can speak of the creation of a different order of recursion.....it is important to realize that we can indicate a difference whenever the circle travels through itself. Speaking of recursion enables us to point to the same snake, while indicating the order of recycling." (p.32)

Keeney (1983) sees systems theory as the world of recursive process. It provides a way of seeing organisational patterns. He sees circular movement as the replaying of the same patterns of organisation.

Keeney (1983) states that "In the case of so-called 'psychopathology', it is now evident that such behavior fits into the organization of a particular context. Therefore, it is likely that each family member's pattern of behavior and experience is as pathological (or normal) as that of any other family member" (p.124). Suicide rates and incidence of post-traumatic stress in the emergency services should be viewed with this in mind. The behaviour of members who commit or attempt suicide, or who are victims of post-traumatic stress, should be described as pathological or *normal* under the given circumstances. The behaviour of members who constitute the "rest of the family" should also be described in terms of how it fits into this particular context. As an illustration of the principle of circular causality Keeney (1983) emphasises: "...when 'pathology' is identified in any social
setting, it is likely that other connected members are sites of pathology." (p. 125)

4.2.11 Symmetrical and complementary relationships

Keeny (1983) describes the difference between symmetrical and complementary relationships, and how patterns of behaviour tend to develop over time. Symmetrical behaviour is seen as behaviour where people display the same kind of behaviour in reaction to each other. An example of this would be if one person loses his or her temper, and another, in reaction to this, also loses his or her temper. An example of symmetrical behaviour in the emergency services would be when one person on a shift displays symptoms of pathological behaviour (e.g., attempting suicide). Ultimately the whole shift starts displaying the same symptoms.

Complementary behaviour, instead of being an identical reaction to a certain action, is an action in the opposite direction of the original action. Person A, for example, loses his/her temper, and person B defuses the situation by pointing out the humorous aspects of the situation. Keeney (1983) continues by stating: "...the way symmetric and complementary patterns of interactions are patterned represents a kind of choreography for the participants." (p. 40)

4.2.12 Holism and interdependence

The structure, function, process and other aspects of the system are not independent, but are part of an ordered, complex, interdependent whole. A system consists of subsystems, as well as the totality of their mutual interaction with each other, a whole, created by the interdependence of the parts. Buckley (1968) explains that "It is not the nature of the parts alone
that are basic to any whole, but the way they are interrelated that gives them their characteristic properties..." (p. xxiv). Subsystems can, therefore, only be understood within the context of interaction with the system. This mutual interdependence of the subsystems is of such a nature that the interactional patterns are, in terms of quality, different and more than the sum total of the qualities of each individual subsystem. An organisational system, therefore, consists of individuals with a repetitive pattern of mutual interaction with each other. The quality of this interaction is referred to as the relationship.

In order to understand the problems experienced at one particular unit of the SAPS, for instance, the interaction between individual members of the unit, as well as the interaction between the unit and other units in the SAPS has to be understood. Members at ground roots level might complain that their commanding officer does not provide them with sufficient information about changes taking place in the organisation. The commanding officer, however, might not have access to this information because he/she does not receive any communication from head office.

Levy (1979) describes the systems approach as a perspective that enables the researcher to observe a phenomenon as a *gestalt* or a whole. It is out of the interdependent relationship that exists between the parts that the unique characteristics of the whole develop (Fisher, 1978). This interdependence between the parts implies that any change that takes place in one component will lead to changes in all the other components as well.

4.2.13 System rules

Each system has functioning rules that are very important. System rules are aimed at those objectives that lead to systems-functioning. According
to Morgan (1986), organisational structure, rules, regulations, and procedures are most often viewed as rational instruments intended to aid task performance. Morgan (1986) points out, however, that these arrangements could be products of a struggle for control. Rules, regulations and procedures often entail hidden agendas related to the power, autonomy, or interdependence of departments and individuals.

Keeney (1983) describes the interaction between members of a system as "...a kind of choreography for the participants..." (p. 43). This choreography operates according to rules which govern interactional themes. Descriptions of the choreography in a particular system therefore specify "how the previously identified interactional patterns (symmetric and complementary themes) are themselves patterned, that is, connected or sequenced." (Keeny, 1983:43)

Often members of the system do not recognise certain behaviour patterns as rules, because these rules are relatively fixed behaviour patterns that are not decided on arbitrarily. Examples of such rules are norms and values.

Norms refer to the way (how) of interaction that is allowed as acceptable within the system. Norms provide the ground rules for interaction between individual members of a system according to the different roles they fulfil in the system. Interaction between members in the emergency services is formalised as ranking structures that prescribe how members address and act towards each other. Interaction between members of other organisations may be governed by unwritten rules, or norms.

Values, on the other hand, refer to the objectives that the system aims at (for example, excellent service to the public). One of the problems experienced in the SAPS, however, is that not all members identify with the
values the organisation aims at (to protect and serve the public). Some of them rather see their function as *enforcers of the law*.

4.2.14 Homeostasis or equilibrium

Homeostasis refers to the maintenance of static or dynamic stability within the system, irrespective of external effects (Beishon & Peters, 1972).

Bailey (1992) points out that Cannon, who developed the model of homeostasis, could have used the term *equilibrium*. Bailey (1992) states that Cannon was, however, aware that equilibrium theory was formulated specifically for isolated systems and regarded applicable only to those systems. Living organisms are not isolated systems, but open systems. For theoretical clarity, therefore, Cannon coined the term *homeostasis* to apply to the equilibrium-like phenomena appearing in open systems such as living organisms.

According to von Bertalanffy (1972) it should be made clear that the term 'homeostasis' can be used in two ways. It can be taken in the original sense as the ensemble of organic regulations that act to maintain the steady states of the organism. They are effectuated by regulating mechanisms in such a way that they do not occur necessarily in the same, and often in opposite, direction to what a corresponding external change would cause according to physical laws. The term is, however, also often used as a synonym for organic regulation and adaptation in general. It is a question of semantics. He points out that it must be remembered that living organisms are essentially considered to be reactive systems. Outside stimuli are answered by proper responses in such a way as to maintain the system.
Keeney (1983) states that it is important to realise that, in systems theory, a static steady state is never elected. All change can be understood as the effort to maintain some constancy and all constancy as maintained through change.

Rather than simply using terms like homeostasis, stability, circular organisation, or coherence, for referring to the distinctive wholeness or identity of a system, Keeney (1983) suggests that the term *autonomy* be used. He argues that autonomy specifies more clearly that one is referring to an upper limit with regard to a system's homeostasis of homeostasis, or coherence of coherence. The term autonomy is related to autopoiesis, and will not be pursued here for the reasons stated in 4.1.3.

Currently the emergency services, like most organisations in South Africa, have to adapt to various changes taking place in these organisations. This causes considerable uncertainty and anxiety among members. Members tend to respond to these changes in various ways: they become negative and display low morale; they become disinterested in their work; they become stubborn and reluctant to apply new rules and regulations; and some of them attempt to fight the system to *keep things as they were*. These reactions to change are all attempts to maintain the equilibrium in the system. It should be noted however, that not all members regard these changes as negative. The fact that some of them welcome these changes tends to intensify the *disequilibrium* in the systems. Apart from the disequilibrium that is created by the changes, members of these systems are not united in whether to maintain the homeostasis or autonomy of the system or not.

Langs (1992) however, states that "chaos is seen to characterize many systems far from their equilibrium states. Yet surprisingly, such chaos is
enormously creative in providing the system with many innovative options. Often, new order arises out of surface chaos through the development of dissipative structures" (p. 381).

4.2.15 Orders of change

To understand the relationships in a particular system it may be necessary to acknowledge the order of learning (or change) the situation requires. It is therefore vital to understand what is meant by orders of change or orders of learning.

Keeney (1983) points out that Bateson uses the concept zero learning, which refers to those responses in a system that are solely determined by genetics or are so automatic that no correction appears possible. All other orders of learning involve trial and error. An organism’s behaviour is thus potentially subject to correction, so that when a behaviour has negative consequences, the organism can try another behaviour until it gets it right.

Learning I or first-order change refers to a situation in which the perceived choices are within a particular set of behavioural alternatives. The feedback process plays an important role in this type of learning, in that the organism’s behaviour is recursively linked to another system’s behaviour, so that the effect of one behaviour modifies subsequent behaviour. Campbell et al. (1994) explain first order change as follows: “First-order change involves the alteration in the activity of parts of a system that enables it to adapt or correct its equilibrium in response to external changes of a non-system-threatening degree, without fundamentally changing the rules governing the interrelationships of the parts of the system.” (p. 22)
Keeney (1983) explains that, whereas Learning I deals with *change in the specificity of response* or the learning of a simple action within a given context, Learning II (or *second-order change*) refers to *learning about a particular context of learning*. This essentially means that the organism learns how to identify and organise its action as part of a specific context. Learning does not arise from comparing different behaviours, but from comparisons across various contexts. Campbell *et al.* (1994) describe second-order change as follows: “Second-order change... occurs where the alteration in the activity of parts of a system reflects the evolution of new ‘rules’ governing their interrelationship. This occurs usually in response to some radical change in the external environment. Second-order change is therefore often discontinuous with the past, sudden and unpredictable in its full ramifications.” (p. 23)

Keeney (1983) points out that what is learned in Learning II is a way of *punctuating events* rather than a specific behavioural response. It is about learning to display appropriate behaviour in different contexts. To display the appropriate behaviour, the organism would first have to recognise the context as different.

The feedback process for initiating second-order change necessarily involves comparing different contexts, frames or punctuations, which requires a greater measure of creativity from the organism (Keeney, 1983).

Keeney (1983) states that Bateson also proposed Learning III, which represents a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which choice is made. Here change does not refer to change of a specific response (Learning I) or contextual punctuation (Learning II), but refers to change of the premises underlying an entire system of
punctuation habits. According to Keeney (1983) this order of learning is very difficult and rare, although it sometimes occurs in psychotherapy, religious conversion, and in other sequences in which there is profound reorganisation of character. Such a conversion represents Learning III and embodies the transition sometimes called change of epistemology.

In sum, different orders of learning and change indicate that people or systems of people may be classified as being caught in a frame, a set of frames or a system of sets of frames. The order of being stuck determines the required order of solution.

4.3 CHAOS THEORY

The contribution of a later development in systems theory, chaos theory, is deemed to be very useful in understanding organisations (Wheatley, 1992). It was explained earlier that stress within the emergency services can not be understood or managed without a thorough understanding of how these organisational systems function. For this reason chaos theory is discussed at some length.

Cartwright (1991) describes the revolution created by chaos theory as a very significant scientific event of the past two decades. Robertson (1995) states: "...chaos theory is the broadest of all of the great scientific discoveries of the 20th century! Chaos theory has already entered each of the older sciences through the back door, so to speak. As each has advanced to the point where it has needed to deal with complexity in its many forms, each has discovered some aspect of chaos theory." (p. 12)
Freeman (1995) explains that the conception of what we call deterministic chaos first emerged in the mathematical analysis of the stability of the solar system. Henri Poincare submitted his solution to the problem for a prize offered by King Oscar II of Norway. After winning the prize for solving the stability problem, a colleague discovered an error in Poincare's calculations. Poincare was given six months to redo his derivation. He found no closed solution. He had encountered intractable complexity in trying to comprehend a homoclinic tangle, which he called "trellis". Chaos was born, but it was swept from sight like a teratological monster. It re-appeared nearly a century later.

In chaos theory, chaos is defined as "order without predictability" (Cartwright, 1991:3). Wheatley (1992) explains that a system is defined as chaotic when there is no predictability. However, if such a system is observed long enough and with the perspective of time, it always demonstrates its inherent orderliness. The most chaotic of systems never goes beyond certain boundaries. Throughout the universe, then, order exists within disorder and disorder within order. Yet there is a way to see this ballet of chaos and order, of change and stability, as two complementary aspects in the process of growth, neither of which is primary.

Robin Robertson (1995) describes three very basic principles of chaos theory:

a. Change is not necessarily linear, small causes can have larger effects.

b. Determinism and predictability are not synonymous. Deterministic equations can lead to unpredictable results - chaos - when there is feedback within a system.
c. In systems that are "far-from-equilibrium" (i.e., chaotic), change does not have to be related to external causes. Such systems can self-organise at a higher level of organisation. Cartwright (1991) explains that chaos is really inherent in certain relationships and not the result of some extraneous factors. Campbell et al. (1994) point out that it is often incorrectly assumed that change is a process that must be stimulated by outside forces, because the natural state of affairs at best will do no more than maintain the status quo or allow organisational/energy levels to dissipate to the lowest point. Change is then incorrectly envisaged as a linear process moving through stages, with each one depending on the preceding one for inputs and then feeding outputs to succeeding stages.

Cartwright (1991) states that the basic idea of chaos theory is that there is order without predictability. There are systems, physical and social, that are well understood (in the sense that they can be fully described by means of a finite set of conditions or rules) and yet they are fundamentally unpredictable. Wheatley (1992) explains that the world is a place where order and change, autonomy and control, are not the great opposites that they were once thought to be. It is a world where change and constant creation signal new ways of maintaining order and structure. Chaos contains order. Systems, by design, fall apart so they can renew themselves.

As an example of this, Koehler (1995) describes the context of EMS (Emergency Medical Services). Immediately following a medical disaster there is no overall and clear-cut structure that immediately emerges, but lots of little structures come into and go out of existence. Although they all follow standard emergency procedures, emergency responders
initially tend to respond to the most conspicuous crises rather than to work according to an overall plan. These little structures are referred to as "fractals". Koehler (1995) explains that fractals are geometric objects that demonstrate self-similarity across several size scales. For example, a cauliflower head contains branches or parts, which, when removed and compared with the whole, are very much the same, only smaller. These clusters can again be broken down into smaller, similar clusters.

Later a structure forms, but only after an extended period. Order and chaos intertwine. From a macro-perspective, during a disaster a large number of EMS responders and organisations reach out toward, across and around one another. At a certain point, a percolation fractal emerges, integrating all these components into a disaster response system.

Due to the nature of disasters and emergencies there is always an element of unpredictability, even though EMS responders attempt to minimise this by following standard procedures. Koehler (1995) points out that a major medical disaster can destroy a substantial portion of the EMS's predictability. Normal standard procedures may be ineffective or insufficient during a major disaster. The chaos that follows creates an immediate need to organise and face conditions that predominate at that moment.

Cartwright (1991) explains that chaos is not anarchy or randomness. Chaos is order, but order that is "invisible". Nor is chaos merely the result of "noise" or interference, or even insufficient knowledge. Chaos implies a kind of inherent "uncertainty principle". Cartwright emphasises, however, that not everything in life is chaotic. Some things
are quite orderly and predictable. Other things are the opposite, not subject to precise rules or predictability.

While the prediction of chaotic behaviour may be impossible, understanding the order that gives rise to it may not be as difficult as was once thought. Cartwright (1991) explains that even in the most chaotic regime, it is possible to detect the underlying order. It is not clearly "visible" because it is of a local rather than global nature, but the order is nonetheless there.

Chaos theory suggests that the "rules" that govern behaviour at the individual or "local" level may be fully understood, but the global result is nonetheless impossible to predict beyond anything but the immediate future.

On the one hand, chaos theory implies that human behaviour may be much more complex than was once thought, so much so that a complete understanding of some of the things we plan may be beyond all possibility. On the other hand, chaos theory also suggests that some understanding of even highly complex behaviour may be found in quite simple models (Cartwright, 1991). From this follows the hope that complicated behaviour may have much simpler sources than was heretofore supposed.

Even more appealing, the word "chaos" traditionally denoted a formless void that was pregnant with forthcoming order. Now it seems that disorder in an individual or a society can precede the emergence of new structure instead of leading inevitably to mere anarchy (Freeman, 1995).
Cartwright (1991) states that the beauty of chaos theory lies in its disturbing integration of order and disorder, certainty and uncertainty, calm and turbulence. Another fundamental implication of chaos theory is that it is time to rethink some of the deep-rooted beliefs in the virtues of order and predictability and the untidiness of chaos and disorder. Cartwright (1991) concludes that humans may even need chaos to survive - that chaos is an essential ingredient in the way we manage our finite lives in an infinitely complex world.

Freeman (1995) points out that so fertile is this notion of chaos that variants breed like rabbits, giving rise to a bewildering array of adjectives: deterministic, terminal, itinerant, computational, soft, hard, controlled, graded, etc., and the levels and domains of application seem boundless. An embedding field is becoming apparent in the form of complexity theory, in which the degree of chaos is viewed as an adjustable property (e.g., when faced with a new situation, the brain searches for past experiences for comparison, which means the system attempts to go to a more-ordered, less-chaotic state as a step toward pattern classification. If there are no past experiences to compare this new experience with, the system becomes less ordered and more chaotic).

Robertson (1995) states: "...paradigms such as existential psychology, humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology, analytic psychology, and so on, were often viewed as outside the pale of scientific respectability. There was no common ground for the two sides to meet within the traditional framework of science. Now chaos theory offers the more "scientific" psychological paradigms a chance to deal with aspects of human psychology they have previously ignored." (p. 13)
4.4 ORGANISATIONS AS SYSTEMS

Three different perspectives on organisations as systems that are discussed in this section are classical management theory, organisations' theory and the "new science" perspective on organisations. It is evident that thinking in terms of organisations has changed and developed over the past few years. In order to survive in future, the emergency services face major changes. Applying "new science" principles (the latest approach to organisations) to the emergency services requires nothing less than what was described earlier as third-order change (or Learning III), which refers to change of the premises underlying an entire system. According to the principles of chaos theory (which forms an important part of new science thinking) a system has the ability to renew itself. In the case of the emergency services systems this will only be possible if a third order change takes place.

4.4.1 Classical management theory

Morgan (1986) points out that organisations are frequently referred to by classical management theorists as if they were machines designed to achieve predetermined goals and objectives, and which should operate smoothly and efficiently. As a result they are often organised and managed in a mechanistic way, forcing their human qualities into a background role. Morgan (1986) explains: "Consider, for example, the mechanical precision with which many of our institutions are expected to operate. Organizational life is often routinized with the precision demanded of clockwork. People are frequently expected to arrive at work at a given time, perform a predetermined set of activities, rest at appointed hours, then resume their tasks until work is over. In many organizations one shift of workers replace another in methodical fashion so that work can continue uninterrupted.
twenty four hours a day, every day of the year." (p. 20) This statement certainly applies to the emergency services in the sense that an uninterrupted, twenty four hour, seven days a week service is provided. The emergency services machine is set in motion by a phone call from a member of the public. In many instances, as is the case with members of the SAPS, employees are trained to interact with the public according to a detailed code of instructions, and are monitored in their performance.

Morgan (1986) points out that organisations that are designed and operated as if they were machines are normally referred to as bureaucracies (a term frequently used when reference is made to the emergency services as organisations). He states: "Much was learned from the military, which since at least the time of Frederick the Great of Prussia had emerged as a prototype of mechanistic organization... In particular Frederick was fascinated by the workings of automated toys such as mechanical men, and in his quest to shape the army into a reliable and efficient instrument he introduced many reforms that actually served to reduce his soldiers to automata. Among these reforms were the introduction of ranks and uniforms, the extension and standardization of regulations, increased specialization of tasks, the use of standardized equipment, the creation of a command language, and systematic training involving army drill. Frederick's aim was to shape the army into an efficient mechanism operating through means of standardized parts. Training procedures allowed these parts to be forged from almost any raw material, thus allowing the parts to be easily replaced when necessary, an essential characteristic for wartime operation. To ensure that his military machine operated on command, Frederick fostered the principle that the men must be taught to fear their officers more than the enemy." (Morgan, 1986:23.) Up to this day most of the principles described above are still applied, not only in the military, but in most of the emergency services across the world.
Morgan (1986) explains that management is typically seen by classical management theorists as a process of planning, organisation, command, coordination, and control. The organisation is seen as functioning as a network of parts: functional departments such as production, marketing, finance, personnel, and research and development are created, which are further specified as networks of precisely defined jobs; and job responsibilities as interlocking so that they complement each other as perfectly as possible. Patterns of authority co-ordinate activities by restricting activity in certain directions while encouraging it in others. When commands are issued from the top of the organisation they travel throughout the organisation in a precisely determined way, to create a precisely determined effect. The emergency services are typically characterised by this approach to management and communication.

Although classical management theory received wide-spread support, Morgan (1986) points out that the classical theorists gave relatively little attention to the human aspects of organisation, as well as to the environment in which organisations function. The fact tends to be overlooked that the tasks facing organisations are often much more complex, uncertain, and difficult than those that can be performed by most machines. Tasks typically performed by members of the emergency services, such as saving people's lives, are examples of these.

Morgan (1986) also warns that mechanistically structured organisations have great difficulty adapting to changing circumstances because they are designed to achieve predetermined goals; they are not designed for innovation. The compartmentalisation created by mechanistic divisions between different hierarchic levels, functions, roles, and people tends to create barriers and stumbling blocks. Standardised procedures and channels of communication are often unable to deal effectively with new
circumstances. Information often becomes distorted, and those in command of the organisation thus frequently find themselves facing issues that are inappropriately defined. Interdepartmental communications and co-ordination are often poor, and people often have a myopic view of what is occurring, there being no overall grasp of the situation facing the enterprise as a whole. As a result the actions encouraged by one element of the organisation often entail negative consequences for others, so that one element ends up working against the interests of another.

Such organisations typically discourage initiative, encouraging people to obey orders and keep their place rather than to take an interest in, challenge, and question what they are doing. People in a bureaucracy who question the wisdom of conventional practice are viewed more often than not as troublemakers.

Ahituv and Neumann (1986) point out that, during times of change, decisions are always made with uncertainty. The more complex a system, the higher the uncertainty. As was pointed out by Morgan (1986), mechanistically structured organisations experience difficulty in dealing with change and uncertainty because such a high emphasis is placed on control.

While the problems described above typically represent those found in organisations such as the emergency services, it has to be emphasised that changing circumstances call for flexibility and creative thinking. These attributes thus become more important than narrow efficiency. The rapidly changing circumstances faced by a system such as the South African society over the past few years, require subsystems of this system, such as the emergency services, to respond to these changes in flexible and creative ways in order to maintain the system as a whole. This refers to second-order, and sometimes even third-order change. These subsystems,
however, with their bureaucratic nature, tend to find this process of adaptation to change difficult and stressful.

4.4.2 Organisation theory

Keeney (1983) explains that, in family therapy, the family should be seen as a *family organism* rather than a collection of individuals. This is the way in which organisations are viewed by organisational theorists.

In discussing organisation theory, Morgan (1986) states that organisation theorists see organisations as organisms - as living systems existing in a wider environment on which they depend for the satisfaction of various needs. This theory has become a kind of biology in which the distinctions and relations among *molecules, cells, complex organisms, species* and *ecology* are paralleled in those between *individuals, groups, organisations, populations (species) of organisations,* and their *social ecology.* The human being is presented as a kind of psychological organism struggling to satisfy its needs in a quest for full growth and development.

Morgan (1986) continues: "When we recognize that individuals, groups, and organizations have needs that must be satisfied, attention is invariably drawn to the fact that they depend on a wider environment for various kinds of sustenance. It is this kind of thinking that now underpins the 'systems approach' to organization.... The systems approach builds on the principle that organisations, like organisms, are 'open' to their environment and must achieve an appropriate relation with that environment if they are to survive." (p. 44)

Modern systems theory does not see organisations, or organisms, as discrete entities, that live in isolation and are self-sufficient. Rather, they
exist as elements in a complex ecosystem. They should be regarded as open systems that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adapt to environmental circumstances.

Organisations such as the emergency services are characterised by bureaucratic management styles. In order to survive they should, therefore, focus on addressing the needs of the environment (the public) as well as their members, instead of running well-oiled machines.

Morgan (1986) explains that, not only are organisations living organisms, but they are also information systems, communications systems and decision-making systems. Within these systems organisational hierarchies perform the function of providing channels of problem solving to help make life more manageable. Those at the lower levels of the hierarchy are responsible for routine information and decision making, allowing those at higher levels to focus on unusual or particularly significant information and decisions. Policies, programmes, plans, rules, and standard operating procedures, on the other hand, help to simplify organisational reality. Ahituv and Neumann (1986) emphasise that, for the decisions-making process in an organisation to be effective, correct information is of utmost importance. This requires effective information systems and communication systems.

Bureaucratic approaches to organisation impose fragmented structures of thought on their members and do not really encourage employees to think for themselves. Organisational goals, objectives, structures, and roles create clearly defined patterns of attention and responsibility, fragmenting interest in and knowledge of what the organisation is doing. Where hierarchical and horizontal divisions within the organisation are particularly powerful, information and knowledge rarely flow in a free manner. This means that different sectors of the organisation often operate on the basis
of different pictures of the total situation, and pursue subunit goals almost as ends in themselves, unaware of or disinterested in the way they fit in the wider picture.

Morgan (1986) states: "Any move away from bureaucracy toward self-organisation has major implications for the distribution of power and control within an organisation, since the increase in autonomy granted to self-organizing units undermines the ability of those with ultimate power to keep a firm hand on day-to-day activities and developments. Moreover, the process of learning requires a degree of openness and self-criticism that is foreign to traditional modes of management. And the principles of requisite variety and minimum critical specification run counter to the inclination of managers who stress secrecy, exclusion, and the need to keep a tight rein on operations." (p. 108) It has to be pointed out that most South African organisations, including the emergency services, are currently pressurised to move away from bureaucracy towards more participative management, more consultation, and more transparency.

Morgan (1986) explains that organisations are also mini-societies that have their own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture. The characteristics of an organisation culture become evident as one becomes aware of the patterns of interaction between individuals, the language that is used, and the various rituals of daily routine. Gharajedaghi (1985) comments as follows about culture: "There are many things about the behavior of a social system that refer to the nature of the interaction between its elements rather than to the individuality of its members. Each social system manifests certain characteristics and may retain these even if all its individual members are replaced. What characterizes a social system is not only its members, but the relationship of its members to one another and to the whole." (p. 17)
The culture in the emergency services was commonly described as one of "a tight-knit team or family that believes in working together". These systems are, however, currently experiencing rapid changes, with the result that the culture within these systems is also changing. Subcultural divisions are arising because members experience divided loyalties. Not everyone is fully committed to the organisation in which they work.

Morgan (1986) points out that it is important to realise that formal leaders in organisations do not have a monopoly on the creation of organisational culture. Their position of power lends them a special advantage in developing value systems and codes of behaviour, because they often have the power to reward or punish those who follow or ignore their lead. However, others are also able to influence this process by acting as informal opinion leaders, or simply by acting as the people they are. Culture is not something that is imposed on a social setting. Rather, it develops during the course of social interaction.

An important aspect to consider about organisations as systems, is the fact that conflict is often experienced in these systems, and even between different organisations (systems) operating in the same environment. Conflict arises whenever interests collide. Morgan (1986) states that, even when people recognise the importance of working together, the nature of any given job often combines contradictory elements that create various kinds of role conflict. Often they are being asked to engage in activities that impinge on each other in a negative way.

In the event of a serious accident, for example, members of the different emergency services are required to work together at one scene, each fulfilling a different function. Sometimes this creates conflict between members. The main objective of the ambulance worker is to get the patient...
to a hospital as soon as possible. The police official has to take down statements and gather as much evidence as possible for use in the later investigation. The traffic official, on the other hand, has to manage the traffic flow at the scene of the accident. Often their different priorities cause them to get in each other's way, which create conflict between members of the different systems.

It was pointed out earlier that organisations are living organisms - living systems that are part of a complex ecosystem. Morgan (1986) states that nowadays, many organisations are preoccupied with understanding their environment as a kind of "world out there" that has an existence of its own. Morgan (1986) suggests, however, that if one really wants to understand one's environment, one must begin by understanding oneself, for one's understanding, of the environment is always a projection of oneself.

Many organisations encounter great problems in dealing with the wider world, because they do not recognise how they are a part of their environment. They see themselves as discrete entities that are faced with the problem of surviving against the vagaries of the outside world. Morgan (1986) points out that this kind of egocentricism leads organisations to become preoccupied with and to overemphasise the importance of themselves. This leads to underplaying the significance of the wider system of relations in which they exist. It is for this reason that increasing pressure is being exercised on the emergency services in some communities for more consultation about and participation in the type of service provided to the community.
Wheatley (1992) applies what she calls “new science” principles to the organisation as a system. Whereas organisational theorists revolutionised thinking about organisations by applying principles of systems theory to them, describing them as living organisms, new science principles built onto this approach by applying principles of recent discoveries in quantum physics, chaos theory and evolutionary biology, which revolutionised thinking about the universe, to organisations.

Wheatley (1992) states: “There is a simpler way to lead organizations, one that requires less effort and produces less stress than the current practices. Our present ways of understanding organizations are skewed.” (p. 3) She continues: “The layers of complexity, the sense of things being beyond our control and out of control, are but signals of our failure to understand a deeper reality of organizational life, and of life in general.” (Wheatley, 1992:3.)

Wheatley (1992) explains that to this day organisations are designed and run according to Newtonian images of the universe (expressed by classical management theory principles) where they are viewed as machines. They are normally managed by separating things into parts, assuming that influence occurs as a direct result of force exerted from one person to another. Organisations also engage in complex planning procedures in order to increase predictability. The emergency services are no exception.

Wheatley (1992) points out, however, that the world is always subjective, and shaped by people’s interactions with it. It is constantly changing. The new sciences approach to organisations emphasises a
movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationships that exist among seemingly discrete parts. Wheatley (1992) quotes an ancient Sufi teaching that captures this shift in focus as follows: "You think because you understand one you must understand two, because one and one makes two. But you must also understand and." (p. 9)

Fluctuations and disturbances have always been viewed as signs of trouble. It is thought that disruptions will more quickly bring on the decay that is the inevitable future of all systems. But Wheatley (1992) points out that the dissipative structures that Ilya Prigogine studied in chemistry demonstrate the capacity of living systems to respond to disorder (non-equilibrium) with renewed life. Disorder can play a critical role in giving birth to new, higher forms of order. Growth is found in disequilibrium, not in balance.

The days following the fire that destroyed the Munitoria building in Pretoria on 3 March 1997, is a good illustration of this principle. During endless meetings, management of the Pretoria fire services reconstructed each aspect of the disaster to identify insufficient procedures, problems relating to equipment, manpower and training, as well as mistakes that had been made. Various changes were implemented following this disaster to avoid a reoccurrence of some of the mistakes and insufficiencies which had been experienced. The service is now better prepared to deal with a disaster of this magnitude.

New understanding of change and disorder is emerging from chaos theory. Work in this field has led to a new appreciation of the relationship between order and chaos. These two forces are now understood as mirror images, one containing the other, a continual
process in which a system can leap into chaos and unpredictability, yet within that state be held within parameters that are well-ordered and predictable. The world is inherently orderly and fluctuations and change are part of the process by which order is created.

Wheatley (1992) notes that, in motivation theory, attention is shifting from the enticement of external rewards to the intrinsic motivators that spring from the work itself. People are refocusing on their deep longings for community, meaning, dignity, and love in their organisational lives. Attention is paid to the strong emotions that are part of being human, rather than segmenting people (love is for home, discipline is for work) or believing that workers can be confined into narrow roles.

To effectively address stress in the emergency services it is essential that the above factors, such as the intrinsic motivators that spring from the work (e.g., the camaraderie of the buddy system, the action and adrenaline and the opportunity to save people’s lives) be taken into account, as well as the fact that people can not be segmented into a “work role” and a “home role”. Those aspects that attract workers to the emergency services may cause their significant stress, but a lack of those aspects may cause significantly more stress. The stressful and exacting nature of their job means that emergency workers frequently experience problems in their private lives and these can not be ignored when addressing their stress.

Organisations tend to lack faith that they can accomplish their purposes in various ways and believe that they do best when they focus on direction and vision, thus allowing transient forms of structure to emerge and disappear. Wheatley (1992) feels that organisations are fixated on structures because these must, it is believed, protect the organisation.
from destruction. Some organisations defend themselves superbly even against their employees with regulations, guidelines, time clocks, and policies and procedures for every eventuality. They have rigid chains of command to keep people from talking to anyone outside their department and protocols define who can be consulted, advised or criticised. It is now understood that order and conformity and shape in organisations are created not by complex controls and structures, but by the presence of only a few guiding formulae or principles.

Wheatley (1992) points out that, according to the principles of the *new science*, power in organisations is the capacity generated by relationships. It is a real energy that can only come into existence through relationships - the patterns of relationship and the capacities available to form them. What gives power its charge, positive or negative, is the quality of relationships.

Campbell *et al.* (1994) highlight that senior managers may have the formal power to plan and control the work of employees. Less obvious, however, is the workers' power to help keep the company in business by the way in which they are prepared to do their work, perhaps by asserting their valid contribution to planning and controlling their operations. In this view it is they who have the power to keep senior management in employment.

Wheatley (1992) observes: "If organisations are machines, control makes sense. If organisations are process structures, then seeking to impose control through permanent structure is suicide. What if we stopped looking for control and began, in earnest, the search for order?" (p. 23)
Organisations that are structured according to classical management theory principles tend to experience any change as a threat to their survival. Wheatley (1992), however, states: “We have begun to speak in earnest of more fluid, organic structures, even of boundaryless organizations. We are beginning to recognize organizations as systems, construing them as ‘learning organisations’ and crediting them with some type of self-renewing capacity.” (p. 13) She continues: “…we can forgo the despair created by such common organizational events such as change, chaos, information overload, and cyclical behaviors if we recognize that organizations are conscious entities, possessing many of the properties of living systems.” (Wheatley, 1992:13.)

As the environment becomes more complex, generating new and different information, it provokes the system into a response. New information enters the system as a small fluctuation that varies from the norm. If the system pays attention to this fluctuation, the information grows in strength as it interacts with the system and is fed back on itself (a process of autocatalysis). Finally, the information grows to such a level of disturbance that the system can no longer ignore it. At this point the system in its current form falls apart. In most cases the system can reconfigure itself at a higher level of complexity, one better able to deal with the new environment.

The fact that most South African organisations created special positions and even departments to implement affirmative action, as a result of pressure from the government as well as overseas investors, illustrates this point.

Many scientists now work with the concept of fields. Wheatley (1992) explains that, in Newton’s universe, space is the basic ingredient of the
universe. There is more of it than anything else. Within atoms, subatomic particles are separated by vast distances. Space is, however, perceived differently in the quantum world. Space everywhere is now thought to be filled with fields, invisible structures or forces, occupying space and influencing behaviour. They cannot be seen, but their effects can be observed. The concept of fields has become a useful construct for explaining how change occurs without the direct exertion of material "shoving" across space.

Wheatley (1992) points out that organisational space can be imagined in terms of fields, with employees as waves of energy, spreading out in regions of the organisation, growing in potential. These employees meet up with other fields. Wheatley (1992) believes that field theory provides a useful explanation to many of the ethereal qualities of organisations such as culture, values, vision and ethics, which describe a quality of organisational life that can be observed, and yet is elusive to specify.

Field theory also provides a new foundation on which to build management style in an organisation. Wheatley (1992) emphasises that a field does not just drift into an organisation. It is created by a manager who, together with employees, takes time to fill organisational space with clear messages about how the organisation functions. With such a powerful structuring field, certain types of individual behaviours and events are guaranteed.

Vision, which can be described as the need for organisational clarity about purpose and direction, is a wonderful candidate for field theory. Vision has often been conceived as thinking into the future, creating a destination for the organisation. Wheatley (1992) points out that organisational vision is a field - a force of unseen connections that
influences employees’ behaviour - rather than an evocative message about some desired future state.

Wheatley (1992) aptly points out: “If vision is a field, think about what we could do differently to create one. We could do our best to get it permeating through the entire organization so that we could take advantage of its formative properties. All employees, in any part of the company, who bumped up against that field would be influenced by it. Their behavior could be shaped as a result of ‘field meetings’, where their energy would link with the field’s form to create behavior congruent with the organization’s goals.” (p. 54)

Wheatley (1992) notes that, in a field view of organisations, clarity about values or vision is important, but is only half the task. Creating the field by disseminating those ideas is essential. The field must reach all corners of the organisation, involve everyone, and be available everywhere. Vision statements should move off the walls and into the corridors. Field creation is not just a task for senior managers. Every employee has energy to contribute. Once organisational fields are created they will sustain themselves, perhaps exerting more control than had been planned. However, Wheatley (1992) does not comment on how to replace one field with another. Organisations such as the emergency services are currently faced with the challenge of creating new visions suited to new circumstances.

Wheatley (1992) warns, however: “If we have not bothered to create a field of vision that is coherent and sincere, people will encounter other fields, the ones we have created unintentionally or casually.” She continues: “…space is never empty. If we don’t fill it with coherent messages, if we say one thing but do another, then we create
dissonance in the very *space* of the organization. As employees bump up against contradicting fields, their behaviour mirrors those contradictions. We end up with what is common to many organizations, a jumble of behaviors and people going off in different directions, with no clear or identifiable pattern.” (p. 56)

Wheatley’s (1992) discussion on field theory ultimately leads to another important aspect in modern organisations, namely *employee participation*. She believes that the reason why participation is such an effective organisational strategy can be explained as follows: traditionally the interpretation of information was left to senior or expert people, who interpreted the data, choosing some aspects of it, and ignoring others. Few know how much potential data they lose in this way.

Wheatley (1992) emphasises that ownership is important. People support what they create. Psychological ownership creates real and tangible sources of energy. It is impossible to expect any plan or idea to be real to employees if they do not have the opportunity to personally interact with it.

Employee participation is often feared by management because it is perceived as “losing control”, and a way in which employees are given the opportunity to rebel against company policies, rules and regulations. Management is concerned that participation can easily create imbalance in the organisation and disturb the equilibrium. Equilibrium, however, is not always desirable. Wheatley (1992) states: "I've observed the search for organizational equilibrium as a sure path to institutional death, a road to zero trafficked by fearful people." (p. 76) Equilibrium is neither the goal nor the fate of living systems, simply because as open systems they
are partners with their environment. Open systems are able to continuously import and export energy to and from the environment. They do not seek equilibrium. To stay viable, open systems maintain a state of non-equilibrium, keeping the system off-balance so that it can change and grow. They participate in an active exchange with their world, using what is there for their own renewal. For this reason, they are frequently called self-organising or self-renewing systems. One of their distinguishing features is system resiliency rather than stability.

In the emergency services, which are known for their authoritarian management styles, strict discipline and formal ranking structures, management tends to perceive participative management as particularly problematic. Although management is pressurised (especially by trade unions) to adopt a style of increased employee participation, this tends to be viewed with suspicion, and there is a constant fear that it can adversely affect the efficiency of the services. Management constantly emphasise that, during times of real emergency, it is essential that workers do not question officers' decisions or commands. The challenge that they are facing is to find a balance in which employees are consulted on issues that affect them, but remain disciplined enough to obey commands when responding to an emergency.

In organisations the environment (supra-system) is also typically seen as the source of disruption and change. Organisations tend to insulate themselves from the environment as long as possible. Even though they know they must respond to forces and demands beyond the boundaries of the organisation, efforts are still focused on maintaining the strongest defensive structure possible. Self-renewing structures, however, seem capable of maintaining an identity while changing form. Wheatley (1992) explains that a flexible system possesses the capacity for
spontaneously emerging structures, depending on what is required. This capacity for self-renewal is the reason for its survival. However, self-organising systems do not simply take in information; they change their environments as well. Organisations and their environments evolve simultaneously toward better fitness for each other. Stasis, balance and equilibrium, therefore, are temporary states. If an open system seeks to establish equilibrium and stability through constraints on creativity and local changes, it creates the conditions that threaten its survival.

The reaction of members of the SAPS to criticism from the public is an example of this. Prior to the 1994 elections members of the SAPS were faced with severe criticism from the public. They typically responded in one of two ways, either becoming defensive and aggressive, or withdrawing themselves", thus avoiding any unnecessary contact with the public. In this way members of the SAPS became known as aggressive and "closed" to the public. Members of the SAPS also seldom stated their case or defended themselves, and in the eyes of the public they became the "villains". This situation, however, started changing as the SAPS became represented on community forums and members gained more confidence to defend themselves against unfair criticism. In many cases members of the public started co-operating with the police through community forums.

Finally Wheatley (1992) focuses on communication in organisations. She points out that there seems to be an epidemic of "poor communication" within organisations.

Information has traditionally been treated as a commodity to transfer from one place to another. The content, meaning and purpose of information were ignored. Wheatley (1992) points out, however, that
information is a dynamic element, taking centre stage. Information gives order, prompts growth and defines what is alive. It is both the underlying structure and the dynamic process that ensure life. She describes information as the fundamental ingredient, the key source of structuration (the process of creating structure).

Wheatley (1992) also points out that chaos is the greatest generator of information. This is exactly what organisations fear. They have no desire to let information roam about, to create chaos. They see it as the task of management to enforce control and to keep information contained. Wheatley (1992) explains that the new sciences emphasise that organisations have capacities for generating and absorbing information, for feedback, for self-regulation. Information is an organisation's primary source of nourishment. It is so vital to survival that its absence creates a strong vacuum. If information is not available, people make it up. Rumours proliferate and things get out of hand. The many rumours that prevail among members of the emergency services serve as an excellent example of this.

Rather than shying away from conflicting information, organisations should see it as rich with the possibility of creating new levels of understanding. Wheatley (1992) explains: “We need to open the gates to more information, in more places, and to seek out information that is ambiguous, complex, of no immediate value. Information will find its way to where it needs to be. Information is always spawned out of uncertain, even chaotic circumstances.” (p. 109)

Wheatley (1992) concludes: “I believe we have only just begun the process of discovering and inventing the new organizational forms that will inhabit the twenty-first century.” (p. 5) She continues: “...we need
Wheatley (1992) concludes: "I believe we have only just begun the process of discovering and inventing the new organizational forms that will inhabit the twenty-first century." (p. 5) She continues: "...we need the courage to let go of the old world, to relinquish most of what we have cherished, to abandon our interpretations about what does and doesn't work." (Wheatley, 1992:5.)

Although much can be said about the systems approach, an attempt was made to focus only on those aspects relevant to the present study. Chapter Five discusses the research methodology used in this study.
Chapter Five deals with the methodology that was used in this study. First the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative research will be discussed very briefly, followed by a short description of multiple research methods. After the methodology used in this particular study has been outlined, the history of co-operation between the researcher and the different emergency services will be explained.

Much has been written over the past few years about the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies. The aim of this study is not to review different research methodologies appropriate for use in the social sciences. It is necessary however, to refer briefly to the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative research.

5.1 PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND: QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH?

Over the past few years researchers in the social sciences have been faced with the question of whether to use quantitative or qualitative research methods. On the one hand, those who are in favour of quantitative research argue that the neutrality and objectivity required for objective research makes it essential that the role of the individual be discounted as far as possible. Spokesmen for qualitative research, on the other hand, insist that in the social sciences, the individual's goals, perceptions and imagination are intrinsically involved in the shape of the reality apprehended. To discount these will be disastrous in the aim of obtaining an understanding of how human beings function. Howard (1982) observes that this issue is far from resolved.
Qualitative research is descriptive in nature, with the intention to improve understanding and active role-taking by all role players. Any person who attempts to write a scientific article or report has to perform some form of qualitative research. Preparing a summary of relevant literature is an example of such research. An inventory has to be made of information, which has to be selected and categorised. In work of a qualitative nature words, and not numbers, are of utmost importance (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). The subjective perception of the environment by the person examined is exactly what qualitative researchers are interested in. Jones (1985) explains: "People develop over their lives a personal framework of beliefs and values with which they selectively and subjectively build meaning and significance in events. It is this framework that the qualitative researcher is interested in learning about." (p. 49)

Researchers in the phenomenological and humanistic circles feel that the social-scientific field of research differs substantially from that in the natural sciences. For this reason a different research methodology is required. They observed that the researcher is inextricably bound up with the object of his/her examination: man in his or her social surroundings. The researcher's influence on the results of his/her research is not considered an inconvenient bias, but is described explicitly as an essential factor of the method of qualitative research. The principle of objectivity can therefore, not be used (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993).

Quantitative research, on the other hand, is supported by schools of thought such as the positivists, who maintain that the only valid accounts are those graced with objective, methodologically correct procedures (Greene, 1995).

Walker (1985), Andriessen (1987), and Welters (1977) point out that, whereas quantitative research is initially product orientated, (e.g., what is
the impact/outcome of the programme in terms of numbers?), qualitative research is particularly suitable for analysing processes (e.g., why does the programme work, or why does it not work?). The qualitative method aims prominently at clarification, interpretation and, to a certain degree, at explanation.

It is not the nature of the research subject that distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative research, but the \textit{way in which the research is conducted and the data is analysed}.

5.2 \textbf{MULTIPLE RESEARCH METHODS}

Kidder (1981) and Hermans (1975) point out that neither the qualitative or the quantitative approach is appropriate in itself for each research situation. Various (successful) attempts have consequently been made to bring these different schools of thought together, or to integrate them into a new perspective. In addition, a number of researchers have amended the qualitative method to such an extent, that it can meet several quantitative criteria without losing its specific character (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Greene (1995) identifies the following five different purposes for mixed method social inquiry:

a. to seek convergence, corroboration or correspondence of results across different methods to increase the \textit{validity} of these results by counteracting sources of methods bias (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Cook, 1985; Denzin, 1978; Shortland & Mark 1987);

b. to measure overlapping, but distinct facets of the phenomenon under investigation. Results from one method are intended to elaborate,
enhance or clarify results from the other to increase the interpretability, meaningfulness and validity of these results (Greene & McClintock, 1985; Shotland & Mark, 1987; Rossman & Wilson, 1985);
c. to use the results of one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is construed broadly to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions;
d. to seek paradoxes and contradiction, new perspectives, interpretations or frameworks via the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method (Rossman & Wilson, 1985); and
e. to extend the breadth and range of the inquiry.

5.3 METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS PARTICULAR STUDY

In this particular study the research method used was mainly qualitative in nature. Systems theorists favour the use of qualitative research methods. The richness of information gathered through these methods tend to capture accurately the way in which systems and subsystems function and interrelate. A qualitative research method was best suited to achieve the objectives that were set for this study. This was the case because these objectives essentially deal with human behaviour and with the perceptions of members of the emergency services. These objectives deal with what they perceive as stressful and not stressful, how much support in coping with stress their organisations are perceived to offer them, and what they perceive their needs to be in terms of support. A quantitative research method would not have been able to capture information of this nature to the extent that a qualitative research method does. The explorative and descriptive nature of a qualitative research method is ideally suited for an understanding of stress in the emergency services, as perceived by its members. In presenting the findings of the research, however, tables are
included indicating the percentages of respondents who gave specific responses. This was an attempt to quantify the data to some extent.

The researcher chose this methodology for various reasons. The study of stressors is an interesting and complex social phenomenon. The social context that is investigated - the emergency services - adds an array of questions to be answered. One of these questions concerns attitudes towards members of the emergency services in the South African situation. It was considered important to capture the experiences of members of these services. At the same time it was important to obtain some indication of the strengths of themes, and to arrive at some form of priority list for addressing the stressors that were mentioned.

The researcher decided on a Six Phase research plan:

5.3.1 Phase One: conducting of preliminary - or focus group - interviews

Phase One involved conducting preliminary - or focus group - interviews with small groups representing the different emergency services. It also involved compiling a report on the results of the interviews to be distributed for comment to those who participated. The information gathered during this phase provided results which were used to continue to Phase Two. Because Phase One in itself can be regarded as results, a detailed description of this phase is provided in a separate chapter, Chapter Six.

5.3.2 Phase Two: structuring of the interview schedule

Phase Two involved compiling an interview schedule, based on the information obtained in Phase One. Using the information obtained in Phase One as input for compiling the interview schedule in Phase Two constitutes
a recursive methodology. Information about the past is used to predict the future.

Because different stressors had been highlighted for the different emergency services, different questions were put to the respondents in the section dealing with stressors. The interview schedule was designed with the purpose of serving only as a guideline during the interviews, and free discussion was encouraged.

The interview schedule was divided into four sections: (1) in the first section biographical data about the respondents were recorded; (2) the second section focused on the stressors experienced in each one of the emergency services (this section differed for each emergency service); (3) the third section was the same for all respondents, and dealt with the support provided within the different emergency services for members in dealing with stress; and (4) the fourth section (also the same for all the emergency services) focused on the co-operation between the different emergency services.

Respondents were given the opportunity to suggest improvements for problems raised after each question, except for those questions where respondents were required to list the priorities that need to be addressed in order to diminish stress. Listing these priorities already represents a form of offering suggestions.

Before conducting this interview schedule, it was tested on a group of five members of the SAPS and ambulance services to establish whether all the questions were understood.
5.3.3 Phase Three: conducting of fieldwork

During Phase Three personal interviews were conducted with 109 members of different units of each of the emergency services.

5.3.3.1 Sample information

The sampling was done as follows:

a. The intention was to include the following emergency services in the study: the SANDF, SAPS, and provincial fire, ambulance and traffic services. After lengthy discussions with the relevant authorities within each one of these services, all of them agreed to participate in the project, except for the SANDF.

b. The SAPS has a complicated structure with many different units and sections. Because of time and financial constraints it was impossible to include in the sample representatives of all the different units and sections of the SAPS (and even of the other emergency services). It was decided to concentrate on the following three units of the SAPS: (1) the Internal Stability Unit (ISU), which is in a process of change, and is currently known as the interim Public Order Policing Service (POPS); (2) Visible Policing (only uniformed staff based at police stations) and the Flying Squad. Apart from Flying Squad members in response vehicles, members of the radio control rooms were also included in the sample. Members tend to be rotated regularly between control rooms and the response vehicles. Considerable stress is also experienced in control rooms.
In the current structure of the SAPS the section Visible Policing does not exist any more. Two sections have now been created, Pro-active Policing and Reactive Policing. Pro-active Policing consists of various units, such as the Crime-prevention Unit, the Community Relations Unit, the Tourist Unit, the Robbery Prevention unit, Community Police Forums, Neighbourhood, Business and Rural watches, and the Mobile Unit. Reactive Policing consists of units reacting to crime already committed, such as the State Mortuary and the uniformed staff based at stations. In some areas the Dog Unit and the Flying Squad also report to the Station Commander responsible for Reactive Policing.

Although it is recognised that members of the other units are subjected to high levels of stress, only the uniformed staff based at stations of Reactive Policing were included in this study. Practical reasons made it impossible to include members of all the sections of Visible Policing. For the purpose of this study, therefore, the term Visible Policing will refer only to uniformed staff based at stations.

The three units mentioned above (the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad) were included for the following reasons: (1) members have considerable contact with the public, (2) they work long hours involving shift work, (3) they are exposed to dangerous, life-threatening situations on a regular basis, (4) they all wear uniforms and can be easily identified by the public as police officials, and (5) these units are normally called on by the public in times of emergency. It was assumed that, although they might experience different stressors, members of these units are all exposed to high levels of stress.
c. Members of the fire, ambulance and traffic services included in the sample had to be operational staff. The divisions within these services are however, not as complicated as those in the SAPS.

d. For the purpose of this study the fire and ambulance services are treated as one organisation, because members of the provincial ambulance services normally report to the fire chief. However, whereas the fire services receive their funding from city councils, the ambulance services are funded by the provincial governments.

e. It was decided to concentrate on three cities in South Africa: Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. Because these cities cover large geographical areas, specific areas within these cities were selected. The areas selected in Cape Town and Durban have become known over the past few years for exceptionally high levels of violence and crime. Because it can be speculated that members of the emergency services working in these areas experience high levels of stress, it was considered appropriate to include these areas in the sample. Pretoria was included to represent a city where the levels of crime and violence are not exceptionally high (in terms of South African standards).

f. In Cape Town the sample was drawn from the Wynberg municipal area. This still represents a large area, especially for the members of Visible Policing, and it was subsequently subdivided into what is referred to by the SAPS as Athlone district. This district includes eight police stations. The sample was also drawn from the ISU unit based at Faure (unit 10), the Flying Squad unit and ambulance station based in Maitland, and the Cape Town city traffic services in mid-town. They all cover larger areas, which include the Athlone district. The sample of firefighters was drawn from three fire stations in the same area.
g. In Durban the sample for the unit Visible Policing included two districts, Durban Central and Durban North. Durban Central district includes seven and Durban North district four stations. The sample was also drawn from the ISU unit based at Point (unit 9), the Flying Squad/radio patrol unit based at C.R. Swart station and the Durban City Police (which is responsible for traffic law enforcement in Durban), also based in mid-town, because they cover the whole of Durban. The sample of firefighters was drawn from eight, and the ambulance workers from two stations operating in the area.

h. In Pretoria the sample was drawn from three different districts of the unit Visible Policing: Pretoria Central, Pretoria North, and Pretoria Moot. The Pretoria Central district includes six stations; the Pretoria North district includes eight stations; and the Pretoria Moot district includes six stations. The sample was also drawn from the ISU unit (unit 1) and the Flying Squad unit based at Silverton, and the Pretoria City Council traffic services in mid-town, which serve the whole of Pretoria. The sample of firefighters and ambulance workers was drawn from seven stations operating in the area.

i. Although the sample was drawn from the stations and units listed above in the different areas, this does not mean that all of them were ultimately represented in the sample, because (1) the total numbers would have been too large, (2) some stations are very small and (3) in some cases the geographical areas to be covered are too great.

j. The Centre for Statistics at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) assisted in determining the numbers of respondents to be interviewed in each one of the emergency services, cities, units or stations, and different levels or ranks. Because the research method
used in this study was **qualitative** in nature it was decided that a total of **120** in-depth interviews would be conducted. However, for practical reasons (e.g., respondents were on sick leave or were called out to an emergency at the time of the interviews) it was eventually possible to do only **109** interviews.

The person in charge of each one of the different units or stations was contacted and duty lists were obtained for specific dates. Names of members on duty, as well as their ranks were reflected on these lists. After the Centre of Statistics had established **how many members**, and **at what ranks**, had to be interviewed at each unit or station, the researcher selected the respondents to be interviewed. This was an attempt to prevent bias in the selection of respondents, because the researcher was not familiar with those respondents who were selected. If supervisors were requested to nominate respondents there would have been the possibility of selecting either those members they believed were suffering from stress, or which they believed would not be too outspoken during the interviews.

It should be noted that, in each one of the emergency services, representative numbers of members of the different ranks were included in the sample.

A sample of 109 members of the different emergency services is too small to be considered representative. For this reason feedback sessions were conducted after the results had been analysed in all three cities with respondents who participated in the study, as well as with management of the different units and stations. In this way the validity of the findings was tested and some measure of generalisability
of the results was ensured. This is also in line with a systemic methodology in which subjects become research participants.

k. While Table 5.A. provides the distribution of the sample group in terms of emergency service and city, Table 5.B. provides the distribution of the sample group in terms of race, and Table 5.C. provides the distribution of the sample group in terms of gender.

| TABLE 5.A.: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE GROUP IN TERMS OF EMERGENCY SERVICE AND CITY |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| EMERGENCY SERVICE               | CAPE TOWN | DURBAN | PRETORIA | TOTAL |
| SAPS: ISU                       | 7         | 7      | 4        | 18      |
| SAPS: VISIBLE POLICING          | 10        | 14     | 19       | 43      |
| SAPS: FLYING SQUAD              | 5         | 4      | 4        | 13      |
| FIRE SERVICES                   | 4         | 4      | 4        | 12      |
| AMBULANCE SERVICES              | 4         | 4      | 5        | 13      |
| TRAFFIC SERVICES                | 3         | 3      | 4        | 10      |

*NOTE*: The total number of members of the SAPS interviewed was 74
TABLE 5.B. : DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE GROUP IN TERMS OF RACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloureds</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Respondents to be interviewed were selected by the researcher from shift rosters, and candidates were selected in terms of (1) their rank and (2) availability for interviews at certain times. It was attempted, however, to include representatives of all the different races at each one of the stations or units, where they were available.

TABLE 5.C. : DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE GROUP IN TERMS OF GENDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The fact that the vast majority of respondents interviewed were male can be attributed to the fact that females are still employed in small numbers in the emergency services, especially as far as operational staff is concerned.

5.3.3.2 Conducting of the personal interviews

The personal interviews were conducted between February and March 1995 by the researcher and a co-researcher employed by the HSRC. Prior to the interviews clear instructions were given to the persons in charge of the stations or units included in the sample about the information selected candidates were to receive about the interviews. Although prior arrangements were made with all respondents, some of them were not
available for interviews at the given times, owing to unforeseen circumstances. For this reason only 109 interviews were conducted, and not 120 as had been planned.

During the interviews considerable time was spent by the interviewers first to establish credibility by carefully explaining the purpose of the interviews and by giving the assurance that all information would be treated as confidential. In each case tape recordings were made of the interviews for later reference by the interviewers. Only in two cases did respondents refuse to permit tape recordings of the interviews. It was found that respondents tended to relax after this, and opened up in the interviews. In some cases respondents commented that they found the interviews therapeutic in giving them the opportunity to talk to someone about their problems.

5.3.4 Phase Four: analysis and integration of interview data

During Phase Four the interview data were analysed and integrated. The data collected during Phase Three were analysed by the researcher to identify the themes that emerged from the interviews. Such data were integrated into a format that could be used in providing feedback during Phase Five.

5.3.5 Phase Five: conducting feedback sessions

Phase Five involved conducting feedback sessions on the findings with all participants (with the intention of giving them ample opportunity to comment on the results and to provide additional input about possible solutions).
During October and November 1995 feedback sessions were conducted in each of the cities with the respondents, as well as with management of the different emergency services. The feedback was provided to members of all the different emergency services simultaneously during combined sessions.

Because some of the respondents expressed serious concern during the interviews about being identified by management during the feedback sessions, the researcher arranged separate sessions for respondents and for management. Although these feedback sessions were very well attended by management of the different emergency services, they were not particularly well attended by the respondents. There could be various reasons for this: it is possible that the respondents did not really perceive the study to be of value for their well-being; management could have neglected to inform them of the arrangements for the feedback sessions; work pressure could have prevented them from attending. Managers, on the other hand, were generally eager to learn about the findings of the study, and several of them expressed interest in obtaining copies of the finished report.

During the feedback sessions the findings were presented, and attendants were asked to provide comments on and possible explanations for the findings. These observations were recorded by the researcher (which proved to be extremely helpful in explaining the results). This also made attendants co-researchers of the study. The suggestions offered during the interviews were also presented at the feedback sessions. Attendants were asked to divide into groups to discuss these suggestions and comment on those they found particularly useful. This provided respondents with the opportunity to gain insight into the viewpoints of their colleagues, and enabled management to obtain input from grassroots level.
Holding joint feedback sessions with all the emergency services simultaneously provided members with the opportunity to get to know each other and to discuss their mutual problems. They often work together at emergency scenes, but never have any other contact. The feedback stimulated discussions to such an extent that during some of these sessions members of the different emergency services decided to get together on a regular basis in future.

5.3.6 Phase Six: putting the data into writing

During Phase Six the findings were put into writing and the additional information gathered during the feedback sessions was integrated with the results.

Although the study is mainly qualitative in nature, in presenting the findings of the research, tables are included indicating the percentages of respondents who gave specific responses. This is an attempt to quantify the data to some extent. It was recognised that, while qualitative data could point out and describe the particular stressors experienced by members of the emergency services, quantitative data could be useful in providing statistical indications of the strengths and direction of the identified stressors. It should be pointed out however, that, because the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, the percentages are only an indication of those respondents who considered certain issues important enough to mention. If a respondent did not mention a certain issue, it does not necessarily indicate that he/she did not agree with the particular statement - it only indicates that he/she did not perceive this particular issue to be important enough to mention during the interview.
These percentages should be seen as no more than a mere indication of the number of respondents who mentioned a specific issue. Because respondents were not limited in the number of responses they could give, the total percentages will not add up to 100%. The reason for presenting the information in table form is to provide the reader with a picture of the responses in order to make it easier to interpret the information.

The researcher wishes to emphasise that the findings of this study represent the perceptions of respondents, and not necessarily reality. A person's perceptions, however, represent reality to that person - whether these perceptions are valid or not. In the case of this study, these perceptions represent those things that members of the emergency services perceive to be stressful to cope with.

5.4 HISTORY OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE DIFFERENT EMERGENCY SERVICES

Under normal circumstances researchers from outside these fairly closed systems find it very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain access to the emergency services. In the case of the present study, however, the minimum amount of resistance was experienced by the researcher in obtaining permission to conduct the research. This is due to the fact that a history of co-operation exists between the researcher and each one of the emergency services.

Five years ago the researcher became part of a team that conducts three-day workshops on a regular basis to members of the SAPS. These workshops are attended by members of different sections and units of the SAPS from different parts of the country, ranging from constable to brigadier (these ranking structures have subsequently changed). In this way
she became familiar with the culture of the SAPS, as well as the problems experienced by members. Valuable contacts and close relationships have been established with members nationally, whose assistance and contributions to this study were of great significance.

In 1993 contact was established at a conference with the Ambulance Superintendent of the Fire and Ambulance Services of the Pretoria City Council. This person was the chairperson of a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing team that had been established for members of the emergency services. In order to give her some idea of the types of stress that members of the ambulance services are exposed to, the researcher was invited to spend some time on the road with members in the pilot car. This was followed by frequent visits to the Pretoria Central Ambulance Station, and later to the Pretoria Central Fire Station, with the result that the researcher became well acquainted with the members. A close relationship developed between her and members of one particular shift.

Contact was established with the traffic services in the Pretoria and Durban areas through a co-researcher at the HSRC who is involved in traffic related research. This co-researcher is intensively involved in working groups that were established for the purpose of networking to co-ordinate and integrate all the important role-players in traffic research. She is also involved in specific projects with certain members of the traffic services, ranging from management to the traffic officials at grass-root level.

Access could not be obtained to members of the SANDF. Because no history of co-operation between the researcher and members of the SANDF exists, it could be speculated that access to the different emergency services would not have been obtained if a history of co-operation between her, her co-researcher and the different emergency services did not exist.
The close relationships, the trust and credibility that have developed between them made it possible to approach these members for interviews. It also provided the researcher with the names of contact-persons in other regions and at other units, which enabled her to obtain permission to conduct her research in three different cities of the country. Because of the relationship of trust that developed members of the emergency services also tended to participate in the research in an open and honest way, without feeling threatened by the questions they were asked.

In terms of the systems approach, the boundaries of the emergency services are fairly impermeable. This implies that very little interaction takes place between these systems and their environment. There is a high degree of structure in these systems, with clear differences in status relationships and roles, and with well-defined rules and regulations. According to the principle of order, the extent to which a system is structured, determines the extent of order that exists within the system. In this context Jacobson's observation (1994) applies: "Living systems have a closed organisation, which means that although they are open to energy and matter, and in fact require this from the environment in order to survive, they are informationally closed. It is their structure, and not the environment, which determines how they will react to any event taking place in the environment." (p. 53) This applies especially to the refusal of members of the SANDF to participate in the research. No previous contact had been established, and for this reason their structure prevented the researcher, who is outside the system, to enter the system to conduct research.

The principle of circular causality states that each component or subsystem in a system co-determines the behaviour of every other component or subsystem and its behaviour. In turn it is co-determined by the behaviour of
all the other components or subsystems in the system. The system is a whole. A clearly observable example of this is the negotiations which took place between the researcher and the SAPS, as well as the fire and ambulance services, for permission to obtain access to these systems for conducting research. In the case of the SAPS permission had to be obtained from head-office, and because the responsible individual was not known to the researcher, she contacted a member of senior management who was known to her. He contacted the person responsible for granting permission for the research. Once this person was convinced of the advantages of the research, he personally contacted all the units involved in the research to explain to them why he considered it necessary for them to co-operate. When the researcher contacted the Fire Chief of the Fire and Ambulance Services of the Pretoria City Council for permission for the research, he responded that he had been informed that she spends a considerable amount of time at one of the units, and that she is familiar with their work. He was therefore prepared to grant permission for the research. He also contacted his colleagues in Durban and Cape Town to obtain permission for the researcher to conduct research in those cities as well. In both cases the behaviour of one member who was known to the researcher influenced other members to co-operate with the research.

Each interview which was conducted was an intervention in itself. It is not possible to predict the impact that the results of the research will ultimately have on each one of these systems, just as it is not possible to predict the impact that the interviews themselves will have on these systems. The impact of the interviews, and ultimately the research should, however, not be seen in isolation from other events within these systems that may also have an influence on the ultimate impact that the research might have.
In Chapter Six a detailed discussion of Phase One of the study, conducting of the preliminary - or focus group - interviews, will be provided.
CHAPTER SIX: AN OUTLINE OF PHASE ONE OF THE STUDY - CONDUCTING OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

As was explained in Chapter Five, Phase One of the research plan was to conduct preliminary - or focus group - interviews. A detailed discussion of Phase One will be provided in Chapter Six.

For the purposes of this study it is necessary to explain the concept focus group interviews.

6.1 WHAT IS A FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW?

Among the most widely used research tools in the social sciences are group in-depth interviews, or focus groups. Originally called focused interviews, this technique came into use after World War II, and has been part of the social scientist's tool kit ever since (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Merton (1987) later adapted this technique for use in individual interviews. In time this method became widely used, both in group and individual interview settings. As researchers began to modify procedures for their own needs and to merge this technique with other types of group interviews, so the technique started changing. Thus, what is known as a focus group today takes many different forms and is therefore most useful for obtaining information in diverse, fast changing communities and social contexts (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

The focus group technique is a tool for studying ideas in group context. It also provides a means for studying one of the cherished propositions of
social science, namely: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It is suitable for specifying the diversity of meaning attached to certain concepts, and can provide a clear, step-by-step exposition of a means by which to pin down meaning (Morgan, 1988). It is also particularly useful for identifying major themes.

Krueger (1994) describes a focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately 7 to 10 people by a skilled interviewer. The discussion is comfortable and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion. The open-ended approach allows subjects ample opportunity to comment, to explain and to share experiences and attitudes.

Morgan (1988) sees focus groups as useful for:

a. orienting oneself to a new field;
b. generating hypotheses based on informants' insights;
c. evaluating different research sites or study populations;
d. developing interview schedules and questionnaires; and
e. obtaining participants' interpretations of results from earlier studies.

In the case of this particular study, all the abovementioned advantages made the use of focus groups particularly useful, because the researcher was an outsider to the systems of emergency services.

A decade ago, little or no consideration was given to the benefits of having non-researchers, or participants, as they are often called (in the case of this study, members of the emergency services) assisting with the research process. Researchers considered these individuals to be unqualified. Rice

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(1931) was one of the first social scientists to express concern in this regard. This author states: "A defect of the interview for the purposes of fact-finding in scientific research, then, is that the questioner takes the lead. That is, the subject plays a more or less passive role. Information points of view of the highest value may not be disclosed, because the direction given the interview by the questioner leads away from them. In short, data obtained from an interview are likely to embody the preconceived ideas of the interviewer as the attitudes of the subject interviewed." (Rice, 1931:561.) Krueger (1994) states that many researchers consider these non-researchers an asset these days. They have skills, connections, energy and ideas that when appropriately channelled can multiply the potential benefit of the study. Involvement of non-researchers can not only improve the quality of the study but build commitment as well, because they become co-researchers or participants in the study.

Krueger (1994) points out that there is no right way to conduct the analysis of data obtained during focus group interviews. In this study the analysis method of Miles and Huberman (1984) was used to provide a variety of analysis strategies that are appropriate to this particular situation.

6.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Phase One of this study commenced on Tuesday, 28 June 1994, when the focus group interviews were conducted at the HSRC.

Certain units of the SAPS in Pretoria, the fire and ambulance services of the former Transvaal Provincial Administration (now the Gauteng Provincial Administration) and the Traffic Department of the Pretoria City Council were each requested to send a group of six to eight members for interviewing. The selected members had to be more or less representative of the various
divisions or units, levels (or ranks) and years of service in their particular service.

Three interviewers were used. Interviews of approximately one hour were conducted with each of the three groups, and each group was then asked to select two members as representatives at a joint session. Audio and video cassette recordings were made of all the interviews.

The participants arrived punctually; but it was evident that they were nervous and unsure about what to expect, especially when they discovered that the interviews were being recorded. The interviewers had to spend considerable time explaining the purpose of the exercise, to put the respondents at ease and establish credibility. Once this had been done responses from the groups were overwhelming and respondents started participating enthusiastically. They were given the assurance that everything they said would be treated as highly confidential. They would also be given feedback to grant them the opportunity to comment on the results of information gathered during the interviews. In this way they would become co-researchers in the project.

It should be emphasised that members of the emergency services tend to be extremely sceptical about talking to outsiders (the interviewers being outsiders to their systems), and especially about admitting to experiencing stress. However, once the participants discovered that they were being involved in the process of identifying the main stressors in the emergency services, and were being consulted about possible solutions to these problems, they opened up in the focus group interviews with almost childlike honesty. They were only too prepared to accept the role of co-researchers.
The following six questions were put to the groups (free discussion was encouraged):

1. What aspects of your work and working environment do you enjoy?
2. What aspects of your work and working environment do you dislike?
3. What positive stress (aspects that generate energy) do you experience in your work?
4. What negative stress (aspects that drain energy) do you experience in your work?
5. What kind of support does your organisation provide to cope with stress?
6. What additional support/knowledge/research/workshops or any other inputs do you need to help you cope more effectively?

During the joint session respondents were asked to consider how the different services could improve their co-operation with one another in future.

During lunch the respondents eagerly continued their discussion about the problems that they experienced in their work, and members of the different services started exchanging ideas spontaneously.

An analysis of the information obtained during the interviews was done in three phases, according to a method described in Miles and Huberman (1984). In Phase One meaning units were identified by compiling lists of information obtained from the respondents in terms of (1) positive and negative stressors experienced, (2) the help or support available to members within the services, and (3) suggestions for improvements. These lists were based on the information obtained from the individual groups that were interviewed as well as from the combined group interview.
In **Phase Two** the meaning units listed in Phase One were grouped into themes according to the method of analysis described by Miles and Huberman (1984).

This was followed by **Phase Three**, during which the research needs identified during the interviews were formulated and grouped into central themes. The central themes were then divided into three operational steps for their implementation. The three steps included: (1) the identification of research needs, (2) the identification of the constructive characteristics of each service involved, and (3) the description of proposed research actions.

### 6.3 THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The findings of the focus group interviews were recorded in a report by *du Toit and Botes* (1995).

The main findings of the interviews are summarised in five tables. Table 6.A. summarises positive stressors identified by participants in these interviews; Table 6.B. summarises the negative stressors identified; Table 6.C. summarises participants' perception of the support available to them for managing stress; Table 6.D. summarises the suggestions received from participants for diminishing stress; and Table 6.E. summarises the suggestions received from participants in the joint session for improvements in the co-operation between the different emergency services. In Tables 6.A. to 6.D. the responses are divided into separate columns for each one of the different emergency services: the first column for members of the fire and ambulance services, the second for members of the SAPS, and the third for members of the traffic services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire and ambulance services</th>
<th>SAPS</th>
<th>Traffic services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meaningfulness of the work</td>
<td>1. Interpersonal aspects of the job</td>
<td>1. Interpersonal aspects of job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 To help people who had been injured.</td>
<td>1.1 Working with the public.</td>
<td>1.1 Working with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Work satisfaction.</td>
<td>1.2 Meeting interesting people.</td>
<td>1.2 Communication with diversity of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Learning skills to cope with life.</td>
<td>1.3 Good buddy system.</td>
<td>1.3 Contact with members of the opposite sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Good team co-operation.</td>
<td>1.4 Social activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nature of the work</td>
<td>2. Distinctive characteristics of the job</td>
<td>2. Distinctive characteristics of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Variation and action.</td>
<td>2.1 Adrenaline and action.</td>
<td>2.1 Action and adrenaline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Positive public image.</td>
<td>2.2 Tackles, chases and firearms.</td>
<td>2.2 Interesting nature of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Earlier exemption from military training.</td>
<td>2.3 Working in the control room.</td>
<td>2.3 Escorting people (except to funerals).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Lack of routine.</td>
<td>2.4 Lack of routine.</td>
<td>2.4 Feeling of power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Challenging work.</td>
<td>2.5 Challenging work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Putting theoretical knowledge into practice.</td>
<td>2.6 Putting theoretical knowledge into practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Crime prevention.</td>
<td>2.7 Crime prevention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Successful completion of tasks.</td>
<td>2.8 Successful completion of tasks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Changes in the SAPS that are positive.</td>
<td>2.9 Changes in the SAPS that are positive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Personal attitude could make work pleasant or unpleasant.</td>
<td>2.10 Personal attitude could make work pleasant or unpleasant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Acknowledgement</td>
<td>3. Acknowledgement</td>
<td>3. Acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Recognition from public and superiors for work well done.</td>
<td>3.1 Recognition from public and superiors for work well done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Good equipment.</td>
<td>3.2 Good equipment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 6.B: SUMMARY OF NEGATIVE STRESSORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire and ambulance services</th>
<th>SAPS</th>
<th>Traffic services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Inefficient use of manpower</strong></td>
<td>1. External image</td>
<td>1. Public law enforcement creates a negative image with the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Imbalance between operational and administrative work.</td>
<td>1.1 Negative attitude of public.</td>
<td>1.1 Conflict with the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Performing duties not trained for.</td>
<td>1.2 Public’s ignorance about the work of the SAPS.</td>
<td>1.2 Insults from the public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Lack of administrative support.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Reduced fines - losing face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Uncertainty about the organisational structure.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Negative attitude of taxi drivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Unstructured working methods.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 Corruption and attempted briberies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Fragmentation within the system - duplication.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Lack of appropriate training</strong></td>
<td>2. Rigid, unapproachable management style</td>
<td>2. Distinctive characteristics of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Lack of computer training.</td>
<td>2.1 Autocratic management style.</td>
<td>2.1 Attending to scenes of accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Poor communication.</td>
<td>2.2 Dangerous work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Rigid command structure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 No motivation from superiors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Rigid, unapproachable management style</strong></td>
<td>3. Problems with the internal system and internal politics</td>
<td>3. Ineffective internal and external communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Autocratic management style.</td>
<td>3.1 Management upsetting the buddy system.</td>
<td>3.1 Lack of communication between management and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Management does not listen.</td>
<td>3.2 Unfair division of work.</td>
<td>3.2 Tension among members of the emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 No support from management.</td>
<td>3.3 Inappropriate training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 No Operational careers.</td>
<td>3.4 Inequality between races.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Forced integration.</td>
<td>3.5 Financial difficulties on projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.6 Poor training facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Long working hours.</td>
<td>4.1 Poor salaries.</td>
<td>4.1 Insufficient salaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Too little leave.</td>
<td>4.2 Unkept promises by management.</td>
<td>4.2 Lack of car subsidies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Shortage of manpower.</td>
<td>4.3 Staff shortages.</td>
<td>4.3 Shortage of equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Dangerous work.</td>
<td>4.4 Shortage of vehicles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Family and marital problems.</td>
<td>4.5 Financial difficulties on projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6 Poor training facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Insufficient remuneration</strong></td>
<td>5. Distinctive characteristics of the job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Poor salaries.</td>
<td>5.1 Dangerous work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 No overtime payment.</td>
<td>5.2 Quick decision making - no opportunity for mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 No overtime payment for public holidays.</td>
<td>5.3 Unnecessary work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4 Lack of team spirit at certain units.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.5 Lack of time with families/friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.6 Quiet times - no action.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire and ambulance services</td>
<td>SAPS</td>
<td>Traffic services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Lack of formal channels</td>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Formal structures</td>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Formal structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 No formal channels available - referred to clinics/stigma.</td>
<td>1.1 Social workers - no confidentiality.</td>
<td>1.1 Traffic head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Management does not support - victimise.</td>
<td>1.2 Psychologists (Department of Behavioural Sciences) - no confidentiality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 No confidentiality in treatment of problems.</td>
<td>1.3 Own psychologist at unit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Members’ doctors not trusted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Members of the fire and ambulance services treated differently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Poor communication between management and members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Black trade union - the only power base.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Informal channels</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Informal structures</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Informal structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Good buddy system.</td>
<td>2.1 Buddy system.</td>
<td>2.1 Informal support from buddies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Drinking sessions.</td>
<td>2.2 Honest unburdening sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Solving it yourself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 Honest communication sessions needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 Regular meetings (&quot;gripe sessions&quot;).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6 Regular &quot;socials&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7 Outside professionals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.8 Debriefing sessions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) team</td>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Need for opportunity for participative management and communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) team stopped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 6.D.: SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire and ambulance services</th>
<th>SAPS</th>
<th>Traffic services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction of a twelve-hour shifts (a three-shift system) instead of twenty-four hour shifts.</td>
<td>Feedback from management.</td>
<td>1. Management style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Negotiation channel between management and staff.</td>
<td>More humaneness.</td>
<td>1.1 Better communication between management and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Drastic measures: mediation or a strike.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 More participative management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. More participative management and feedback.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Opportunities for younger members and new methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Get-togethers with SAPS/fire and ambulance services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Better equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1 Better equipment and clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Firearms for officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Subsidised petrol price for officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Better skills needed to handle crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 Training in stress management and regular stress debriefing sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Channel for managing conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 An independent stress centre.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 6.E. : SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FROM THE JOINT SESSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Integration of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Better communication and co-operation between emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>A single communication system for all the emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Uniform guidelines for emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Members should do what they are supposed to do at accident scenes and not get in each other’s way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>A combined communication centre for the emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Same shifts for different emergency services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th>Assistance in management of stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Stress clinic for members of the emergency services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Involvement of spouses in work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th>Increasing productivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Appropriate standards to measure productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Fewer administrative duties/use of civilians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was stated earlier, the information obtained during Phase One, the focus group interviews, was used to compile an interview schedule during Phase Two of the study. This interview schedule was used in the individual interviews conducted during Phase Three.

Following the theoretical overview on stress, the literature overview on stress in the emergency services, the chapter explaining the theoretical orientation of the study and the description of the methodology used, an outline was given in Chapter Six of Phase One of the study, the focus group interviews. In Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine the results of the study will be discussed.
CHAPTER SEVEN: STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY MEMBERS OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

7.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The information presented in the following three chapters is the result of Phase Six of the study where the data were put into writing.

The interview schedule devised during Phase Two, and which was used during the interviews was as follows (In the first section biographical data about the respondents were recorded):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7.A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECTION TWO: STRESSORS EXPERIENCED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Fire and ambulance services
   1. Please describe the usage of manpower - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services. Suggestions for improvements.
   2. Please comment on the training presented - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services in terms of appropriateness and usefulness in actual work. Suggestions for improvements.
   3. Please comment on the management style - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services. Suggestions for improvements.
   4. Please comment on the distinctive characteristics of your job - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services. Suggestions for improvements.
   5. Please comment on the remuneration packages received in the fire and ambulance services - positive and negative. Suggestions for improvements.
   6. Please state what you see as priorities that need to be addressed in order to diminish members' stress in the fire and ambulance services.
II. **SAPS**

1. Please comment on the public image - positive and negative - of the SAPS. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

2. Please comment on the management style - positive and negative - in the SAPS. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

3. Please comment on the effectiveness of communication of the SAPS - both externally and internally. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

4. Please comment on the internal working environment and policies - positive and negative - in the SAPS. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

5. Please comment on the working conditions/remuneration packages received in the SAPS - positive and negative. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

6. Please comment on the distinctive characteristics of your job - positive and negative - in the SAPS. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

7. Please state what you see as priorities that need to be addressed in order to diminish members' stress in the SAPS.

III. **Traffic services**

1. Please comment on the public image - positive and negative - of the traffic services. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

2. Please comment on the distinctive characteristics of your job - positive and negative - in the traffic services. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

3. Please comment on the effectiveness of communication of the traffic services - both externally and internally. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

4. Please comment on the working conditions/remuneration packages received in the traffic services - positive and negative. 
   *Suggestions for improvements.*

5. Please state what you see as priorities that need to be addressed in order to diminish members' stress in the traffic services.

**SECTION THREE: PRESENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE**

Please describe the support available within your organisation for assisting members to manage stress. 
*Suggestions for improvements.*

**SECTION FOUR: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Please comment on the co-operation between the different emergency services - positive and negative. 
*Suggestions for improvements.*

The findings of Section Two of the interview schedule (the stressors experienced) will be discussed in Chapter Seven. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings of Section Three (support received within the emergency services for managing stress) in Chapter Eight. Section Four (co-
operation between the different emergency services) will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

In dealing with each section of the interview schedule, the discussion will focus on general themes identified in the different emergency services. Due to different issues identified by members of the different emergency services during the focus group interviews, the questions asked of respondents of the different emergency services during the interviews were not identical. Although some of the questions were the same, some of the issues addressed during the interviews were specific to a specific emergency service. Where questions asked of members of different emergency services were the same, general themes were identified and discussed for that specific question.

The discussion of each one of the questions of the interview schedule will be discussed in the following format: (1) the most important aspects mentioned by members of the emergency services will be discussed under certain sub-headings or themes. (2) This will be followed by figures illustrating the aspects mentioned in graph form. (3) Following the figures a list is presented of the suggestions received from the respondents on how a particular problem should be addressed.

In the figures presented for each one of the questions the findings for the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad are combined. In this way a total picture is presented for units in the SAPS included in this study (differences between the units are clearly illustrated, and comparisons between the units can be made). Figures with findings relating to members of the fire and ambulance services are also combined in order to present a total picture for the fire and ambulance services included in this study. In the case of the traffic services only one figure will be presented for each question. It has to be pointed out
once again that, because respondents were not limited in the number of responses they could give, the total percentages will not add up to 100%.

This chapter deals with Section Two of the interview schedule, the stressors experienced by members of the emergency services.

7.2 DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOB

One of the questions to members of the SAPS, fire, ambulance and traffic services was: "Please comment on the distinctive characteristics of your job - both positive and negative - in your organisation." Responses were grouped together in one section, and general themes were identified.

A clear distinction can be made between the positive and the negative characteristics of the job mentioned.

7.2.1 Most significant positive characteristics

The most significant positive characteristics mentioned were the following:

a. Excitement, action, adrenaline and variety

Sixty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 39% of the ISU, 16% of Visible Policing, 23% of the ambulance services members, 17% of the fire services members and 20% of the traffic services members stated that one of the distinct characteristics of their job is the excitement, danger, action, adrenaline and variety associated with their work. They also enjoy the fact that they do not spend their time in offices. These respondents believed that this makes their work interesting and keeps them from becoming bored. To illustrate how much they enjoy their
work, one member of the ambulance services exclaimed: "Ons het die lekkerste werk in die wêreld!" ("We have the most enjoyable in the world!")

b. Helping, serving and protecting people, and saving lives

Forty-seven percent of the members of Visible Policing, 31% of the Flying Squad, 11% of the ISU, 54% of the ambulance services members, 25% of the fire services members and 20% of the traffic services members saw helping, saving, serving and protecting the lives of people as one of the key characteristics and very positive aspects of their job. Respondents commented that seeing the relief on bystanders' faces when a rescue is successful makes them feel that they are doing something worthwhile. A respondent from the ambulance services explained: "We are just a bunch of dedicated fools."

c. Contact with a diversity of people

Thirty-seven percent of the members of Visible Policing, 11% of the ISU, 8% of the Flying Squad, 23% of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members indicated that an important aspect of their job is that they have frequent people contact with a diversity of interesting people of different races.

d. Good relationships at work

Thirty-nine percent of the ISU members, 23% of the Flying Squad, 16% of Visible Policing and 20% of members of the traffic services indicated that one of the characteristics of their job is the close
relationships that develop between colleagues, normally referred to as *buddies* (see 8.1.a.).

e. **Maintaining law and order**

Thirty-three percent of the ISU members, 16% of Visible Policing and 15% of the Flying Squad felt that to combat crime and maintain law and order is an important aspect of their job.

f. **Lack of routine**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 16% of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU stated that an important aspect of their work is the diverse types of situations they deal with and the lack of routine.

g. **Meaningful work**

Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members stated that they regard their job as meaningful. They feel they make a difference and are proud to be members of the ambulance services. Some of them also believe that they are valued by the community.

h. **Time off**

Twenty-five percent of the fire services members and 8% of the ambulance services members stated that they enjoy the amount of time they have off between shifts.
i. Medical knowledge

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members indicated that they find the medical knowledge they gain in their work very interesting and find saving patients' lives challenging.

7.2.2 Most significant negative characteristics

The most significant negative characteristics that were mentioned were the following:

a. Dangerous work

Thirty-three percent of the members of Visible Policing, 8% of the Flying Squad, 6% of the ISU, 31% of the ambulance services members, 8% of the fire services members and 30% of the traffic services members indicated that they experience their work as dangerous. Members of the SAPS stated that because the crime rate is so high in South Africa they often become involved in violent situations, sometimes extremely violent gang fights. The buddies constantly worry about each other's well-being. Many of them live in the communities they serve. In the case of particularly violent communities they live under constant threat to their lives and also worry about the safety of their spouses and children. A respondent explained: "In some of the coloured communities it is not easy to admit that you are a member of the SAPS. For fear of intimidation many of us come to work in private clothes and get dressed at work." Members of the fire and ambulance services stated that their job is dangerous because they travel at high speed, they often work in dangerous areas, they work long hours, when they are tired they become accident-prone, the public becomes agitated with them when
their response times are too slow (respondents from Cape Town explained that in some cases members of the community become violent, throw stones at them and even threaten to kill them) and they come into contact with people who could infect them with deadly diseases.

b. Members of the emergency services are taken for granted and are not appreciated

According to 23% of the Flying Squad members, 16% of Visible Policing, 11% of the ISU, and 40% of the traffic services members one important aspect of their job is that the public takes them for granted and does not appreciate what they do. Members feel that they are very seldom thanked or congratulated for work well done. Instead they are abused, criticised (especially when they make arrests), and called out unnecessarily.

c. No room for advance planning

Seventeen percent of the ISU members and 2% of Visible Policing commented on the fact that the nature of their work does not allow for planning ahead. They have to manage crises. One of the respondents explained: "We in the ISU are doing an unpredictable and very dangerous job - you want to behave correctly, but you do not always know how. Everybody just waits for you to make a mistake."

d. Long working hours

Fifty-four percent of the ambulance services members and 33% of the fire services members complained about their long working hours leaving them no time for their families, a private life or sport. [At the time of the
interviews members in Cape Town and Durban were working 12-hour shifts. White members in Pretoria, however, worked an 84-hour week (i.e., 24-hour shifts and 48-hour shifts over weekends) with an overtime allowance of approximately R1 000-00. Non-white members in Pretoria worked a 56-hour week (i.e., 12-hour shifts) and were not compensated for overtime. White members of the ambulance services in Pretoria have subsequently also changed to 12-hour shifts, but white members of the fire services in Pretoria still work 24-hour shifts.] Fifteen percent of the ambulance services members stated that they do not get enough sleep. This results in them always being tired, moody and aggressive, which causes them to become involved in interpersonal conflict and to drink. Members of the ambulance services state that, although they work the same hours as members of the fire services, the long working hours seem to affect them more. They sometimes do up to nineteen calls in a night, which means that they work all the time while members of the fire services are not called out so often. Some members felt very strongly about the long working hours; to such an extent that a member of the ambulance services stated: "I am truly surprised that they have anyone working for them at all!"

e. Poor facilities

Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members complained about the poor facilities at their stations. Some of the issues they raised were a shortage of toilets and bathrooms, lack of healthy meals or canteen facilities and lack of recreational facilities.
f. Difference between white and non-white members

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members complained about the differences between blacks and whites in terms of salaries and working hours (see 7.2.2.d.).

g. Elitism

Twenty-five percent of the fire services members and 23% of the ambulance services members complained about elitism in the organisation. Members of the fire services felt that the rescue teams are favoured, and members of the ambulance services felt that the fire services have better equipment than the ambulance services.

h. Marital conflict

Seventeen percent of the fire services members and 15% of the ambulance services members indicated that they have marital problems due to their highly stressful job and the long hours they work. One member of the fire services stated: "The hours that we work definitely affect a person's married life. That's why we have such a high divorce rate. We never see our wives..."

Figure 7.A. (p. 167) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of the distinctive characteristics of their job in the SAPS. Figure 7.B. (p. 168) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of the distinctive characteristics of their job in the fire and ambulance services. Figure 7.C. (p. 169) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of the distinctive characteristics of their job.
FIGURE 7.A.
SAPS: DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOB

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
Figure 7.B.
FIRE & AMBULANCE: DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOB

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)
FIGURE 7.C.
TRAFFIC SERVICES: DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOB

- Taken for granted: 40
- Adrenaline/action: 20
- Serving/protecting: 20
- Good relationships: 20
- Dangerous work: 30

Traffic: N = 10
7.2.3 Suggestions for improving certain aspects of the job

Respondents were also requested to offer suggestions for improvements regarding the issues they raised. Although numerous suggestions were received, only those which are deemed by the researcher as significant are included. Some suggestions by members of the SAPS to improve certain aspects of their job were the following:

a. Numerous suggestions were made for addressing the remuneration packages of SAPS members.

b. Suggestions for improving the physical working conditions of members included aspects such as increments in manpower and logistics.

c. Suggestions for improving interpersonal relationships in the SAPS.

d. Suggestions for improving the internal effectiveness of the SAPS, especially through addressing members' uncertainty and insecurity about the future.

e. Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of community policing in order to change the attitudes of the public to help the SAPS in combating crime. Community forums should be used to improve communication with the communities and to get them more involved.

f. Suggestions for policing to be done in a professional way (e.g., that professional standards be maintained, and that police officials be given adequate training).

Some of the suggestions offered by members of the fire and ambulance services to improve certain aspects of their job were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving working hours and shifts.

b. Suggestions for reducing the retirement age to 60.
c. Suggestions for addressing the shortages and poor quality of equipment (such as vehicles).

d. Suggestions for improving facilities available to members (e.g., bathrooms and toilets, kitchen facilities where meals can be made or obtained and rest room facilities), especially for members working at satellite stations.

e. Suggestions for improving interpersonal relationships in the fire and ambulance services.

Some of the suggestions offered by members of the traffic services to improve certain aspects of their job were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving internal organisation such as doing away with bureaucracy, unnecessary paperwork and red tape.

b. Suggestions for improving interpersonal relationships in the traffic services.

c. Suggestions for improving training of traffic officials.

d. Suggestions for improving the availability of vehicles.

e. Suggestions for improving legislation regarding hawkers.

7.3 PUBLIC IMAGE

A question addressed to members of the SAPS and the traffic services was: "Please comment on the public image - both positive and negative - of your organisation."
7.3.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses from respondents were the following:

a. **Improvement in the public image of the SAPS since the April 1994 elections**

The response from members of the ISU (28%), Visible Policing (14%) and the Flying Squad (8%) indicated that some members have experienced a significant improvement in the attitude of the public towards the SAPS since the April 1994 elections. Members commented that the public is now more willing to assist them in solving crime. Members of the public are starting to see the SAPS as *their* police service, indicating a sense of ownership. From their side the SAPS has also become more transparent and accountable to the public they serve.

b. **Positive public image of the SAPS/traffic services because they *serve and protect* the public**

Thirty-one percent of the Flying Squad members, 9% of Visible Policing, 6% of the ISU, and 30% of the traffic services members believed that the public has a positive image of their organisations because they are there to serve and to protect the community. They provide a service to the public. They explained that members go out of their way to be as helpful as possible, and always try to maintain good relationships with the public. One of the respondents commented as follows: "We believe the public will treat us according to the way they are being treated."
c. Some members of the public are positive towards the SAPS/traffic services, and some are negative

Twenty-three percent of the Visible Policing members, 23% of the Flying Squad, 7% of the ISU, and 40% of the traffic services members commented that the public image of their organisations is neither positive nor negative. They were ambivalent about the public image of their organisations. In their experience some members of the public are positive towards them, and some are negative. In some of the comments received from the respondents, the bitterness and pain of rejection by the communities they serve are clearly reflected: "The SAPS is the 'floor-cloth' of the country." Some of the comments indicate, however, that members also experience understanding and support from some members of the public: "Daar is wel simpatie by die publiek vir ons werksomstandighede en swak salarisse - sommige mense is ons goedgesind." (There is also sympathy from the public regarding our working conditions and poor salaries - some people are positive towards us).

d. Law enforcement necessarily causes negativity

Twenty-two percent of the ISU members, 21% of Visible Policing and 15% of the Flying Squad believed that certain members of the public are negative towards the SAPS because, in the execution of their duties, members have to enforce the law and arrest criminals. Some members added that, when arrested, criminals sometimes become violent and have to be handled with force. This makes members of the SAPS even more unpopular. Thirty percent of the traffic services members indicated that the public is negative toward them because they have to enforce the law in public, which necessarily causes negativity. When they issue fines to
members of the public or arrest them, it normally takes place in the public's eye, and traffic officials are never popular for doing that. Irrespective of how polite members of the traffic services are when enforcing the law and fining members of the public, this will always be regarded with negativity.

e. **Negative public image of the SAPS due to politicisation of the role of the SAPS**

Some of the members (22% of the ISU, 15% of the Flying Squad and 14% of Visible Policing) commented that the SAPS has a negative public image because its role had been largely politicised in the past. Members had required to enforce unpopular laws, and were seen to side with the National Party. Some members believed that there is still a stigma attached to the SAPS. This is reflected in the statement of two members of the ISU: "The people in black communities moaned about our camouflage uniforms, but we could have worn pink uniforms, it would not have made a difference. They still see us as part of the old apartheid regime." Comments were made, however, that this situation should improve in future.

f. **Difference in perceptions of the SAPS between black and white communities**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 22% of the ISU, and 7% of Visible Policing commented that different communities have different perceptions of the SAPS. According to the respondents, white communities tend to be more positive towards the SAPS whereas black communities still tend to be negative towards members because the SAPS still experiences problems with legitimacy in these communities.
Comments were also received that white policing in black areas, as well as black policing in white areas, is resented in some communities.

g. Negative public image of the SAPS due to slow response times

Thirty-one percent of the Flying Squad members and 12% of Visible Policing believed that the SAPS's negative public image can be attributed to slow response (or reaction) times and lack of feedback to the public about the progress made in solving cases. Members explained that members of the public often become very rude and impatient over the telephone when they do not obtain a response quickly enough. They added: "When you are outside on the road in the response vehicles you do not have contact with difficult members of the public as often as you have when you are in the control room and speak to them over the telephone."

h. Negative public image of the SAPS due to lack of manpower

Some of the members (12% of Visible Policing, 8% of the Flying Squad and 6% of the ISU) believed that the negative public image of the SAPS can be attributed to the lack of sufficient manpower in the organisation (see 7.6.1.b.). Some of the respondents also attributed negative attitudes of the public partly to unprofessional conduct on the part of SAPS members. This becomes clear from the following comment: "Die SAPD kom onprofessioneel voor omdat ons ouens dikwels bloedjonk en 'wintie' is - dit sit die publiek af." (The SAPS comes over as unprofessional because our members are often very young and 'showy' - that puts the public off).
i. **Negative public image of the SAPS due to lack of logistics**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members and 7% of Visible Policing believed that the lack of sufficient logistics and, in their case, especially vehicles prevent them from being as effective as they would like to be (see 7.6.1.d.).

j. **Ignorance of the public**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 9% of Visible Policing, 6% of the ISU, and 20% of the traffic services members commented that the public is generally ignorant about the law, as well as traffic rules and regulations. This causes negativity when members execute their duties. The public is also not adequately informed about how the SAPS or the traffic services operate, about its rules and regulations, and the circumstances under which its members have to work. Consequently they become upset if fines are issued to them or if they are arrested when, in fact, members are only doing their job.

k. **Lack of commitment towards the SAPS from the South African community**

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 15% of the Flying Squad and 5% of Visible Policing commented that the South African community has never committed itself to the SAPS. The SAPS is not accepted or supported by the community, and members of the public are generally unthankful and rude towards members. The only time the public is positive towards SAPS members is when they need help.
I. **Lack of respect for the SAPS**

Some of the ISU members (17%) and 2% of Visible Policing believed that the public is negative towards the SAPS because they do not respect them. It is public knowledge that SAPS members are poorly paid, and therefore they are regarded as *cheap labour*. One comment received was the following: "Police officials are seen by the public as the macho enforcers of the law who have all the answers. And yet the public has no respect for us - they throw stones and bottles at us, they shoot at us, and when they call us to investigate something they ask us to enter through the backdoor."

m. **The vicious circle: negativity causes negativity**

Some of the members of the Flying Squad (23%) and Visible Policing (5%) believed that a vicious circle has developed over the years. The public's negative attitude towards the SAPS caused members to become negative towards the public. Members learn to become tough and to turn a deaf ear to the public's accusations and swearing directed at them. The following comment reflects some of the members' feelings about the communities they serve: "Everything centres around the communities these days but nobody looks after the police official, or even sees him as a human being - that makes him negative towards the public."

n. **Supervisors side with the public against members**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members and 20% of the traffic services members complained that their superiors tend to side with
the public when complaints are lodged, instead of defending their staff. They believed that this creates a poor image of the SAPS/traffic services.

o. The negative public image of the SAPS/traffic services causes stress for members

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 15% of the Flying Squad, 12% of Visible Policing and 20% of the traffic services members admitted that they find it stressful to cope with the negative image of their organisations. Members of the SAPS commented that their lives and those of their families, as well as their properties, are constantly in danger. Some of them, especially black members of the SAPS, found it necessary to move out of the areas in which they lived because of intimidation by the public. Because of the negative attitude towards them, SAPS members are frequently shot at while doing their job.

p. Taxi drivers team up against members of the traffic services

Twenty percent of the traffic service members stated that taxi drivers tend to team up against them.

Figure 7.D. (p. 179) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of the public image of the SAPS. Figure 7.E. (p. 180) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of the public image of the traffic services.
FIGURE 7.E.
TRAFFIC SERVICES: PUBLIC IMAGE

- Some pool/negative: 40
- Positive: serve: 30
- Neg: enforce law: 20
- Neg: ignorance law: 20
- Superv. side public: 18
- Teixie team up: 20
- Stressful to cope: 20

Traffic: N = 10
7.3.2 Suggestions for improving the public image of the SAPS and the traffic services

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve the public image of the SAPS were the following:

a. Suggestions for internal organisational change (such as increasing logistics, manpower and members' salaries) in order to improve the image of the SAPS.

b. Suggestions for changing or improving the service provided to the public. This includes increasing visibility.

c. Suggestions for education of the public on legislation and what the SAPS does.

d. Suggestions for more communication and interaction with the public and the media.

e. Suggestions for depolitisation of the role of the SAPS and for improved legislation to control crime.

Some suggestions offered by traffic services members to improve the public image of the traffic services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving the public image of the traffic services through training of officials to deal more effectively with the public, and of the public about the role of the traffic services.

b. Suggestions for improving the public image of the traffic services through improving internal organisation. This includes better utilisation of available resources, and increasing logistics and manpower.

c. Suggestions for improving public relations by providing a better service to the public.
7.4 MANAGEMENT STYLE

A question addressed to members of the SAPS as well as the fire and ambulance services, was: "Please comment on the management style - both positive and negative - in your organisation."

7.4.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses from the respondents were the following:

a. More participative management recently

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 28% of the ISU and 16% of Visible Policing stated that considerably more participation and consultation have been taking place in the SAPS recently. Although the members viewed this as very positive, some commented that support for consultation and participation seems to be theoretical only and is not always implemented in practice at stations and units. Some wondered whether management was becoming more democratic because they wanted to or because they were forced to do so. Some of the members found all the changes taking place in the SAPS slightly overwhelming. One respondent explained: "The old autocratic management style has changed from a command structure to a management structure. At the moment it is being exaggerated, but a balance will be found. The change is for the best, it is just sometimes happening too fast."
b. **Autocratic management: lack of consultative, participative management style**

Thirty-five percent of the members of Visible Policing, 23% of the Flying Squad, 17% of the ISU, 46% of the ambulance services members and 33% of the fire services members felt that management is autocratic and that there is no consultative or participative management style. They complained that management is autocratic and forces people to do things they do not want to do. A member of the ambulance services stated: "We don't only want to be consulted, we want to participate in the decision-making."

c. **No implementation of ideas**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members and 12% of Visible Policing stated that, although management does consult with them, their ideas are not implemented. Management still takes all the decisions, and just informs the staff that there is no money to implement their ideas. The respondents found this discouraging. Some respondents commented, however, that members often have unrealistic expectations of consultative management and do not understand that consultation does not necessarily mean that each and every suggestion will be implemented.

d. **Good relationships experienced at station/unit**

Fourteen percent of the Visible Policing members, 8% of the Flying Squad members and 6% of the ISU indicated that they are satisfied with management at their unit and that good relationships exist between management and staff.
e. **Inadequate communication**

Twelve percent of the members of Visible Policing, 11% of the ISU, 25% of the fire services members and 23% of the ambulance services members complained about inadequate communication channels in their organisations (see 7.5.1.f.).

f. **Lack of discipline**

Eleven percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 7% of Visible Policing complained about the recent lack of discipline in the SAPS. They felt a need for more discipline and believed that too much democracy and consultation ultimately destroy discipline. One respondent explained: "We have a negotiation forum between management and the trade unions in the SAPS. We have an open door policy at our station. Too much emphasis is being placed on democracy, however. Discipline is breaking down. A clear line needs to be drawn. The interaction should be there, but discipline should also be maintained." Some of the respondents felt that the standards for admission to the SAPS are too low, which makes maintaining discipline even harder.

g. **Some members of management are open to change - others are not**

Eleven percent of the ISU members and 8% of the Flying Squad members felt that some members of management are open to change and others are not. They believed, however, that those who are not open to change should be pressurised to be so. One respondent, however, saw the situation in a slightly different light: "In the SAPS one gets a mix of management styles - autocratic and democratic. In the
olden days, when the management style was still autocratic, at least one knew where one stood. Now there is a lot of uncertainty."

h. **Respect for new top management**

Eleven percent of the ISU members, 9% of Visible Policing and 8% of the Flying Squad indicated that they have respect for and trust in the new top management of the SAPS. They are encouraged by the changes that have already taken place in the organisation.

i. **Older management feels threatened**

Thirty-eight percent of the ambulance services members believed that some of the older members of management feel threatened by some of the younger, better qualified and effective members.

j. **Limited job and promotional opportunities**

Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members complained about limited job and promotional opportunities because of rigid job structures within the organisation. Members cannot be promoted unless someone else is transferred or promoted.

k. **Victimisation**

Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members stated that they are victimised by management when they raise grievances.
1. **No problems**

Seventeen percent of the fire services members and 8% of the ambulance services members stated that they experience no problems with management, and that they are consulted and given the opportunity to provide their inputs.

Figure 7.F. (p. 187) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of management style in the SAPS while Figure 7.G. (p. 188) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of management style in the fire and ambulance services.

### 7.4.2 Suggestions for improving management style

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve the management style in the SAPS were the following:

- **a.** Suggestions for improved communication in the SAPS and more consultation by management, especially with regard to changes taking place in the organisation.
- **b.** Suggestions for more structure and discipline in the SAPS.
- **c.** Suggestions for better quality managers who are competent and who also have operational/practical experience.
- **d.** Suggestions that management should look after the well-being of its staff and provide them with more support.
- **e.** Suggestions that management should deal with racial issues in the SAPS and that there should be a good racial mix at all levels in the SAPS.
FIGURE 7.F.
SAPS: MANAGEMENT STYLE

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
FIGURE 7.G.
FIRE & AMBULANCE: MANAGEMENT STYLE

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)
f. Suggestions for streamlining of functions, especially the administration, some of the senseless rules and standing orders.

g. Suggestions for civilians to staff police stations and control rooms in order to put more trained police officials on the road.

h. Suggestions for improving management's interaction with communities in order to win their favour and for the SAPS to provide a better service.

i. Suggestions for effective personnel management in the SAPS.

j. Suggestions for the SAPS to have a more flat management structure with more delegated authority and easier access to management.

k. Suggestions for a larger budget for the SAPS in order to enable them to do proper policing.

Some suggestions offered by members of the fire and ambulance services to improve the management style in the fire and ambulance services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving top-bottom communication in the organisation as well as external communication with outside institutions such as hospitals.

b. Suggestions for improving organisational structure and policy, such as the creation of operational careers and more promotional opportunities, the fair implementation of affirmative action and elimination of racism.

c. Suggestions for making the organisation responsible to only one body. It is problematic for the ambulance services to be dependent on provincial administrations for funding and on city councils for the distribution of the money.

d. Suggestions for improving management skills and ensuring that managers have operational experience.
e. Suggestions for improving management style, creating a balance between maintaining discipline and becoming more democratic and consultative.

7.5 COMMUNICATION

A question addressed to members of the SAPS and the traffic services was: "Please comment on the effectiveness of communication of your organisation - both externally and internally."

7.5.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. Adequate communication within the SAPS

Seventeen percent of the ISU members and 7% of Visible Policing indicated that communication within the SAPS is adequate and that they experience no problems in this regard.

b. Adequate communication from top management

Fifty percent of the ISU members, 31% of the Flying Squad and 9% of Visible Policing stated that they are satisfied with the communication they receive from top management. They respect management's honest attempts to improve communication in the SAPS. They also realise that top management does not always have all the information available. When information becomes available, top management makes sure it is communicated to all the members. Some of the respondents mentioned...
that they receive Servamus every month and also regular circulars and letters in their payslips that keep them up to date with the latest changes in the organisation.

c. **Poor communication in the traffic services**

Twenty percent of the traffic services members described the communication in the organisation as poor. They complained that the rank structures and management's authoritarian style prevent effective communication.

d. **Inadequate communication from top management: uncertainty and rumours**

Forty-six percent of the Flying Squad members, 17% of the ISU, 12% of Visible Policing, and 30% of the traffic services members stated that members experience a lot of uncertainty about the future, communication is characterised by rumours and distorted messages, and morale in the organisation is low (see 7.7.1.b.). This is because they are not adequately informed by top management about changes in the organisation. One respondent commented that members are worried, and asked: "Why are all the generals leaving the ship?... and what is going to become of us?"

Members of the traffic services added that there is a communication gap between management and members at grassroots level. To illustrate this, a member commented: "You must just not show that you are happy in what you're doing - then management takes you away from there."
e. **Inadequate communication from top management: not informed about changes in the organisation**

Nineteen percent of the members of Visible Policing, 15% of the Flying Squad, 6% of the ISU, and 30% of members of the traffic services complained that top management does not inform them adequately and in time about changes in the organisation. SAPS members were particularly concerned about the fact that they read about changes in the SAPS in the newspaper before they are informed. They are also often presented only with pieces of information and never with the total picture. A SAPS member explained as follows: "We desperately need good communication - we function on instructions. How can we function if we do not understand what is going on?"

f. **Crowded top-down communication channels**

Twenty-one percent of the members of Visible Policing, 8% of the Flying Squad and 30% of the traffic services members stated that the top-down communication channels are too crowded (see 7.4.1.e). They felt that members receive too much information to absorb. The channels are too lengthy with the result that messages take too long to reach members at ground level. Messages are also filtered (some respondents believed that management deliberately withholds certain information). One SAPS member commented jokingly: "If they can't even get our payslips out on time, how can they communicate well?"

g. **Inadequate bottom-up communication**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members complained about inadequate bottom-up communication (this was also mentioned by
members of the traffic services). They mentioned that there are too many rank structures and formal channels to be followed, that management is too busy, that feedback is very rarely provided, and that members are sometimes victimised if they speak up. There were also complaints that top management is not sufficiently informed about what is happening on the ground. One respondent expressed his frustration about management not having the time to talk to members. He stated: "I cannot talk to my commanding officer about my problems - the problem is solved by the time I get an appointment."

h. Adequate communication at units or stations

Thirty-nine percent of the ISU members and 39% of the Flying Squad expressed their satisfaction with the communication at their units or stations. One of the respondents mentioned that a liaison officer had been appointed at his unit who is in charge of communication. Another respondent, a member of the ISU, said: "The communication between the officers and members of this unit is excellent. The dangerous nature of our work in the ISU forces us to work closely together."

i. Regular meetings at units, stations or departments

Forty-six percent of the Flying Squad members, 33% of the ISU, 5% of Visible Policing and 40% of the traffic services members stated that they have regular meetings at their units, stations or departments. They regularly receive all the information they require.
j. Effective formal communication channels at stations and units

Thirty-nine percent of the ISU members, 31% of the Flying Squad and 28% of Visible Policing indicated that they have formal communication channels at their stations that work effectively.

k. Inadequate communication with station or unit commanders

Twelve percent of the members of Visible Policing, 8% of the Flying Squad and 6% of the ISU indicated that communication with their station commanders is poor. They complained about station commanders not visiting satellite stations, or not knowing what is happening at their stations, about correspondence not being circulated, about station commanders not consulting them, and only communicating with them when there are problems.

l. Good communication with other units and stations in the SAPS

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 16% of Visible Policing and 15% of the Flying Squad indicated that their communication with other units and stations in the SAPS is good. Regular contact is maintained at management level between the different units and stations in a particular area.

m. Adequate communication with the public

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 28% of Visible Policing, 22% of the ISU, and 30% of the traffic services members felt that their communication with the public is adequate. According to SAPS members, the concept of community policing initiated by the SAPS
has proved to be effective in that it has changed public attitudes. Members of the public are now willing to assist the SAPS in solving crime, and regular contact is maintained with community leaders. Some of these respondents added though, that representation of the SAPS on community forums requires a tremendous amount of input and time from members, and that their families often suffer as a result.

n. Good communication with buddies

Twenty percent of the traffic services members commented that the communication between buddies is exceptionally good (see 7.2.1.d.).

Figure 7.H. (p. 196) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of communication in the SAPS. Figure 7.I. (p. 197) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of communication in their organisation.

7.5.2 Suggestions for improving communication

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve communication in the organisation were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving the communication style of management in that they should be more approachable, open about changes taking place in the organisation, and knowledgeable about what is going on at grassroots level.
FIGURE 7.H.
SAPS : COMMUNICATION

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
FIGURE 7.1.
TRAFFIC SERVICES: COMMUNICATION

Traf: N = 10
b. Suggestions for improving formal communication channels in the SAPS include creating flatter and less rigid structures, and by providing members easier access to management.

c. Suggestions for improving communication at stations or units include the establishment of participative management forums at stations and units to give members a channel to communicate with management.

d. Suggestions for improving communication between stations and units include that different units should work together more often and that regular meetings should take place between them.

e. Suggestions for improving communication with the public include that the public should be educated about the role of the SAPS, that the SAPS should be more visible, and that more informal contact should be established with the public.

Some suggestions offered by members of the traffic services to improve communication in the traffic services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving communication between management and staff include that management should keep members informed about what is happening in the organisation, that there should be more participative management with regular departmental meetings, that communication channels should be less rigid with easier access to senior management, and that management should know what is happening at grassroots level.

b. Suggestions for improving internal communication include that better and more efficient use should be made of radio-contact, and that better communication equipment should be provided.

c. Suggestions for improving external communication include that the public should be educated on the role of the traffic services, and that members should be trained to relate to the public.
A question addressed to members of the SAPS, fire, ambulance and traffic services, related to their remuneration packages. In the case of members of the SAPS and traffic services the question also included reference to their working conditions. The question posed to respondents was: "Please comment on the working conditions (in the case of members of the SAPS and traffic services) and remuneration packages received in your organisation - both positive and negative."

7.6.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses received from respondents relating to their remuneration packages were the following:

a. Poor salaries

Seventy-seven percent of the members of Visible Policing, 77% of the Flying Squad, 72% of the ISU, 46% of the ambulance services members, 8% of the fire services members, and 40% of the traffic services members complained about poor salaries. Respondents felt that the salaries of members at the lower ranks in particular should be urgently addressed. Respondents believed poor salaries to be the main cause of stress and low morale. Members of the SAPS and traffic services stated that they are exposed to danger every day of their lives, and that the salaries they earn do not compensate for this. Some comments received from SAPS members regarding their salaries are the following: "A constable’s salary amounts to slavery. They learn to make do with the bare minimum and they sacrifice a lot." "How can I get paid the same as the administrative people when I am on the road, constantly exposed to
danger?" "Take a matriculant and he will earn much more in the private sector than he would as a member of the SAPS, who has a stressful, dangerous job with long hours and overtime." "We should actually only work two weeks in a month for the salaries we are being paid!" "Their poor salaries make it easy for SAPS members to be corrupt and to be bribed." "We work for and serve the public. But we do not get adequately compensated for that. The families of those members of the police who are killed are not even looked after. We give our lives for the state and we are just a number."

Members of the fire and ambulance services in Durban and Cape Town stated that members in Pretoria earn considerably more than they do.

One member of the administrative staff of the traffic services complained: "We in administrative positions have bigger responsibilities than the people on the road, who only regulate traffic and enforce the law. We have to make inputs at high levels and have to evaluate issues where huge amounts of money are at stake. Yet we get paid the same salaries."

b. Salaries not comparable to what members do

Twenty percent of the traffic services members stated that their salaries are not commensurate with the amount of work they do, the amount of overtime they work or the responsibilities they carry.

c. No compensation for overtime

Thirty-nine percent of the ISU members, 28% of Visible Policing and 8% of the Flying Squad emphasised that they are not being compensated for
overtime worked, in spite of numerous promises made by management in this regard.

d. **Expensive medical aid**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members and 5% of Visible Policing stated that they have good but expensive medical aid.

e. **Poor housing allowances and subsidies**

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members complained about poor housing allowances and subsidies.

f. **Adequate/fair remuneration**

Sixty-seven percent of the fire services members, 23% of the ambulance services members, and 50% of the traffic services members felt that they receive adequate/fair salaries and benefits. Some of them added however, that it could also be improved. One member of the fire services explained: "With our shift allowances we are being paid more than a medical practitioner in a government hospital, so we can not complain." Another supported his view by saying: "If you look at the economy we are lucky to have a salary - everybody would like to have more, but our salaries are okay."
The most significant responses received from members of the SAPS and traffic services relating to their working conditions were the following:

a. Sufficient manpower

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members and 9% of Visible Policing indicated that they have sufficient manpower, provided that it is utilised correctly.

Shortage of manpower

Thirty-three percent of members of Visible Policing, 22% of the ISU and 15% of the Flying Squad indicated that they experience a shortage of manpower at their units or stations (see 7.3.1.h.). The respondents explained that it is difficult for members to provide an efficient service to the community when they are as understaffed as some of the stations and units are. Due to the lack of manpower the SAPS is also not visible enough.

The shortage of manpower also results in members being overworked, especially at management level. Some of the respondents felt that the existing manpower is not always utilised correctly and to full potential.

The comment was made that, by international standards, the ratio of SAPS members available to the size of the communities served is far too small. Respondents also felt that, because the crime rate is exceptionally high in South Africa, more manpower is needed for the SAPS to be more visible and to provide a better service to the community. One respondent felt that there are too many officers at head office and too few on the ground. Another stated: "We receive approximately 2 000
calls per day - we have far too few vehicles and people to respond to these calls within a reasonable time. Everybody thinks his case is of high priority. The public should be informed about this situation, and that clear information is required when a matter is being reported." A third respondent commented as follows: "In the white areas we have sufficient manpower for efficient policing. In some of the black areas we are 350-400% under strength - we cannot possibly combat crime and provide an efficient service in this way."

c. Sufficient equipment

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 28% of the ISU, 9% of Visible Policing, and 50% of the traffic services members indicated that they have sufficient equipment available to them. In some instances other units even borrow from them from time to time. One member of the traffic services observed: "The equipment of the traffic services is excellent - the best in the country."

d. Shortage of equipment

Fifty-four percent of the members of Visible Policing, 46% of the Flying Squad, 17% of the ISU, and 30% of the traffic services members stated that they experience logistical problems (see 7.3.1.i.). Members of the traffic services complained mainly about a shortage of vehicles. Some of the problems raised by members of the SAPS were: a shortage of vehicles; damaged vehicles that take too long to be repaired (members explained that the public become furious when they have to wait for a response owing to non availability of vehicles); the waiting period for ordering new equipment that is too long; that there is a serious shortage of bullet-proof vests; that bullet-proof vests are too heavy; that more
hand radios are required; that some stations require switchboards; and
that in some instances computers, sirens, binoculars, air-conditioners and
rifles are also required. One member complained: "We only got bullet-
proof vests this year after six of our guys died last year, and that after
vests had been available in the stores all along!" Another explained: "We
had two vans at the station - one's gearbox broke, so now we have only
one. Now we do foot patrols (without hand radios and torches). What
do you do when you arrest someone? You look for a public phone to
phone the station!" A third stated, however: "There is a difference
between the 'have to have' and 'nice to have' equipment. At our unit
we have all the equipment that is essential to do our jobs."

e. Long working hours

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 7%
of Visible Policing complained that their working hours are too long for
them to be alert at all times. Some respondents were satisfied with the
working hours but complained that the travelling time to work is too
long. Only one member of the traffic services complained that the
working hours are too long.

f. Fine working hours

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 26% of Visible
Policing, and 20% of the traffic services members stated that they are
happy with their working hours (SAPS members work twelve-hour
shifts).
Figure 7.J. (p. 206) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of their working conditions and remuneration packages. Figure 7.K. (p. 207) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of their remuneration. Figure 7.L. (p. 208) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to their working conditions and remuneration packages.

7.6.2 Suggestions for improving the working conditions and remuneration packages in the emergency services

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve their working conditions and remuneration packages were the following:

a. Suggestions for improved remuneration packages include increasing members' salaries so that the right quality people are attracted, and the payment of overtime, shift and danger allowances.

b. Suggestions for more effective utilisation of manpower include increasing the manpower so as to improve the service provided to the public. These suggestions also include employing more civilians to do the administration and to man the control rooms in order to put trained members of the SAPS outside on the street.

c. Suggestions for improved logistics include the provision of better, faster and more vehicles, as well as additional equipment such as bullet-proof vests, firearms and ammunition, computers, switchboards at some stations, equipment for vehicles such as first aid kits, and air-conditioners in control rooms.

d. Suggestions for improving the physical working environment include upgrading stations in terms of more bathrooms, toilets, guardhouses, control rooms and sick bays, and better planning of stations before they are built.
FIGURE 7.J.
SAPS: WORKING CONDITIONS/REMUNERATION PACKAGES

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
FIGURE 7.K.
FIRE & AMBULANCE: REMUNERATION PACKAGES

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)
FIGURE 7.1
TRAFFIC SERVICES: WORKING CONDITIONS/REMUNERATION PACKAGES

Traffic: N = 10
Some suggestions offered by members of the fire and ambulance services to improve their remuneration packages were the following:

a. Suggestions for increasing basic remuneration include that salaries be improved (especially beginner salaries) and that the scope of salary scales be increased.

b. Suggestions for increasing allowances include the provision of allowances such as housing subsidies and allowances, car and petrol allowances, and the payment of overtime.

c. Suggestions for improving salary structures include that blacks and whites receive equal remuneration and allowances, and that the same salary scales be applied for the different regions.

d. Suggestions about the communication to members on reasons for their poor remuneration, as well as on progress made during negotiations with trade unions.

Some suggestions offered by members of the traffic services to improve their working conditions and remuneration packages were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving logistics include that more equipment (especially vehicles) be provided, that vehicles be better equipped, and that lighter caps be acquired.

b. Suggestions for improving remuneration included that salaries be increased to attract the right quality people and that members be given car and petrol allowances.

c. Suggestions that members work shorter hours in order to see more of their families.
7.7 WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN THE SAPS

A question addressed to members of the SAPS only was: "Please comment on the internal working environment and policies - both positive and negative - in the SAPS."

7.7.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses from respondents were the following:

a. No problems experienced

Eleven percent of the ISU members and 9% of Visible Policing indicated that they experience no particular problems with the internal working environment and policies in the SAPS.

b. Insecurity about the future

Once again uncertainty about the future was mentioned by the respondents, this time highlighting the effect of uncertainty on the internal working environment (also see 7.5.1.d. and 7.5.1.e.). Eleven percent of the ISU members and 2% of Visible Policing stated that they experience insecurity about the future, partly because of the integration process taking place in the SAPS. One respondent commented: "We are extremely uncertain about our future in the SAPS. The minister has no practical policing experience, and the new commissioner does not have our interests at heart. He just tries to impress the public. Top management should rather go out on the road with us so that they understand what we are doing."
c. **Unnecessary complaining**

Eleven percent of the ISU members stated that some members tend to complain too much. They urged those that are satisfied with their working conditions to start speaking up, especially to the media, because only the negative aspects of working for the SAPS are normally published. These respondents also felt that those who are dissatisfied should discuss their concerns with each other rather than with the public or the media.

d. **No racial problems**

Thirty-seven percent of the members of Visible Policing, 31% of the Flying Squad and 28% of the ISU indicated that no racial problems are experienced at their units or stations. They believed that the members of different races get on well and that the integration process presents no real problems, although there are some members who tend to be oversensitive.

e. **Various racial problems experienced**

Thirty-eight percent of the Flying Squad members, 17% of the ISU and 14% of Visible Policing stated that various racial problems are still experienced in the SAPS. Some of the examples of racial problems mentioned were the following:

- The different races seem to experience difficulty in accepting one another, mainly because they do not understand each other's cultures and languages.
Different accusations are made of one another. For example, the blacks are accused of being lazy, scared and pushy. The whites are accused of being brutal and impulsive. The Indians are accused of being too autocratic and power-conscious. The coloureds are accused of being unreliable.

Some members feel that there are too few whites in coloured and black areas. One of the coloured respondents said: "We have only two whites at our station. I feel we need more .. give the opportunity to young white males to work in coloured or black areas to gain intercultural knowledge." Another respondent made the following comment: "Although POPCRU demands that whites be removed out of black areas, I do not agree. In the end you will have the situation where Xhosas have to police Xhosas, Zulus have to police Zulus, and in this way criminals may be protected. We have to ensure that communities are protected and served and safe."

A number of white members complained about reverse discrimination. They claimed that only blacks are sent on courses, that they get away with almost anything through their trade unions, and that they tend to be insensitive to the feelings of members of other races in that they say and do just what they like.

Some black members complained that blacks have to stay in the control room longer than white members, that some white members do not want to go into black areas because they believe it is too dangerous, and that some white members do not want to work with black colleagues because they do not feel safe with the way they use their firearms. One respondent stated, for example: "Yes, the SAPS is changing - we have a new commissioner. But there are lots of words and no action. Whites are only pretending to accept non-white members as part of their team."
Comments were made that too few blacks are accepted in special units, which presents the problem that the white members cannot speak the language of the people in the community they serve.

Comments were also made about the fact that discipline is sometimes wrongly perceived as a racial issue.

Some of the respondents commented that racial issues in the SAPS do not always refer to a black-white situation. One of the respondents stated: "The black members in the SAPS experience more problems among each themselves than are being experienced between the different race groups."

f. **Civilians required for administrative duties**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 7% of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU stated that civilians are required for administrative duties and for operating control rooms and charge offices. This would put more trained police officials on the road to provide a more effective service to the community.

g. **Shortage of female members in the ISU**

Eleven percent of the ISU members felt that more female members are required in the ISU because of problems experienced with searching female members of the community.

h. **Pleasant atmosphere at the base**

Seventeen percent of the ISU members experienced the atmosphere at their base as pleasant.
i. Unpleasant atmosphere at the base

Eleven percent of the ISU members felt that the atmosphere at their base is unpleasant. Complaints centred mainly on the base being far removed from everything and members becoming bored because there is nothing for them to do.

j. Unpleasant physical environment

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 7% of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU complained about the unpleasant physical environment they have to work in. Examples of problems raised are: charge offices at stations that are unfit for public use because they are too small and dirty; police stations not originally built for this purpose and being inadequate; toilets that are inadequate; buildings that are old and falling apart; control rooms that are overcrowded; lack of office space; and shortage of air conditioners in control rooms.

k. Fair work distribution

Fourteen-percent of the members of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU believed that the work distribution in the SAPS is fair. They were satisfied that job rotation regularly takes place between control room or charge office duty and working outside.

l. Unfair work distribution

Fourteen-percent of the members of Visible Policing, 15% of the Flying Squad and 11% of the ISU complained about work not being distributed
fairly. They felt that some people end up "carrying" others at the unit or station.

m. Members are not rotated regularly

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad respondents felt that members are not rotated frequently enough between doing control room duty and being on the road. They believed working in the control room to be especially stressful. Some of the respondents also complained that rotation is sometimes done in an unorganised way, leaving members unsure whether they would be in the control room or on the road the next day.

n. Favouritism

Eleven percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 2% of Visible Policing complained about favouritism in the SAPS. They stated that jobs are given to relatives or friends of certain people, that some members are promoted sooner than others, and that members are sent on courses only if they know the right people.

Figure 7.M. (p. 216) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of their working environment.
Suggestions for improving the working environment in the SAPS

Some suggestions offered by the respondents to improve the working conditions in the SAPS were the following:

a. Suggestions for addressing racial issues include doing away with all forms of racism and reverse discrimination in the SAPS, paying more attention to differences in culture, values and customs between members, and making the management ranks more representative of the different race groups in South Africa.

b. Suggestions for addressing training needs include providing practical, on-the-job training, as well as more training in communicating with the public and the media.

c. Suggestions for improving organisational culture include that members should learn to be patient with the rapid changes taking place in the SAPS.

d. Suggestions for improving external organisational functioning include that the SAPS should focus on combating crime instead of all the senseless things with which they keep themselves busy. Members should also be rotated between different areas, as well as between the control room and being on the road on a regular basis. If they spend two weeks on the road, all criminals know them.
7.8 USAGE OF MANPOWER IN THE FIRE AND AMBULANCE SERVICES

A question addressed to members of the fire and ambulance services only was: "Please describe the usage of manpower - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services."

7.8.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. Manpower shortage

Sixty-two percent of the ambulance services members and 42% of the fire services members believed that they are understaffed. This is especially the case during times of crisis, with the result that it is also difficult for members to obtain leave at certain times. Some commented that they seldom work with full crews and do not have enough people to man the machines available at their stations. Some members of the fire services stated that they are understaffed only from time to time. Members of the ambulance services, on the other hand, complained that they are often continuously on the road without returning to their stations. One of the respondents explained that the number of people employed at their ambulance station is still the same as in 1989. They are doing three times more calls now than in 1989, with the result that they are sometimes up to 50 calls behind.

b. Experts not on the road

Forty-six percent of the ambulance services members complained that their seniors, who are the experts, are in the offices doing managerial
work instead of being on the road where their expertise is desperately required. The respondents felt that more expertise is needed on the road and that managers tend to lose their skills when they do not regularly spend time on the road.

c. Too much administration

Thirty-eight percent of the ambulance services members felt that the administrative burden placed on them is too high. They commented that they do not have enough time between calls to do the administration required of them, and that they are also not trained to do this administration. Some of them do not even know how to use a computer.

d. Unnecessary work

Twenty-five percent of the fire services members and 8% of the ambulance services members believed that they are often required to do unnecessary work like cleaning the backyard in order to keep them busy. These respondents felt that this is not their job and that they should be used constructively.

e. Response times too slow

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members stated that their response times are too slow, with the result that members of the public become agitated when they have to wait for an ambulance.
f. **Area too big**

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members and 17% of the fire services members complained that the area they serve is too large. They have to travel great distances to reach their patients, which makes their response times very slow.

g. **High absenteeism**

Seventeen percent of the fire services members and 15% of the ambulance services members complained of high absenteeism rates among their colleagues, which place an additional burden on the remaining staff. Some of these respondents accused their colleagues of abusing sick leave and alcohol, of staying off work, of a lack of loyalty, and of a *don't care* attitude.

h. **Providing a service and saving lives**

Seventeen percent of the fire services members commented that, despite the fact that they are sometimes too busy and sometimes not used constructively, they thoroughly enjoy providing a service to the community and saving lives.

Figure 7.N. (p. 221) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of the usage of manpower.
FIGURE 7.N.
FIRE & AMBULANCE: USAGE OF MANPOWER

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)
7.8.2 Suggestions for improving the usage of manpower in the fire and ambulance services

Some suggestions offered by respondents to improve the usage of manpower in the fire and ambulance services were the following:

a. Suggestions for increasing manpower, especially operational staff and staff specifically designated and trained for administrative duties.

b. Suggestions for improving usage of available manpower include that senior people should be put on the road instead of in the office, and the redistribution of staff in order to let operational staff be on the road instead of doing administrative work.

c. Suggestions for improving staff motivation include that management should pay more attention to the motivation of staff.

7.9 TRAINING PROVIDED IN THE FIRE AND AMBULANCE SERVICES

A question addressed to members of the fire and ambulance services only was: "Please comment on the training presented - positive and negative - in the fire and ambulance services in terms of appropriateness and usefulness in actual work."

7.9.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. Satisfactory training

Sixty-nine percent of the ambulance services members and 50% of the fire services members stated that the training they receive is generally
satisfactory. Some of them mentioned that the courses had been upgraded and made more appropriate. Others felt that members have the opportunity to improve themselves if they want to.

b. **More updated, intensive training**

Twenty-five percent of the fire services members and 8% of the ambulance services members requested more updated, intensive training in order to improve their effectiveness.

c. **Inappropriate training**

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members and 16% of the fire services members felt that the training they receive is inappropriate for the situations they experience in practice. They requested more relevant and more practical training.

d. **More regular refresher courses**

Seventeen percent of the fire services members and 8% of the ambulance services members felt that more regular refresher courses should be presented, especially to train them in the use of new equipment.

e. **Members tend to lose interest**

Fifteen percent of the ambulance services members felt that members are only motivated for a month or two after having attended a training course. They soon lose interest or forget what they have learnt because they are called out mainly to minor cases - very seldom to serious cases.
f. **Members not trained to do administration and typing**

Fifteen percent of the ambulance services members complained that they are required to do administration and typing on a computer without being trained (see 10.1.7.).

Figure 7.0. (p. 225) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of training.

### 7.9.2 Suggestions for improving the training provided in the fire and ambulance services

Some suggestions offered by respondents to improve the training provided in the fire and ambulance services were the following:

a. **Suggestions for changing training courses** include that training should be more practical and should take place in real-life situations, that course syllabi should be revised and divided into manageable blocks, and that computer and administrative training should be provided.

b. **Suggestions for more training - practical and theoretical.**

### 7.10 PRIORITISING OF NEEDS

A question addressed to members of the SAPS, fire, ambulance and traffic services was: "Please state what you see as priority suggestions for diminishing stress within the organisation." Because the responses to this question represent the priorities of needs to be addressed in each of the services, the responses of members of the different services will be discussed
separately. First the responses of members of the SAPS will be discussed, then of members of the fire and ambulance services, and finally of members of the traffic services.

7.10.1 Most significant responses of members of the SAPS

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. **Improve salaries**

   Ninety-two percent of the Flying Squad members, 67% of the ISU and 58% of Visible Policing stated that an improvement in their salaries would diminish stress. Respondents stated that financial difficulties often lead to destructive behaviour such as corruption, bribery, suicide, aggression, marital conflict and drinking.

b. **Improve communication**

   Twenty-six percent of the members of Visible Policing, 23% of the Flying Squad and 22% of the ISU felt that communication in the SAPS should be improved. Management and staff should learn to communicate with one another openly and honestly, which will improve interpersonal relationships and reduce conflict in the organisation.

c. **Increase manpower**

   Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 19% of Visible Policing and 17% of the ISU felt that the manpower in the SAPS should be increased in order to reduce members’ stress. Respondents claimed
that members are overworked and that their workload should be reduced by increasing the manpower.

d. Improve/increase logistics

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 12% of Visible Policing and 11% of the ISU stated that logistics should be improved and increased. Respondents referred to vehicles, uniforms, firearms, bullet-proof vests, etc.

e. Shorter working hours

Sixteen percent of the members of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU members requested that the working hours be reduced, especially the amount of overtime worked. This will enable members to spend more time with their families and will reduce marital conflict.

f. More consultation by management

Fourteen percent of the members of Visible Policing, 11% of the ISU and 8% of the Flying Squad felt that management should be more consultative and less autocratic. They should listen to members' suggestions and communicate more, but should still maintain discipline.

g. Improve promotional opportunities

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 7% of Visible Policing believed that an improvement in promotional opportunities for members should reduce some of the stress they experience. They pleaded for recognition in terms of experience, merit
and qualifications, and felt that members should not have to wait so long for promotion.

h. **Create unity in the SAPS**

Twenty-two percent of the ISU members and 5% of Visible Policing pleaded for more unity and teamwork in the SAPS, especially among the different units.

i. **Educate the public**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members felt that the public should be educated on the role of the police, which will diminish stress for members.

j. **Improve community policing**

Twenty-three percent of the Flying Squad members, 12% of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU stated that community policing should be improved. This would change the public’s attitude and encourage them to accept the SAPS. The public should be fully informed about the danger of police work, and the positive rather than negative aspects of policing should be emphasised.

Figure 7.P. (p. 229) combines responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of prioritising the needs to diminish stress.
Most significant responses of members of the fire and ambulance services

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. **Increase manpower**

   Thirty-eight percent of the ambulance services members and 25% of the fire services members indicated that manpower needs to be increased to diminish the stress of members who are currently overworked.

b. **Improve salaries**

   Thirty-eight percent of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members felt that their salaries should be improved in order to diminish stress.

c. **Shorter working hours**

   Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members indicated that working hours should be shorter to diminish stress. To enable them to have more time to spend with their families, they also want to work less overtime.

d. **Improve and increase logistics**

   Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members stated that logistics (such as vehicles, equipment and uniforms) should be improved and increased to diminish stress.
e. More consultative, participative management

Twenty-five percent of the fire services members and 15% of the ambulance services members felt that management should consult more, have a more participative style while still maintaining discipline, should be less autocratic, should listen to members' suggestions, and should not victimise members. This would diminish the stress which members experience.

f. Improve communication

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members and 17% of the fire services members felt that communication between management and staff should be improved in order to diminish stress. The respondents felt that they want improved interpersonal relationships, less conflict, open and honest communication and clearer instructions from management.

g. No racism

Seventeen percent of the fire services members felt that the organisation should eliminate all forms of racism as well as reverse discrimination in order to diminish members' stress.

Figure 7.Q. (p. 232) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services to the question of prioritising the needs to be addressed in order to diminish stress.
7.10.3 Most significant responses of members of the traffic services

The most significant responses from respondents were the following:

a. Improve communication

Forty percent of the traffic services members indicated that communication between management and staff as well as among members should improve, which will in turn improve interpersonal relationships.

b. Improve salaries

Thirty percent of the traffic services members stated that salaries should be improved. It was felt that poor salaries result in members being open to bribery and corruption. One member commented: "A traffic officer can never be paid enough money for what he does - his life is on the line all the time."

c. More consultation

Thirty percent of the traffic services members felt that management should consult more, be less autocratic and be more open to suggestions from members.

d. More administrative assistance

Twenty percent of the traffic services members requested more administrative assistance, less red tape and less paperwork.
e. **Increase manpower**

Twenty percent of the traffic services members believed that manpower should be increased in the organisation to enable members to do their work effectively.

f. **Management should treat members like adults**

Twenty percent of the traffic services members requested that management treats them like adults and not like children. They explained that this implies being treated with dignity and respect.

Figure 7.R. (p. 235) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of prioritising needs to be addressed in order to diminish stress.

The findings of Section Three of the interview schedule (support received within the emergency services for managing stress) will now be discussed in Chapter Eight.
FIGURE 7.R.
TRAFFIC SERVICES: PRIORITISING OF NEEDS

Traffic: N = 10
CHAPTER EIGHT : SUPPORT RECEIVED WITHIN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR MANAGING STRESS

This chapter deals with Section Three of the interview schedule, support received by members of the emergency services for managing stress.

The question addressed to all respondents was: "Please describe the support available within your organisation for managing stress."

This question, like all the questions in this study, deals with the perceptions of members. Presenting the respondents' viewpoints, however, without also referring to the formal structures that are available in the different emergency services to assist them in coping with stress would paint an incomplete picture. These formal structures are therefore illustrated in Figure 8.A. (formal head office structures for support available to members of the SAPS), Figure 8.B. (formal provincial structures available in the SAPS), and Figure 8.C. (formal support structures available to members of the fire, ambulance and traffic services). It has to be pointed out that the existing formal structures for providing support to members of the SAPS are being amended. The interim structures presented in this study are currently in the process of being approved. Note that, what was previously called the Chaplain Services, is now referred to as Spiritual Services. It should also be emphasised that the illustration provided in Figure 8.C. (support structures provided to members of the fire and ambulance services) refers to all three cities included in this study.
Formal supporting structures available to members of the SAPS

Figure 8.A: HEAD OFFICE STRUCTURE

NOTE: This is an interim structure which has not been finally approved as yet.
Formal supporting structures available to members of the SAPS
Figure 8.B. : PROVINCIAL STRUCTURE

NOTE: This is an interim structure which has not been finally approved as yet
Formal supporting structures available to members of the fire, ambulance and traffic services
Figure 8.C.
Most significant responses

The most significant responses from respondents were the following:

a. Support from buddies

Fifty-four percent of the Flying Squad members, 39% of the ISU, 37% of Visible Policing, 62% of the ambulance services members, 42% of the fire services members, and 30% of the traffic services members stated that they discuss their problems with their buddies (see 7.2.1.d.). The buddies spend a lot of time together, know each other well, and become like a family. In times of crises buddies support and look after each other. Good teamwork, group cohesion and trust develop between buddies, and members claim that this is something that makes their jobs worthwhile, even when they work under difficult circumstances. The support they receive from each other reduces their stress. One SAPS member commented that, for many of the members, their buddies are what keeps them in the SAPS. He stated: "What scares me is that, after a few years in the SAPS one realises that you will not be able to adapt outside anymore." There were respondents, however, who commented that they do not talk to their buddies about their personal problems because they cannot be trusted to keep it to themselves and not joke about it. A member of the ambulance services explained: "Nobody here can be trusted - even your own buddies turn against you."

b. Support from superiors

Forty-six percent of the Flying Squad members, 33% of Visible Policing, 28% of the ISU, 23% of the ambulance services members, and 17% of...
the fire services members indicated that their superiors are available and approachable, should they experience problems or need assistance.

c. **Superiors refer for professional help**

Twenty-two percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad, 7% of Visible Policing, 15% of the ambulance services members, and 30% of the traffic services members commented that their superiors might refer them for professional help (to a social worker or a psychologist), should the need arise.

d. **Support from nursing sister at station**

Thirty-one percent of the ambulance services members stated that there is a nursing sister at their station whom they normally talk to when they have problems.

e. **Availability of social workers**

Forty-six percent of the Flying Squad members, 44% of the ISU and 40% of Visible Policing indicated that social workers are available, should they wish to speak to them. The respondents also commented that these social workers give frequent talks at their stations or units, and that some of them do good work. The comment was also made, however, that problem cases frequently reach the social workers too late, when virtually nothing more can be done to improve the situation.
f. **Social workers not trusted**

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members and 21% of Visible Policing stated that they do not trust the social workers because they do not treat cases as confidential. They are also difficult to get hold of because they are short-staffed. Because he is worried about confidentiality, one respondent stated: "If I have to speak to a social worker inside the police I would rather speak to someone in another district than to one at my own unit." Another respondent made the following comment: "I don't really know why they employ social workers in the SAPS. When a person has a problem he will only talk about it when he is really out of control, and by that time a social worker cannot help - he needs a psychologist."

g. **Availability of chaplains**

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 21% of Visible Policing and 17% of the ISU stated that, should they have problems, they can speak to a chaplain. The comment about problems sometimes reaching chaplains too late was repeated. Fourteen percent of the respondents indicated, however, that they do not trust the chaplains and have no contact with them at all.

h. **Availability of psychologists**

Thirty-one percent of the Flying Squad members, 26% of Visible Policing and 11% of the ISU stated that the department of Psychological Services (previously referred to as Behavioural Sciences) provides psychological help to members.
i. Psychologists not trusted

Forty-six percent of the Flying Squad members, 33% of the ISU and 28% of Visible Policing indicated that they do not trust the psychologists at the Department of Psychological Services. Some of the complaints were: these psychologists are unapproachable and not trusted because they are unknown and do not spend time with the members; they experience serious manpower shortages, which makes it virtually impossible to obtain an appointment with one of them; there is a lack of confidentiality - information is put on members’ files; and the Department of Psychological Services tends to be reactive rather than proactive. One respondent warned, however: "Complaints about Behavioural Sciences [now referred to as Psychological Services] are mainly based on hearsay than on first hand knowledge."

j. Consultation of private psychologists and psychiatrists

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members indicated that they use the services of private psychologists and psychiatrists in order to cope with their stress. One member of the fire services also mentioned that he visits his private medical practitioner when he experiences stress.

k. Debriefing after traumatic events

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 28% of the ISU and 12% of Visible Policing indicated that they receive voluntary team debriefing after traumatic events. They mentioned, however, that this was regretfully introduced only after a number of their colleagues had committed suicide. One respondent explained the procedure followed at
his unit: "At our unit we have a book in the ops-room where you record any shooting incident or situation. The commanding officer then refers you to the social worker as soon as possible when she visits the unit once a week."

I. Stress management training programmes

Thirty-three percent of the fire services members and 30% of the traffic services members stated that they attend stress management programmes presented in the organisation. This helps them to cope with stress. Two members of the fire services pointed out, however, that members are ignorant about stress and do not understand what it is. For this reason it is important that training in stress management be presented.

m. Employee assistance programme

Thirty percent of the traffic services members stated that the city council has an employee assistance programme to assist employees who need help. It was also commented, however, that it is rather difficult to find somebody from the programme who is available to see members when they need help.

n. No formal support

Fifty-four percent of the ambulance services members, 25% of the fire services members, and 40% of the traffic services members indicated that no formal support systems are available in their organisations for helping members to cope with stress. Although some of them stated that they might, in some cases, be able to talk to their superiors, all of
them said that no psychologists or social workers are available for them to talk to.

o. Drinking and socialising

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 28% of the ISU, 26% of Visible Policing, 31% of the ambulance services members and 8% of the fire services members indicated that they cope with stress by drinking and socialising. They admitted this to be destructive, however, because it often leads to marital problems and divorce.

p. Members isolate themselves

Twenty percent of the traffic services members stated that members tend to isolate themselves when experiencing problems. They do not talk to anyone.

Figure 8.D. (p. 246) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of support available to manage their stress. Figure 8.E. (p. 247) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services, and Figure 8.F. (p. 248) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of support available to manage their stress.
FIGURE 8.D.
SAPS: SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR MANAGING STRESS

Sources of support

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
FIGURE 8.E.
FIRE & AMBULANCE : SUPPORT FOR MANAGING STRESS

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)

Sources of support

FIRE
AMBULANCE
FIGURE 8.F.
TRAFFIC SERVICES : SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR MANAGING STRESS

Sources of support

Traffic: N = 10
8.2 Suggestions for improving the support provided to members of the emergency services for managing stress

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve the support provided to them for managing stress were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving the professional services in the SAPS include that problems should always be treated in the strictest confidence by all professionals, that no information about sessions with members should be put on their personal files and made available to management, that members should be encouraged to talk about their problems and not to cling to their macho image, that debriefing sessions should be compulsory for members who have been exposed to traumatic incidents, and that more professionals are desperately needed in the SAPS.

b. Suggestions relating to improving life style include that members should admit to experiencing stress, should maintain a balanced life style and not neglect their religious life.

c. Suggestions relating to improving the support received from management include that the management structure in the SAPS should be more supportive, and that members would find it far less stressful if there was proper, open communication from management.

d. Suggestions relating to improving working conditions include that salaries as well as working conditions should be improved, and that manpower should be increased.

e. Suggestions for the creation of a neutral, independent stress clinic for members of all the emergency services.
Some suggestions offered by members of the fire and ambulance services to improve the support provided to them for managing stress were the following:

a. Suggestions relating to improving lifestyle include that members should be encouraged to talk about their problems and not to cling to their macho image.

b. Suggestions relating to improving the support received from management include that there should be more open communication from management, and that members' problems should be treated with confidentiality.

c. Suggestions relating to improving working conditions include that manpower should be increased, and that members should work shorter hours.

d. Suggestions that members receive proactive stress management and life skills training.

e. Suggestions that debriefing sessions should be compulsory for members who have been exposed to traumatic incidents.

f. Suggestions for professionals to be put on each team to assist members with stress and do stress debriefing.

g. Suggestions for the creation of a neutral, independent stress clinic for members of all the emergency services.

Some suggestions offered by members of the traffic services to improve the support provided to them for managing stress were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving professional services include that there is a need for a neutral, independent stress clinic for members of all the emergency services, and that professionals should be placed on the road with the teams.
b. Suggestions for improving working conditions include that the management structure should be more supportive in that management should not side with the public against members, and that more manpower should be employed.

c. The politics in the country, the violence and the crime should be sorted out.

The findings of Section Four of the interview schedule (co-operation between the different emergency services) will now be discussed in Chapter Nine.
CHAPTER NINE : CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT EMERGENCY SERVICES

This chapter deals with Section Four of the interview schedule, co-operation between the different emergency services.

The question posed to all the respondents was: "Please comment on the co-operation currently between the different emergency services - positive and negative."

9.1 Most significant responses

The most significant responses received from respondents were the following:

a. Good relationship between different emergency services

Ninety-four percent of the ISU members, 62% of the Flying Squad, 54% of Visible Policing, 62% of the ambulance services members, 42% of the fire services members, and 70% of the traffic services members stated that a very good relationship exists between the different emergency services. Members of the different services depend on and are appreciative of one another and help each other in crisis situations.

b. Good relationship between different units in the SAPS

Twelve percent of the members of Visible Policing indicated that the relationship between the different units in the SAPS is good and that no problems are experienced.
c. Poor relationship between different units in the SAPS

Seventeen percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 7% of Visible Policing indicated that a poor relationship exists between the different units in the SAPS, especially the special units. There is tremendous competition between them and members of each of these units believe that they are the best. This competition is reflected in the following comment received from a member of the ISU: "The other units always send in the ISU first to take the punch, and then they walk in, arrest the criminals and get all the recognition." One respondent stated, however: "We must serve the community - that's our work - not to fight each other."

d. Problems with members of the SAPS

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members and 17% of the fire services members indicated that they experience problems with members of the SAPS. Some of the complaints raised were that when members of the SAPS call the fire or ambulance services they tend to exaggerate cases, that they just stand around at scenes instead of controlling the crowds (bystanders), that they are sometimes too slow in arriving at scenes, that they are reluctant to open dockets and then ask the ambulance services to transport members of the public when it is not necessary, that they provide incorrect and incomplete details and addresses to the fire and ambulance services which adversely affects their response times, and that they sometimes call private ambulance services instead of the provincial ambulance services because they believe their response times to be quicker.
e. **Good relationship with ambulance services**

Fourteen percent of the members of Visible Policing and 25% of the fire services members indicated that they enjoy a good relationship with members of the ambulance services.

f. **Response times of ambulances are too slow**

Thirty-nine percent of the Flying Squad members, 26% of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU stated that they experience problems with the ambulance services. Their response times are too slow due to a serious shortage of manpower. One respondent complained: "SAPS members are not medically trained and do not have medical equipment. Quite often we arrive first on a scene. We contact an ambulance and wait three hours at the scene with the community getting upset with us because they take so long. We are not allowed to transport patients. What can we do? They could at least tell us that they are going to take that long so we can make alternative arrangements." According to some of the respondents, in some cases SAPS members are even stoned by bystanders who accuse them of not having contacted the ambulance services. There were also respondents who complained that members of the ambulance services refuse to enter certain areas without police escort.

g. **Good relationship with traffic services**

Twelve percent of the members of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU stated that they experience a good relationship with members of the traffic services. Nine percent of the members of Visible Policing
indicated, however, that they experience problems with the traffic services.

h. Problems experienced with traffic services

Thirty-three percent of the fire services members and 23% of the ambulance services members stated that they experience problems with members of the traffic services. This is mainly because they issue fines to them for violating speed limits and for not wearing safety belts. The respondents explained that they have to be able to get out of their vehicles as quickly as possible to get to patients, and for this reason they do not wear safety belts. During the interviews it was also explained that, apart from the fact that there is an element of competition between the different services, it is acceptable that certain traffic rules be violated by members of the emergency services under certain circumstances. This, however, causes friction between members of the traffic and other emergency services as to when these special circumstances apply and when not. Complaints were also received about members of the traffic services not doing their job at accident scenes. Instead of directing the traffic, they are more interested in watching how the injured are rescued by members of the fire and ambulance services. They also do not get to scenes quickly enough owing to a shortage in manpower, and they display an unco-operative attitude.

i. Good relationship with fire services

Sixteen percent of the members of Visible Policing and 6% of the ISU commented that they have a good relationship with members of the fire services, and experience no problems with them. Four percent of the members of Visible Policing complained, however, that members of the
fire services take too long to reach fires and by the time they do arrive everything has already been destroyed.

j. Members of the fire and ambulance services disregard traffic rules

Twenty percent of the traffic services members complained that members of the fire and ambulance services disobey traffic rules. They tend to obstruct the traffic with their vehicles at accident scenes, and they speed when there is no emergency.

k. Lack of co-ordination at scenes

Fifteen percent of the Flying Squad members, 25% of the fire services members, 8% of the ambulance services members, and 20% of the traffic services members complained about the lack of co-ordination at scenes. Friction is caused by uncertainty as to who is in command. Some respondents stated that the different emergency services work together very well during major disasters, but experience power struggles and lack of co-ordination at smaller scenes, because they tend to get in each other's way.

l. No access to each other's channels

Eleven percent of the ISU members, 8% of the Flying Squad and 5% of Visible Policing complained that communication between members of the different emergency services is difficult. This is because they do not have access to each other's radio channels, which results in slow response times.
m. Friction between management teams of the different emergency services

Fifteen percent of the Flying Squad members stated that, while friction and power struggles are experienced between the management teams of the different emergency services, at grassroots level members get on very well.

n. Friction between fire services, ambulance services and special rescue teams

Thirty-eight percent of the ambulance services members complained about friction and competition between the fire services, ambulance services and special rescue teams. This friction is mainly due as to who is responsible for what, and is mainly evident between management of the different services and not between the members at grassroots level.

o. Friction between fire and ambulance services

Twenty-three percent of the ambulance services members stated that there is friction between members of the fire and ambulance services. Members of the ambulance services felt that members of the fire services do not always give the correct treatment to injured accident victims, and they also tend to infringe on the domain of the ambulance services.

Figure 9.A. (p. 258) combines the responses of members of the ISU, Visible Policing and the Flying Squad to the question of co-operation between the different emergency services. Figure 9.B. (p. 259) combines the responses of members of the fire and ambulance services, and Figure 9.C. (p. 260) summarises the responses of members of the traffic services to the question of co-operation between the different emergency services.
FIGURE 9.A.
SAPS : CO-OPERATION BETWEEN EMERGENCY SERVICES

%  

Co-operation

N = ISU (18); VP (43); FS (13)
FIGURE 9.B.
FIRE & AMBULANCE: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN EMERGENCY SERVICES

\[\text{Co-operation}\]

N = Fire (12); Amb (13)
FIGURE 9.C.
TRAFFIC SERVICES: CO-OPERATION BETWEEN EMERGENCY SERVICES

%  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-operation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Good Relationship</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-co-ordination</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems: Fire/Ambulance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traffic: N = 10
9.2 Suggestions offered for improving the co-operation between the different emergency services

Some suggestions offered by members of the SAPS to improve the co-operation between the different emergency services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving communication include establishing better co-ordination and more open communication channels between the different emergency services, and establishing a combined communication centre for the emergency services.

b. Suggestions for practical co-operation include that management of the different emergency services should co-ordinate as to who is in charge at a scene.

c. Suggestions for improving co-operation through training include that members of the emergency services should receive training about each others' fields of responsibilities.

d. Suggestions for improving co-operation between units in the SAPS through the elimination of competition and enhancement of team work.

e. Suggestions for improving the availability of emergency services include that the private sector should become involved in sponsoring emergency services in communities.

Some suggestions offered by members of the fire and ambulance services to improve the co-operation between the different emergency services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving the communication between emergency services include that a combined communication centre for the emergency services be established, and that meetings be held on a regular basis between members of the emergency services.
b. Suggestions for practical co-operation include that management of the different emergency services co-ordinate who is to be in charge at a scene.

c. Suggestions for improving co-operation through training include that members of the emergency services should receive training about each other's fields of responsibilities and that the public be educated on the role of each one of the emergency services.

d. Suggestions for improving the availability of emergency services in all communities.

Some suggestions offered by members of the traffic services to improve the co-operation between the different emergency services were the following:

a. Suggestions for improving communication include establishing better co-ordination and more open communication channels between the different emergency services, establishing a combined communication centre for the emergency services, and obtaining access to each other's radio channels.

b. Suggestions for improving co-operation by improving logistics, especially manpower and vehicles.

c. Suggestions for improving co-operation by improving structures include that management of the different emergency services co-ordinate who is in charge at a scene, as well as the different roles of the different services and that members of the traffic services render assistance to SAPS members to do patrols.

In Chapter Ten the findings of this study is discussed with specific reference to the systems approach.
CHAPTER TEN: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE SYSTEMS APPROACH

In Chapter Ten the findings of the study will be discussed with specific reference to the systems approach. Each question will be discussed separately, and finally overall comments and suggestions will be made from the findings.

10.1 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

10.1.1 The distinctive job characteristics of members of the emergency services

Several interesting comments can be made about the respondents' descriptions of the distinctive characteristics of their job.

The adrenaline and action associated with their job seem to be particularly important to the members. To people who enjoy adrenaline and action it is far more stressful to be bored and not to be busy (and that is busy with something they regard as worthwhile) than to experience an overload. This is a factor that has to be kept in mind when dealing with members' stress. It can be speculated that the adrenaline and action associated with their job may be what attracted many of them in the first place, and is what keeps them there.

Two aspects mentioned especially by members of the ISU, are: (1) the close relationships that develop between buddies, and (2) the fact that they are there to maintain law and order.
Larger percentages of members of the ISU and Flying Squad, compared to those of Visible Policing, commented on the close relationships with their buddies. This can be attributed to the fact that in units such as the ISU and Flying Squad, far more than in Visible Policing, members work in teams. They tend to become dependent on each other for physically protecting each other and for emotional support. The buddy system and the adrenaline and action associated with their job have become, what Wheatley (1992) would call, intrinsic motivators that spring from the work itself. Many members of the emergency services are reluctant to find employment outside because they realise how much they would miss the action, adrenaline and companionship with their buddies.

Members of the ISU, far more than members of the other units, focused on the fact that they have to maintain law and order. In terms of the systems approach, maintaining law and order, has become one of the values (the objectives that the system aims for) of members of the ISU. The nature of their work demands that they have to do just that. The function of the ISU when this study was conducted, was to restore law and order wherever there is unrest and violence in the country.

Characteristics of their job that were mentioned especially by members of Visible Policing, are: (1) helping people; (2) contact with a diversity of people; and (3) the fact that they have dangerous work.

Members of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad seem to see their function in terms of serving and protecting members of the community. Members of the ISU tend to see their function mainly as maintaining law and order. Hence the higher percentage of members of the former two units who mentioned helping people as part of their job. Maintaining law and order has become a value for members of the ISU in the same way as helping people (serving and
protecting them) seems to have become a value (an objective the system aims for) for members of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad.

In terms of the systems approach it can be stated that two values in particular are being adhered to in the SAPS as a system: (1) maintaining law and order, and (2) serving and protecting the community. The different subsystems in the SAPS all seem to recognise the importance of both these values. However, due to their different roles and functions within the system, these values differ in importance to the different subsystems.

It has to be pointed out that the official vision statement of the SAPS is "to serve and to protect". This could place members of the ISU, who tend to place a higher priority on their function to maintain law and order, in conflict with the rest of the system, and cause the system not to act as a whole.

Members also seem to recognise that, although both the abovementioned values are important for the well-being and survival of the supra-system, these values are not equally accepted and welcomed by all members of the supra-system.

Members of Visible Policing, owing to the nature of their job, come into close contact with a diversity of people daily. Members of the ISU, on the other hand, tend to operate in teams and mostly have contact with people only during operations when they are called out to maintain law and order. Members of the Flying Squad have contact with a diversity of people regularly, but for very short periods of time when they attend situations they are called out to. After leaving they very seldom have contact with the same people again. For this reason contact with a diversity of people is perceived far more as a distinctive characteristic of the job of members of Visible Policing. In terms of the systems approach members of Visible Policing tend
to interact to a larger extent with their environment than do members of the Flying Squad and the ISU. For this reason they can be classified as a *more open system* than the other two units. Due to the differing nature of their functions in the SAPS, different units of the SAPS tend to display different degrees of openness to their environment.

Members of Visible Policing tend to see their job as dangerous because many of them operate daily with ordinary vehicles, and armed with only their service pistols, in areas where members of the ISU enter only in armoured vehicles. Members of the Flying Squad, on the other hand, normally do not operate in these areas. This is an illustration of the *different roles and functions of horizontal subsystems* within a system, and it also illustrates that different subsystems in a system may have different perceptions of the same situation. Due to the different roles and functions they fulfil in the system, they differ in the nature of the contact they have with the supra-system.

Two additional characteristics of their job were mentioned specifically by the Flying Squad members: (1) the *lack of routine* in their job (which ties in with the fact that they are constantly looking for adrenaline and action), and (2) their feeling that the SAPS is often *taken for granted* by the public and is not appreciated. Members of the Flying Squad, probably more than any of the other units, have to respond to calls that turn out to be unnecessary, are abused by intoxicated members of the public or have to mediate family conflicts. The result is that they feel unappreciated and abused by the public. In terms of the systems approach members of the Flying Squad (a subsystem of the larger SAPS system) perceive the supra-system (the communities they serve) not to fully appreciate the importance of their function. It also has to be pointed out that, not being appreciated by the larger supra-system, could also affect the status of a subsystem within a system.
It is obvious from the responses, however, that members of the SAPS tend to view their job in a positive light. Very few negative aspects of their job were mentioned. This indicates that, irrespective of the competition and communication problems there may be between the various subsystems (or units) within the larger SAPS system, and irrespective of the negative image that this system may hold among some members of the larger supra-system (the community), members of the SAPS still tend to share, to a large extent, the values (the objectives the system aims for) of the system.

A prominent feature of the results to the question about the distinctive characteristics of their job to members of the fire and ambulance services is the complaint received about the long hours they work. As was explained earlier, this complaint came mainly from members of the ambulance services in Pretoria. The situation has since changed with regard to members of the ambulance services but not of the fire services. In this case the working hours (a system rule) presented a problem to members. Especially members of the ambulance services experience this as a problem because a higher frequency of exchange with the supra-system (a higher level of input) is required of them. The high levels of input by and energy flow from the system to the supra-system leave members with very little opportunity to replace that energy. One could also speculate that, although the job of firefighters is physically extremely demanding, the job of members of the ambulance services is possibly more demanding emotionally.

Three aspects of their job were mentioned especially by the fire services members: (1) that their job entails helping people and saving lives, (2) that they enjoy the amount of time they get off and (3) a complaint about elitism. Members of the ambulance services, on the other hand, were more varied in their responses. They indicated that an important aspect of their job is (1) to help people and save lives; (2) that they found their work meaningful but
(3) also *dangerous*; (4) that they have *poor facilities* available to them; (5) that they enjoy the *action and adrenaline*, (6) the *medical knowledge*, and (7) *contact with a diversity of people* associated with their job; they complained about (8) the *differentiation* that is made in their organisation between blacks and whites, and also about (9) *elitism*. Far more complaints were received from members of the ambulance services than of the fire services. This may indicate that more problems are indeed experienced in the ambulance services than the fire services. Some members explained that this is because they report to the head of the fire services and do not function independently as an ambulance service. It may also indicate that members of the ambulance services tend to be generally more outspoken about their problems than members of the fire services.

Helping people and saving people’s lives seem to be an important aspect of their job to members of the fire services, but even more so to members of the ambulance services. This clearly indicates that, for members of this system, helping people and saving people’s lives have become an important value of the system. It is an objective members strive to reach during every call they respond to. Helping people is generally important to members of the emergency services as part of the helping profession. Apart from their need for action and adrenaline this is normally one of the important reasons why they chose this type of career in the first place (especially members of the ambulance services). It is this aspect of their job that they feel is meaningful and which makes them willing to do work that is both dangerous and demanding.

It was pointed out earlier that Wheatley (1992) described organisational vision as a field - a force of unseen connections that influences employees’ behaviour. She believed that vision statements should move off the walls and into the corridors. The fact that so many of the respondents felt that
an important aspect of their job is to help people and save their lives, indicates that they do share a vision. This vision has indeed moved off the walls and into the corridors. However, they possibly do not recognise it as a vision because they have not been involved by senior management in creating this vision. Employee participation is not part of the tradition of the emergency services, and up to very recently they have not been given the opportunity to formally contribute energy towards creating vision statements for their organisations. Although their responses indicate that they do share a common vision with management in terms of helping people and saving lives, it is doubtful whether they have made it their own and have taken ownership of it at a conscious level to recognise it as a vision for the organisation.

No members of the fire services mentioned that they find their work meaningful, but they enjoy helping people and saving lives. This may be an indication that they enjoy their work when they are busy, but find their job to be less meaningful when they are bored, waiting for a call.

Fewer members of the ambulance services than fire services members indicated that they enjoy their time off. There may be two explanations for this and there may be some truth in both of them: (1) Members of the ambulance services tend to identify so strongly with their jobs and enjoy what they do so much (including the close relationships they have with buddies on their shifts) that it is difficult for them to cope with their free time, away from what they enjoy doing and from the people they feel comfortable with. One member of the ambulance services confirmed this when he asked: "What am I to do with myself on my days off when I am divorced in any case? Listen to the sirens and wish I were there? It's funny, I got divorced because my wife could not cope with my working hours; now I can't cope with not being at work."; (2) It can be speculated that, in view of their long working hours, the
number of resultant divorces among members and their continuous exposure
to trauma over a long period of time, many of these members may have
adopted an unbalanced life style. This may increase their susceptibility to
burnout and may result in loss of enjoyment of life, which is one of the
symptoms of burnout. From a systems perspective it is clear that some
members of the system have become totally enmeshed in the system - they
have reached the stage where they do not have a life outside the system.
This, of course, enforces the tendency for the system to become more closed
to influences from the supra-system, because members do not only spend all
their working time together, but also all their free time.

Members of both the fire and the ambulance services complained about elitism
in the organisation. There seems to be a fair amount of competition, not only
between members of the fire services and special rescue teams, and between
the fire and ambulance services, but also between different shifts. This can
be explained in terms of a natural process of group cohesion that develops
owing to the amount of time members of one shift spend in each other's
company. Competition could however, if not carefully controlled, become
destructive and highly stressful for members to cope with. It is a very natural
tendency for subsystems of a system to be in competition with each other.
This competition could be healthy and stimulating. Quite often, however, it
becomes destructive, resulting in negative consequences for the system as a
whole. Each subsystem ends up fighting for itself without considering the
well-being of the system as a whole. In such a case the system becomes
characterised by fragmentation, lack of co-ordination and ineffective
communication. Emphasis needs to be placed on the interdependence of the
subsystems of a system in order to enable the system to function as a whole.

Considerably more ambulance services members than fire services members
stated that their job is dangerous (although the work of firefighters is highly
dangerous). There is a particular tendency to perceive something as dangerous if one has no control over it (Mitchell and Bray, 1990). In the case of members of the fire services there is a far greater feeling of control. They can decide, for example, when it is too dangerous to enter a burning building. The danger members of the ambulance services are exposed to is often not visible to the human eye (e.g., contagious disease). Therefore they have far less control over such danger. Members of the ambulance services in Cape Town seem to be particularly sensitive to the danger of their job. This may be because of recent shooting incidents during which members of the public fired at them because their response times were too slow.

Members of the ambulance services also complained about their poor facilities. They felt that members of the fire services have far better facilities than they have. During the feedback sessions management commented they had already addressed this matter. This complaint by members of the ambulance services is another example of competition between subsystems in a larger system. The impression is also created that the various subsystems in this system are not afforded the same status and deemed as equally important. It should however, be taken into account that the fire services are funded by city councils. A more complicated procedure applies to the ambulance services. They are funded by the provincial governments, but are managed by the local city councils. On the surface the fire, ambulance and traffic services appear to be subsystems of the same larger system of a city council. The ambulance services, however, are subsystems of the provincial governments and are only managed by the local city councils. The result is that different procedures (especially in terms of funding) apply to the fire and traffic services than to the ambulance services. The ambulance services find themselves in a rather confusing situation of being subsystems to two different larger systems.
A comment should also be made on members of the fire and ambulance services' referral to the *marital conflict* they experience due to their demanding job. This comment was not received from a large number of the members. It can be speculated, however, that the percentage of members of the emergency services who experience serious problems with interpersonal relationships may be extremely high. Members may just not be keen to admit this. It should also be pointed out that, in an attempt to cope with their stress, members often tend to develop drinking problems or become involved in extramarital affairs, which are merely *symptoms* of stress. Members often do not connect the fact that their jobs are exceptionally demanding and stressful with the marital problems they experience. This results in them not seeing beyond the symptoms to the underlying causes of stress.

The principle of circular causality states that each component or subsystem in a system co-determines the behaviour of every other component or subsystem and its behaviour because the system is a whole. This principle seems to apply in this case. It is important that the human being is recognised as a system. Each one of his/her subsystems or components (in this case, each one of the facets of his/her life) is co-determined by every other facet of his/her life. The problems a person experiences at work can never be separated from the problems experienced at home. This also supports the viewpoint of Wheatley (1992) which was mentioned earlier, about not segmenting people into roles at work and roles at home.

Only four aspects featured in response to the question to members of the traffic services on the distinctive characteristics of their job. Members indicated that they feel the public is *taking them for granted* and that they are not appreciated for what they do. This reflects a need by members of the system to receive recognition from the supra-system that they are fulfilling a useful purpose in the larger system and to the benefit of the larger system.
They also mentioned the *adrenaline and action* associated with their job, the fact that their job involves *serving and protecting people* (indicating that the serving and protecting of the public is also one of the important values of this system, and possibly also part of their vision), and that their work is *dangerous* (indicating that not enough protection is provided by the system to the subsystem to enable it to fulfil its function properly).

The overall picture painted of their job was largely positive for members of the SAPS, fire and ambulance services. The two outstanding features for members of the traffic services, however, are negative. They are not being appreciated, and their work is dangerous. The fact that they feel they are not being appreciated indicates a sense of not belonging, not being cared for and feeling isolated. When a subsystem (in this case the traffic services) is not regarded by the larger system (in this case the community) as fulfilling a meaningful purpose, the subsystem ultimately faces the threat of becoming superfluous. The complaint of not being appreciated for what they do may be a reflection of the fear of these members that the community at large regards this service as unnecessary. Because they are members of the emergency services, the aspects of adrenaline and action and of helping and serving people, come as no surprise.

The complaint about their work being dangerous should be seen in the context of the statement members made that minibus taxis team up against them (see 7.3.1.p.), and the fact that some members of the public tend to become enraged when reprimanded in public. Some of them commented that traffic officials should be armed. Although most of them do carry firearms, not all of them are armed, depending on the section to which they belong.

From the abovementioned it is clear that some of the aspects were mentioned by members of all the emergency services. These include the *adrenaline and*
action associated with their job, helping/serving/protecting people, the fact that their job is dangerous, and that the public tends to take them for granted and not to appreciate them.

10.1.2 The public image of the SAPS/traffic services

A number of observations can be made about the responses received from members of the SAPS and traffic services to the question about their public image.

Significantly more members of the ISU than those of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad perceived the public image of the SAPS to have improved since the 1994 elections. It has to be pointed out that, owing to the function of the ISU to control violence and unrest, certain members of the public have negative associations with them. As a result, of all the units of the SAPS, the ISU has probably received the most resistance and criticism from communities. Because of the strong resistance they faced, it is therefore understandable that members of the ISU will be particularly sensitive in noticing any improvement in the public image of the SAPS. Just prior to the interviews members of the ISU also had to change their distinctive uniform to the standard SAPS uniforms. Members of the public had complained that they appeared too aggressive in the camouflage uniforms. Because they could now not be readily identified as members of the ISU, this could also have influenced the public's behaviour towards them.

It was stated previously that, in terms of the systems approach, maintaining law and order, has become one of the values (the objectives that the system aims for), particularly of members of the ISU. It was also stated that when a subsystem (such as the ISU) is not regarded by the larger system (in this case the South African community) as fulfilling a meaningful purpose, the
subsystem ultimately faces the threat of becoming superfluous. The comment by members of the ISU that the public image of the SAPS has improved since the 1994 elections indicates that members seem to experience less fear since the 1994 elections about the community at large regarding them as unnecessary.

The fact that they now wear the same uniform as all the other units in the SAPS, possibly also creates an increased sense of belonging among members. The division between the ISU as a subsystem and the larger system is now far less.

Three aspects concerning the public image of the SAPS were highlighted, especially by members of the ISU.

1. The fact that enforcing the law and arresting criminals necessarily causes negativity. This viewpoint was shared by members of Visible Policing and some members of the Flying Squad. To this question members of the Flying Squad, however, far more than the ISU and Visible Policing, indicated that they perceive their role primarily as protecting and serving the public, and not necessarily arresting criminals. This could explain why fewer of them mentioned this aspect.

2. The negative public image of the SAPS is due to politicisation of the role of the SAPS. This viewpoint was shared to a lesser degree by members of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad. For many years, one very important function assigned to the SAPS as a subsystem of a larger system (the South African community), has been to maintain the status quo in the system by enforcing apartheid-laws. As a society divided into various subsystems that strongly opposed each other (frequently with violence), there was very little evidence of holistic functioning and
interdependence of the various subsystems. There was evidence only of fragmentation (which is an example of a disentangled, or a 'degenerate system). This made the SAPS critical for both the maintenance of the values and the survival of some of the subsystems in the larger system (the South African society). It also made the SAPS extremely unpopular and hated among other subsystems of the system.

With the 1994 elections this function was taken away from the SAPS (which was, no doubt, experienced by some of the members as giving up one of the values of the SAPS). Possibly members of the ISU, more than any other unit in the SAPS, have been subjected to the effects of politicising their role. Members of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad are more often perceived to serve and protect members of the community than are members of the ISU. Members of the ISU are predominantly called to violent scenes where there is intense conflict and often public disorder.

3. There are different perceptions of the SAPS between black and white communities (subsystems of the larger South African community). This viewpoint was shared by members of the Flying Squad, but to a far lesser degree by members of Visible Policing. A possible explanation is that both the ISU and the Flying Squad operate in diverse communities. They therefore have a more holistic picture, which enables them to compare the responses of the different communities towards them. Members of Visible Policing, who are based at a specific station, operate in one community only.

Some members of Visible Policing, the Flying squad and the traffic services seemed fairly ambivalent about the public's attitude toward them. They indicated that "some members of the public are positive, and some are
negative”. This results in uncertainty about how to behave towards members of the public.

As was stated earlier, South Africa was (and still is to some extent) a society divided into various subsystems. This made the SAPS and the traffic services critical for the maintenance of both the values and the survival of some of the subsystems in the system. It also made them extremely unpopular and hated among other subsystems of the system. For reasons explained earlier, members of the ISU seem to experience far less ambivalence regarding the public image of the SAPS. They perceive the public as being either distinctly negative or distinctly positive about what they do.

Although an impression is created that the public image of the traffic services is both positive and negative, members tend to feel rather isolated from the rest of society. The public tendency is not to regard traffic violations as criminal offences, with the result that members of the public feel offended when they are fined. The low status and unpopularity of traffic officials in South Africa are reflected in the many biting jokes about members of the traffic services. This is intensified by the fact that legislation often does not provide support to the traffic services, which make them even more of a joke in the public's eyes.

It has to be pointed out that the ambivalence experienced by members is typical of an organisation in the process of change. It is possibly also a true reflection of the public's response towards the SAPS and the traffic services. The ambivalence experienced by members of the SAPS can be largely attributed to the previous politicisation of their role. The ambivalence experienced by members of the traffic services, however, seems to be largely attributed to the particular nature of their job. By relieving the SAPS of the political nature of their role, the supra-system appeared far more prepared to
accept the values maintained by this system. The benefits of upholding those values (maintaining law and order and serving/protecting the public) are clearly visible to a large percentage of the supra-system. The benefits of the values maintained by the traffic services however (traffic regulation and traffic safety), do not seem to be as readily accepted as yet by the supra-system as beneficial.

The comment was received especially from members of the Flying Squad that the public has a negative image of the SAPS because their response times are too slow. Members of the Flying Squad, far more than the other units of the SAPS, tend to measure their effectiveness in terms of their response times. A quick response time is one of the important rules (almost a value) of the Flying Squad, as a subsystem of the SAPS. Any criticism from the public (supra-system) for being ineffective, therefore, will be seen in terms of unsatisfactory response times. The importance attached to quick response times should also be seen in terms of the expectations held by members of the supra-system in terms of the service they receive. In order to fulfil a necessary function in the supra-system, the expectations and needs of the supra-system have to be met. One of the expectations that members of the public hold of the Flying Squad is that of quick response times when they are required to provide protection to members of the public.

Some members of the Flying Squad and traffic services complained that their supervisors tend to side with the public rather than defending them. They felt this puts them in an extremely vulnerable position and exposes them to public ridicule. This complaint was not received from any members of the other SAPS units. This is a reflection of the need among members of these systems for increased group cohesion and for stronger boundaries to protect them against attacks from the supra-system. To explain why this was mentioned only by members of the Flying Squad and the traffic services, it will probably
be necessary to determine the personality type of the average member (and supervisor) of the Flying Squad and the traffic services, as opposed to those in Visible Policing and the ISU. Factors to consider include: a possible concentration of young, inexperienced supervisors; members with unrealistic expectations that their supervisors have to back them up, even when they are clearly in the wrong; and the pressure put on supervisors by top management.

A stressor mentioned by members of the traffic services, is the perception that mini-bus taxis are teaming up against them. The minibus taxi industry in South Africa represents an enormous, well-organised and influential group of road users with their own sets of social and traffic rules. In terms of the systems approach the minibus taxi industry can be described as a powerful system within the supra-system, with well-organised subsystems. Although its values are often contradictory to those formally held by the supra-system, this system is powerful enough to have a marked influence on the supra-system, and other systems within the supra-system. It is therefore essential that members of the emergency services, and specifically of the traffic services, be equipped to deal with this. An attempt is currently being made to address the tendency of taxis to team up against members of the traffic services. Specialised training is provided to certain members in terms of law enforcement relating to minibus taxis. This entails putting specially trained teams of traffic officials on the road to deal exclusively with minibus taxis. When two or more powerful systems in the supra-system are in direct conflict with one another it ultimately results in extremely destructive consequences, not only for the systems involved, but for the supra-system as a whole. It is for this reason that special efforts are now being made to address this problem in a constructive way.

On the surface minibus taxis are responsible for total chaos on South African roads. Yet, as was pointed out above, the minibus taxi industry represents an
enormous, well-organised and influential group of road users with their own sets of social and traffic rules. This illustrates the principle stated in chaos theory that, if a system is observed for long enough, it always demonstrates its inherent orderliness. The specially trained teams of traffic officials that have now been created to deal with these minibus taxis represent an emergency response to a situation that got totally out of control. This supports the statement of Freeman (1995) that disorder in a society can precede the emergence of new structure instead of leading inevitably to mere anarchy. Out of this chaos new structures were born, which represents growth in the traffic system. A principle of chaos theory is that growth is found in disequilibrium, not in balance.

Some members admitted to experiencing stress due to the negative image of the SAPS and traffic services. This comment was received from only a minor percentage of the respondents. It is speculated, however, that a far higher percentage of respondents actually may experience the negative public image of these organisations as stressful, but are reluctant to admit this. Admitting to experiencing any stress in such a distinctively macho environment is seen as a sign of weakness.

Once again it can be stated that the system is dependent to a large extent, on the supra-system for its survival (and the supra-system on the system). In the case of policing the supra-system depends on the system responsible for policing to maintain law and order and to provide a service to the supra-system. Although the maintenance of law and order is not always popular with all members of the supra-system, it is a crucial function that has to be fulfilled within any supra-system. When members of the supra-system view the system responsible for maintaining law and order in a negative light (irrespective of how valid or invalid these negative perceptions may be), it becomes increasingly difficult for this system to effectively fulfil the function
for which it is designed. In its struggle for survival this system also tends to protect itself in various ways, which often increases the negativity from the supra-system. This whole process of fighting for credibility in the supra-system and protecting itself puts considerable pressure on the system and its subsystems.

The overall picture derived from the responses to this question indicates that members of the SAPS, as well as the traffic services, perceive the expectations held of them to be unrealistically high, and often contradictory in nature. Although there is recognition by the supra-system that these services are needed and are necessary, the supra-system often opposes these systems in fulfilling the functions for which they were created. Some SAPS members indicated however, that the SAPS is in the process of gaining credibility, especially in black communities, by being more service-oriented and less politicised than before.

On its own, the poor public image of the organisation may not be regarded as a significant stressor for members. When combined with a lack of logistics, a poor salary and a lack of appreciation from management and the public, members may experience stress that is serious enough to hamper their effective functioning. The poor service that results strengthens the negative public image of the organisation. It also creates a perception among members that, irrespective of the amount of work they put in, somebody will dislike and criticise what they are doing.

SAPS members, however, not only have to deal with negative public attitudes and internal organisational problems. They also have to deal with negative publicity from the media and with what they regard as a lack of legislative back-up. This is something that the public often blames on the SAPS because members are the direct link between criminals and the general public.
Members of the public do not understand that different systems, such as the Department of Justice which is responsible for determining whether a person is granted bail or not, the Department of Correctional Services, which determines the length of incarceration, and the Department of Public Works, which is responsible for the physical conditions in prisons, are all involved in dealing with criminal offenders. From this it can be speculated that the public image of the SAPS, which was perceived as quite negative up to the 1994 elections, is only now slowly starting to improve.

10.1.3 Management style

From the findings of the question relating to the management style in the SAPS, two important general observations can be made. The first observation relates to the comment that there has been more participative management in the SAPS lately, and the second is about the comment that management is autocratic.

More Flying Squad and ISU members commented that there has been more participative management lately, than did members of Visible Policing. This could indicate that the effects of management’s efforts to introduce a greater measure of participation in the SAPS are stronger in larger units such as those found in the ISU and Flying Squad than in Visible Policing. Visible Policing is structured so that smaller stations report to district headquarters in each district in South Africa. At units such as those found in the ISU or the Flying Squad, management is able to maintain closer contact with members. This results in better opportunities for regular communication and for involving members in the operation of the unit than is the case for management in Visible Policing. The particular structure of Visible Policing therefore presents certain practical problems in implementing participative management.
Although Visible Policing, the ISU and the Flying Squad are all subsystems of the same system, it is clear that they are characterised by different structures and different levels of order. This does not suggest that participative management cannot be successfully implemented at station level. It is doubtful, however, whether management at station level would be motivated to implement participative management if they themselves do not feel involved by district headquarters in decisions directly affecting them. This is an example of the principle of circular causality, where each component or subsystem in a system co-determines the behaviour of every other component or subsystem and its behaviour.

It was stated earlier that employee participation is often feared by management because it is perceived as “losing control”, and as a way in which employees are given the opportunity to rebel against company policies, rules and regulations. Wheatley (1992), however, emphasises that ownership is important. People support what they create. She firmly believes that it is impossible to expect any plan or idea to be real to employees if they do not have the opportunity to personally interact with it. Although not all managers in the emergency services would agree with Wheatley, they are all pressurised by trade unions and employees, and they realise that they will have no choice but to increase employee participation in future.

More Visible Policing members stated that management is autocratic, than did members of the Flying Squad and the ISU. Members of Visible Policing therefore experience this to be more of a problem than the other two units. This could possibly be explained again in terms of the particular structure of Visible Policing. This particular structure has far more formal channels to adhere to than is the case at units with flatter structures such as the ISU or Flying Squad. The more formal channels there are in a structure, the more
rigid and inflexible the system tends to become in applying rules and regulations; hence the perception that management is autocratic.

As was pointed out earlier, members of Visible Policing are far more inclined to see their job in terms of helping and serving people than do members of the ISU and Flying Squad. This could also influence the extent to which they feel comfortable with a more autocratic management style. Members of the ISU, for instance, tend to see their role primarily as maintaining law and order. For this reason they would tend to feel more comfortable with an autocratic management style than would members of Visible Policing, who tend to see their role more in terms of helping people. The different values and functions of the subsystems in the system can therefore, also influence their perception in terms of management style.

As was stated earlier, Wheatley (1992) believes that some organisations defend themselves superbly even against their employees with regulations, guidelines, time clocks, and policies and procedures for every eventuality. The basis of autocratic management, therefore, is fear of losing control. Wheatley (1992) points out, however, that it is now understood that order and conformity and shape in organisations are created not by complex controls and structures, but by the presence of only a few guiding formulae or principles (such as creating a common vision).

However, in an organisation such as the SAPS, which has a formal ranking structure and has until very recently been referred to as a police force rather than a police service, the number of comments received to the effect that management is autocratic, seems surprisingly small.

The overall picture presented by members of the ISU regarding the management style in the SAPS indicates that members are reasonably happy
with the management style. Some complaints were listed, but these came from small percentages of the members.

The overall picture presented by the members of Visible Policing highlights one particular problem: members experience management to be autocratic. The other comments received, like the ISU, also came from small percentages of the members.

Responses received from members of the Flying Squad indicate that some believed that there has been more participative management in the SAPS lately. However, complaints were received about two aspects: (1) autocratic management style and (2) members' ideas not being implemented by management. A general comment which can be made is that the Flying Squad is regarded as a specialised unit in the SAPS. It is possibly for this reason that members seem to have higher expectations of, and place higher demands on, the system than members of the other subsystems in the SAPS.

The abovementioned results indicate that members of the SAPS seem reasonably happy with management of the SAPS, although some feel that management is still too autocratic. It is also clear that management, especially in Visible Policing, requires support as well as training to deal with the problems they are facing.

From the findings of the question relating to the management style in the fire and ambulance services, a number of important general observations can be made. The first, as in the case with members of the SAPS, relates to the complaint that management is autocratic.

More members of the ambulance services than of the fire services voiced concern about the fact that management is autocratic and does not consult
with them. This seems to indicate that members of the ambulance services feel less comfortable in a paramilitaristic, autocratic environment than do members of the fire services. Members of the ambulance services perceive their role to be primarily to help and save people (see 7.2.1.b.), which is regarded as being incompatible with operating in a rigid, autocratic system.

The overall complaint most frequently voiced by members of the fire services regarding management was the lack of effective communication. Lack of communication, specifically relating to the privatisation and integration processes in progress in the organisation, increases members' confusion and fears, as well as their feelings of insecurity and mistrust in management's motives (even though these may be valid and justifiable). Some members mentioned that many rumours prevail. This is also an indication of poor communication. Wheatley (1992) highlights the fact that rumours are normally a symptom of poor communication where members attempt to explain what is happening to them in the light of the deficient information. If members are informed about the economic realities and problems management has to face on a daily basis, the understanding and co-operation of members will be enhanced.

The importance of communication within a system is emphasised by Wiener (1968), who states: "Information is a name of the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it, and make our adjustment felt upon it." (p. 32) If the process of receiving and of using information is the process of adjusting to the contingencies of the outer environment, members can not be expected to adjust to any of the changes taking place in the supra-system or in their own system, if they do not receive adequate information.

Some members of the ambulance services perceived older management to be threatened by younger, better qualified members. This could be explained in
terms of the fact that the role of the ambulance services, the skills required and the expectations of the community of the service they require, have changed significantly over the past few years. In view of the higher standard of skills currently required of members, a significant number of them are, in fact, better qualified than management. This inevitably causes friction. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that some members claim that management is out of touch with what is happening on the road and the realities they have to face. This perception could be changed to some extent if non-operational management (who have decision-making power over operational staff) were to spend more time on the road with members to experience first hand what the practicalities are and what the work entails. In this way management would be exposed to the demands placed on members by the supra-system, and would then be able to guide members in how to meet these demands. By spending time on the road, management will receive constant input from the environment, and will be able to respond in appropriate ways.

There seems to be a feeling among members that they are a new generation with different needs. There is a need for management to adapt to meet the urgent demands of a more modern and sophisticated operation. Members on the ground seem to sense that, in order for their system to survive in future, some changes and adaptations are required. Currently the future of the provincial ambulance services is being extensively debated. A system constantly has to adapt to changes in the environment in order to survive, and the ambulance services is no exception. Not only has the environment in which members operate changed dramatically over the past few years, but methods of treatment and medical equipment available on the market have also changed. This creates a need for refresher courses on a regular basis. For this reason there is a specific need for management to also keep abreast
of the latest developments in this field, and to be fully conversant with the conditions under which members operate.

Members of the ambulance services also complained about limited promotional opportunities due to a rigid organisational structure. Three comments can be made in this regard: (1) Members seem to have a fairly limited understanding of the realities of organisational functioning and exactly how job structures work. This is a classic example of the necessity for transparency and communication by management, and the members' need to know (e.g., a need to know why certain people are promoted and others not). (2) This comment could be a reflection of the need for operational careers. (3) Once again this complaint should be interpreted in the context of members of the ambulance services being a subsystem to two different systems.

Like in most organisations, the emergency services place high emphasis on structure. It has to be pointed out, however, that Wheatley (1992) talks about the emergence of organisations with far less, if any structure. She states: “We have begun to speak in earnest of more fluid, organic structures, even of boundaryless organizations.” (p. 13) These organisations place far more emphasis on being flexible to meet the demands of the supra-system. Such organisations tend to concentrate on the skills of their employees rather than on the structures. It would, however, be somewhat impractical to expect organisations such as the emergency services to function without any form of structure. It would be impossible to respond efficiently to emergencies. They would benefit, however, by critically assessing the effectiveness and wisdom of their existing structures, and by revising dysfunctional structures to be more flexible (e.g., by creating operational careers).
Another complaint received from members of the ambulance services was about victimisation by management. This complaint was supported by the fact that a number of members of the ambulance services were extremely concerned during the interviews about being identified by management as having made certain statements.

The accusation of victimisation by management can be viewed from different angles. If it is true that members are victimised for raising grievances and complaints about the system, this behaviour by management may be defensive, in the sense that management is trying to protect itself, and is trying to maintain the equilibrium of the system. This leads to a very obvious question: against whom or what is management trying to protect itself? Could it be against top management, who is in turn pressurising management to maintain the equilibrium of the system? Or against economic realities, in that the survival of the system is threatened by lack of funding? Perhaps the economic realities confronting top management force it to pressurise management, who in turn pressurises members at ground level.

Another way of approaching the accusation of intimidation by management is to ask whether the term victimisation is clearly understood. What exactly do members perceive as victimisation? Could it be that they regard normal reprimanding and disciplinary procedures applied by management as victimisation? This emphasises the necessity of clearly defining such crucial terms. Just as Wheatley (1992) places emphasis on the necessity of a few clear, guiding principles that represent a vision for the organisation, emphasis needs to be placed on clear communication which creates a common understanding among all members of the organisation about the meaning of concepts such as “victimisation”...
Management in the emergency services, like management in most South African organisations, is facing the extremely difficult task of having to deal with the emotional upset, confusion, fears and unrealistic expectations typically found in changing organisations. Whenever there is change, there is disequilibrium. Currently management is not only facing disequilibrium within its own systems, but also the disequilibrium experienced in society as a whole. This already difficult task is complicated by the fact that key concepts such as affirmative action, discipline and participative management do not seem to be clearly defined and understood. Also, criteria to evaluate and monitor these processes do not exist, adding to the confusion and conflicting expectations around these processes. In order for members to understand what exactly is meant by terms such as affirmative action, discipline and participative management, it is crucial that these concepts be clearly defined and monitored. Although defining and monitoring these processes is difficult, these are essential steps in dealing with the suspicion and mistrust among members.

It is common for organisations in transition to experience an "us against them" situation. This is due to ambiguities in the terms used, structures and communication that are vague and confusing, as well as unrealistic fears and expectations. People find it difficult to adapt to changes and are seldom happy with quick, dramatic changes. Management has the role of being "bearer of the tidings" - whether good or bad. In order to facilitate the process of change effectively, management requires additional support and guidelines to work with top management. They also require training in skills such as active listening, communication, negotiation and conflict management, and assertiveness.

It has to be pointed out that, in terms of chaos theory, there is order in the chaos management is facing, but it is order that is "invisible". This chaos is
not merely the result of "noise", or interference from the outside environment, or even of insufficient knowledge or communication. What this chaos implies is a kind of inherent "uncertainty principle". It was pointed out earlier that Cartwright (1991) stated that, for systems that are "far-from-equilibrium" (i.e., chaotic), change does not have to be related to external causes (such as pressure from the public or the government). Such systems can self-organise at a higher level of organisation. Cartwright (1991) explains that chaos is really inherent in certain relationships and not the result of some extraneous factors. For this reason it is proposed that the emergency services focus more on the relationships in the organisation as well as with the public, rather than respond to pressure for change just for the sake of change. They should not wait for equilibrium to "happen". They should find stability and security within themselves as far as it is possible under the given circumstances, while still remaining flexible enough to respond to any changes required of them. How do they do this? By creating a vision for themselves. A vision which is shared by each and every member of the organisation. A vision which is supported, and "lived" by every member of the organisation.

10.1.4 Communication in the SAPS and traffic services

Comments received from members of the ISU regarding communication reveal the following: members seem to be satisfied with communication with top management (information flow between subsystems and the larger system); with communication at their units (information flow within subsystems); they believe that the formal communication channels (the formal structure for information flow within the system) work well; and they do have regular meetings at their units (formal structures for information exchange within subsystems) where they are provided with all the necessary information. The
overall picture presented is that members of the ISU are satisfied with communication in the SAPS, and that information flow in the system is adequate. It could be speculated that, due to the nature of its function, the ISU units tend to function mainly on instructions. There may be a relatively small need for information relating to broader organisational issues.

Responses received from members of Visible Policing indicate that they are also relatively happy with the communication in the SAPS. They seem to perceive their communication with the public to be adequate (information flow between the system and its supra-system), the formal communication channels within the SAPS to be working well (formal structure for information flow within the system), and the communication between units to be good (information flow between various subsystems). However, they complained that the top-down communication channels are crowded and that the communication they receive from top management is inadequate. This indicates a problem in information flow between subsystems and the larger system that results in uncertainty about the future. It also indicates a need by members of subsystems for direction and structure from the larger system. Members of Visible Policing seem to experience a bigger need for information flow (upward and downward communication) than do members of the ISU. Campbell et al. (1994) classify this problem as one of “loose feedback” (responses which are not immediate or directly responsive to an action, and are unnecessarily time-consuming). Once again the problems experienced by members of Visible Policing could be attributed mainly to their particular structure, which makes regular communication between management and members problematic.

Comments received from members of the Flying Squad indicate that members seem to be satisfied with the regularity of meetings at their units (formal structures for information exchange within subsystems), with communication
at their units (information exchange within subsystems), and with the formal communication channels within the organisation (formal structure for information flow within the system). They also seem to be satisfied with their communication with the public (information flow between the subsystem and its supra-system).

However, the problems raised by members of the Flying Squad were similar to those experienced by members of Visible Policing. These problems refer to inadequate information flow between subsystems and the larger system. In particular it reflects a need experienced by subsystems (such as members of the Flying Squad and Visible Policing) for direction and structure from the larger system. It also reflects a need experienced by subsystems to exchange information more freely within the larger system, about the problems they experience in fulfilling their functions. If ambivalent messages are received (which is typical in times of change), uncertainty prevails. As was pointed out in 10.3., one measure of the effectiveness of formal communication in an organisation is the number of rumours circulating in it. People tend to create their own information if the information they need is lacking. In this way they create structure for themselves, as well as explanations for things happening to them that they do not understand.

The overall picture indicates that members are reasonably satisfied with communication in the SAPS. Problems that need to be addressed, however, are crowded top-down as well as down-up channels between management and members (the information flow between the system and its subsystems). The communication between top management and the grassroots level clearly needs to be addressed if there is to be a reduction in the uncertainty and insecurity experienced by members about their future. This stems from the uncertainty around the position of the SAPS as a system in the supra-system and from changes in the roles and functions attributed to this system by the
supra-system (second-order, as well as third-order change). Internal changes within the system also result in uncertainty about the survival of some of the subsystems in the larger system, and of the values each of the subsystems are expected to strive for. During the feedback sessions it was observed that the extent to which members experience uncertainty about the future depends largely on how particular supervisors or managers communicate with their staff (e.g., whether the broader values of the system are communicated and interpreted to members on the ground; whether the direction the system seems to be moving in is shared with members, etc.). This once again highlights the wisdom of finding stability and security within the system itself by creating a vision which is shared by all members of the system.

Communication in the SAPS is also currently receiving serious attention as a whole, and various actions have been taken to improve communication in this huge organisation. This includes the recent introduction of a computerised communication system, as well as regular close-circuit television broadcasts. Some of the responses indicate, however, that there is still room for improvement, and that there is a particular need for communication training in the SAPS, as well as effective change management. Although individual supervisors or managers can improve the information flow within a particular subsystem, the information flow within the whole system will clearly have to be addressed.

A number of members of the traffic services said that they have regular departmental meetings (formal structures for information exchange within subsystems). The top-down channels, however, are crowded (information flow between the system and subsystems). This indicates that members receive more information than they feel they can absorb. Some of them indicated that the information they do need, however, such as information about changes taking place in the organisation, is not communicated to them.
Once again there is a need expressed by subsystems for direction and structure from the system, and for a common vision. Others complained about a communication gap between them and management, which points to misunderstandings about each other's needs and problems, as well as a need for more employee participation in those issues that directly affect them.

Fewer members of the traffic services than members of the other emergency services mentioned the importance of communication with their buddies (informal information flow within subsystems). Although the buddy system seems to be important in the traffic services, one gets the impression that it is not as strong and influential as in the SAPS or the fire and ambulance services.

It has to be acknowledged that some of the complaints received from respondents about communication are symptoms of the pains and difficulties experienced by a fast-changing organisation, adapting to a fast-changing country such as South Africa. The change that is expected from the emergency services as systems are not merely first-order changes, or even second-order changes. In many respects the supra-system demands a total change of attitude and approach to the services that are rendered, which represents third-order change. It was pointed out that this type of change is difficult and rare. Understandably this type of change will cause high levels of stress among members, and management is blamed for many unpopular changes that inevitably have to take place.

Once again the communication problems mentioned by respondents also indicate a lack of definition and criteria about crucial issues such as "participative management" and "affirmative action". Members seem to need structure and clear indicators of what is expected of them and how well they are doing their job.
10.1.5 Working conditions and remuneration packages

The most prominent feature of the responses to the question on working conditions and remuneration packages in the SAPS is the fact that most respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with their salaries (dissatisfaction about the rewards offered by the system for inputs). Poor salaries seem to be problematic throughout the SAPS.

Apart from complaining about poor salaries, members of the ISU and Visible Policing complained about not being compensated for working overtime. Only a few of the Flying Squad members raised this issue. This indicates that they are either not required to work overtime, or that they are compensated in some way for working overtime (such as getting time off). It can be speculated that the former reason applies, because members do not seem to experience shortages of manpower that necessitate working overtime. The practical arrangements for working overtime depend largely on the individual supervisor or manager. Members of the ISU and Visible Policing are also more likely to be expected to work on their days off during crisis periods than members of the Flying Squad. Examples of such overtime would be when a special operation is planned (such as a roadblock) and members on duty at the stations cannot be involved because normal operations have to continue, or when the scope of the operation is too great to involve only the ISU members on duty. In such cases members who are supposed to be off-duty are utilised. The needs or requirements of the larger system take precedence over the needs of individual members. In this case however, individual members are not complaining about the fact that the needs or requirements of the system take precedence over their own needs. They are complaining that the system does not reward them sufficiently for the sacrifices they make in helping the system to meet its needs.
Members of Visible Policing and the Flying Squad complained bitterly about a shortage of equipment, while members of the ISU did not seem to experience a problem in this regard. In order for subsystems to fulfil their functions effectively it is essential that they be sufficiently equipped by the system to do so. However, some members of the Flying Squad and the ISU indicated that they have sufficient equipment. The problem of a shortage of equipment seems to be most severe in Visible Policing. While members at some of the stations were reasonably satisfied with the equipment they have, most complained about a shortage.

A large percentage of members of the Flying Squad raised the shortage of equipment as an issue. This could be explained in terms of the fact that members were complaining bitterly primarily about the conditions in the control rooms (especially about them being overcrowded and not sufficiently air-conditioned). During the feedback sessions, however, the comment was made that these problems had since been addressed.

During the feedback sessions it was also pointed out that the assertiveness of station commanders in justifying the need for more and better equipment is of critical importance in addressing this problem. The structure of Visible Policing is, once again, a possible source of this problem. Members of Visible Policing have to follow long channels in order to acquire new equipment. This is less of a problem in units such the ISU and the Flying Squad where there are flatter management structures. Units such the ISU and the Flying Squad are also seen as specialised units, and it is automatically assumed to be essential for them to have good and sufficient equipment. The problem is therefore a matter of unequal distribution of equipment in the system rather than the unavailability of equipment.
In addition to a shortage of equipment, another aspect was mentioned by members of the SAPS: a shortage of manpower. Once again this problem seems to be most prevalent in Visible Policing. It can be speculated that the same reasons apply to the manpower shortage in Visible Policing as those applicable to the shortage of equipment experienced: unequal distribution and the fact that they are not a specialised unit. It also needs to be pointed out that the ISU and Flying Squad operate as full units. Members of Visible Policing, on the other hand, are based at different stations, some of them very small, having to serve large communities. Their numbers are therefore spread over large areas instead of concentrated at large units. However, the manpower shortage in the SAPS and the unusually high number of SAPS members leaving the service have been well publicised by the media over a period of time. The problem therefore appears to be more than just an unequal distribution of resources. This, of course, has serious consequences for the system effectively fulfilling its function in the supra-system, not only in terms of the resources available, but also in terms of the skills available.

The responses to the question of working conditions and remuneration packages in the SAPS clearly show that members' poor salaries create a considerable amount of stress. For members of Visible Policing additional stressors, namely a shortage of equipment such as radios, bullet-proof vests, etc. and a shortage in manpower need to be added.

It was pointed out that many of the problems experienced by members of Visible Policing can be attributed to their particular structure. In 10.3. the problems experienced in terms of the lack of participative management and the autocratic management style in Visible Policing was attributed in part to their particular structure. In 10.4. the communication problems they experience were also attributed to their particular structure. In 10.5. it was pointed out the shortages experienced in equipment as well as manpower are
possibly also due to their particular structure... In Chapter Four Wheatley's (1992) viewpoint about rigid organisational structures was discussed. She believed that some organisations tend to defend themselves superbly even against their own employees with rigid structures, regulations, policies and procedures. Instead she proposed more fluid, organic structures, even boundaryless organisations. Although it is doubtful whether any one of the emergency services will be able to operate effectively with such a fluid organisational structure, it is clear that the structure of particularly Visible Policing needs to be addressed. Perhaps the solution to this problem comes from the organisational theorists. Morgan (1996) pointed out that organisational theorists believe that organisational hierarchies should perform the function of providing channels of problem solving to help make life more manageable in the organisation. The present structure of Visible Policing should therefore be reviewed in terms of its functionality. The structure should serve to make life more manageable, not more problematic.

The responses to the question on remuneration packages produced striking differences between members of the fire and ambulance services. While most of the fire services members mentioned that they receive adequate salaries, only a small number of the ambulance services members indicated that their salaries are adequate. On the other hand, a large percentage of members of the ambulance services, and only a small percentage of the fire services members complained that their salaries are poor.

It might appear that members of the ambulance services are far more dissatisfied with their salaries than members of the fire services, and that they feel that they are not sufficiently rewarded by the system for their inputs. It has to be pointed out, however, that complaints about inadequate remuneration are often a symptom of dissatisfaction with something else, such as poor working conditions and/or little work satisfaction. When high
levels of stress are experienced there is often a greater need for the availability of money to spend (for medical expenditures, holidays, entertainment, etc.). Although members of the ambulance services complain about poor salaries, this may be an indication of the levels of stress they experience. It is far easier for members to transfer all their negative feelings of frustration, depression, anger, etc. onto something concrete (such as poor remuneration) than to submit to the painful process of analysing the underlying causes of these emotions. They may even discover that they are suffering from burnout. The causes of problems are often projected onto the larger system rather than dealing with it at subsystem, or even sub-subsystem level.

A number of the ambulance services members complained about poor housing allowances and subsidies while this complaint was not received from any of the members of the fire services. During the feedback interviews a member of the ambulance services suggested that this correlates with the fact that very few members of the ambulance services stay on the premises (where free accommodation is available), whereas a considerable number of the fire services members do stay on the premises.

Responses of members of the traffic services to the question about their working conditions and remuneration packages focused mainly on two aspects: (1) their salaries and (2) their equipment.

Members seemed ambivalent about whether their salaries are adequate or poor. While the majority felt their salaries are fair and adequate, some complained that their salaries are poor, and others commented that their salaries are not commensurate with the work they do. This seems to indicate that, although there are complaints about their salaries, this problem is not as severe as is the case with members of the SAPS. It also indicates that, unlike members of the SAPS, members of the traffic services do not seem to feel
that the system does not reward them sufficiently for the inputs they are expected to make. Although it can be speculated that they would appreciate better salaries, they do seem to feel that they are sufficiently rewarded by the system for their inputs into the system.

While a considerable number of these members indicated that they have sufficient equipment to do their work, some complained that this was not the case. Members complained specifically about a shortage of vehicles. Once again it can be stated that, although certain shortages are experienced, this does not seem to be a critical issue. Members of the traffic services also do not seem to feel that the system expects them to fulfil a certain function without sufficiently equipping them to do so.

From the responses received from members of the traffic services, the impression is created that members seem to experience a fair amount of reward by the system they belong to. From the responses received about the distinctive characteristics of their job, however, the impression is created that they tend to feel unrewarded, unprotected and unsafe when operating within the supra-system (see 7.2.1.a. and 7.2.1.b.).

10.1.6 Working environment in the SAPS

The one outstanding feature of responses to the question on the working environment in the SAPS is comments received regarding racial integration. This seems to suggest that racial integration, whether experienced as problematic or not, is currently a prominent aspect of the working environment in the SAPS.

The different race groups represented in the SAPS also represent different subsystems in the system. The changes that are taking place in the SAPS
regarding racial integration represent disequilibrium in the system. The tendency for any system is to work towards equilibrium or homeostasis. The responses received from members indicate that the SAPS, in systemic terms, is still in the process of working towards equilibrium. Perhaps the lessons learnt from chaos theory can nowhere else be more aptly applied than to the issue of racial integration. To many members in the SAPS (as well as in the other emergency services) racial integration was associated with chaos. They all realised that this issue could not be avoided, but felt at a loss to deal with the many complications it caused (such as negative attitudes and stereotypes). Yet, many of the respondents discovered that, the original chaos caused by racial integration is now starting to be replaced with a new order. Things are not the way they used to be, but amidst all the changes a new structure, and new ways of doing things developed, and members are starting to adapt.

Indications are that racial integration is an especially important aspect of the working environment of members of the Flying Squad. One possible explanation for this is that members of the Flying Squad tend to regard themselves as a specialised unit. They are particularly conscious of the standards they set for themselves. Racial tensions could be experienced because the blacks feel they are not easily accepted into this unit, and are not sufficiently assisted by their white colleagues in meeting the required standards. White members, on the other hand, could feel that accepting black members into their unit could result in a drop in standards. Because members of the Flying Squad work in teams of two, the fear of management breaking up the buddy system should also not be underestimated. Their reaction therefore, indicates an attempt to maintain the equilibrium or homeostasis within this subsystem, irrespective of the external effects it may have in terms of punitive measures introduced by the system, or criticism from the supra-system.
Apart from the aspect of racial integration, aspects of the working environment in the SAPS mentioned by members of the ISU were varied, with no prominence being given to any one aspect.

Three additional aspects were mentioned by some of the Flying Squad members: (1) civilians are required for administrative duties in order to release members to serve and protect the community; (2) members are not rotated between the control room and the road regularly enough; and (3) they work in a particularly unpleasant working environment. It is known that members of the Flying Squad do not enjoy routine administrative work or being tied to an office environment. The abovementioned comments possibly reflect the fact that they dislike aspects of their job that do not involve action and excitement.

The overall comment that can be made about responses to the question on the working environment is that the process of racial integration is far from complete. Although structures and the racial composition of different units in the SAPS may have changed, it is essential that the attitudes and fears of members of all races be addressed. The fact that members of the Flying Squad find certain aspects of their job such as routine administrative work and control room duty particularly stressful also needs to be addressed. Creative solutions to diminishing the effect of these stressors should be sought.

The suggestion that more civilians be employed to do administrative duties to release police officials to do policing, is a move towards becoming a more open system. It is a move away from being a closed system with very limited interaction with the environment. Although a number of suggestions had been made to this effect, it was pointed out during the feedback sessions that civilians employed by the SAPS are perceived by members as outsiders to the system. They are never really accepted into the system. Members realise that the system needs the input of members of the supra-system, but are not
yet quite prepared to accommodate outsiders into the system. Although the
system realises that it will have to open up in order to survive in future, there
is still an attempt to maintain the equilibrium of the system. The fact that
members of the system (SAPS) are reluctant to accept civilians within the
system demonstrates this attempt.

10.1.7 Usage of manpower in the fire and ambulance services

The majority of members of the ambulance services and a considerable
number of members of the fire services stated that they experience a shortage
of manpower. These shortages seem to be the most severe in Pretoria for the
ambulance services, and in Durban for the fire services.

While members of the fire services admitted that they do not continually
experience a staff shortage, members of the ambulance services experienced
this to be a continuous problem. Because members of the ambulance services
are so understaffed and have large areas to cover, their response times tend
to be slow, resulting in friction with members of the other emergency
services, and with members of the public. Clearly the system is not
adequately equipped to deal with the demands placed on it by the supra-
system. This not only puts pressure on the system, but also puts pressure on
the supra-system, which is not having its needs met.

A continuous shortage of manpower has a negative influence on the provision
of an effective service. It should be pointed out that, irrespective of how
motivated or efficient members might be, it is inevitable that they ultimately
become the victims of burnout if there is a constant shortage of manpower.

It is also appropriate to refer to a newspaper article on the front page of the
Metro on Friday, 12 April 1996, entitled "Wrakke moet lewens red!" (Wrecks
have to save lives!). This article focuses on the poor equipment that the ambulance services have at their disposal. It claims that, owing to lack of funding of the TPA ambulance services, ambulances in Pretoria are in a very poor condition. Over the Easter weekend ten ambulances broke down. They are also very old (in the past four years no new ambulances were purchased). The acting fire chief of Pretoria is quoted as saying that in the fleet of 32 ambulances in Pretoria there is not one that has done less than 200 000 km. It is speculated that this problem is not unique to Pretoria. With this in mind it comes as no surprise that the response times of ambulances tend to be slow. It is also not surprising that members find this situation frustrating. They set high professional standards for themselves in terms of their efficiency in saving lives. They are bound to find it highly stressful to deal with insufficient and faulty equipment.

The abovementioned clearly illustrates the principle of circular causality, where each component of a system influences the other. In this case the shortage of manpower and equipment affects members' response times, which affects the efficiency of their service, as well as their credibility in the supra-system.

Members of the ambulance services also complained that members with expertise are taken off the roads and put in offices. In this type of work, practical skills and academic knowledge are equally important. Irrespective of a person's academic knowledge, if there is no opportunity to put this knowledge into practice regularly, these skills are lost. Once again, as was pointed out in 10.3., the underlying need expressed here is for operational careers where members have a choice between entering the management ranks or developing and progressing in the field they originally chose as a career. One advantage of creating opportunities for operational careers is that those who choose to become managers are motivated to do so. Those who
choose an operational career also remain motivated and committed to what
they do.

Many organisations are faced with the challenge of adapting the system to
allow for operational careers. The problem they are faced with is that, on the
surface the needs of the system and the needs of individual members of the
system appear to be in opposition. Whereas the system experiences a need
for efficient management skills, individual members experience the entrance
into management ranks and the need for development of new skills as
frustrating, and often traumatic. However, these needs are not necessarily in
opposition to each other. Not only individual members, but also the larger
supra-system will benefit from the introduction of operational careers. A
higher level of expertise will be available on the road to provide a service to
the community, and members will be more motivated. Top management of
the emergency services will have to realise that only those members who
make a voluntary choice to sacrifice their operational careers for a
management position will ultimately be effective managers. However, while
this argument makes sense theoretically, the financial implications of a
structure which allows for both operational and managerial careers would also
have to be acknowledged.

Some of the ambulance services members complained bitterly about the
administrative burden they have to carry. During the feedback sessions in
Pretoria it was stated that this complaint had since been addressed. It was
interesting to note the intensity of emotions that these members displayed
regarding this problem. They already felt overworked in terms of their long
working hours and the number of calls they respond to during one shift. They
viewed this not only as an additional workload but also as something they did
not feel competent in doing. Because they did not have the necessary
computer training or typing skills, they felt incompetent and highly frustrated
doing this work. Whereas members tend to regard administrative duties as unnecessary and a waste of time, effective administration is essential for the smooth running and survival of any system.

It has to be pointed out that, in general, members of the emergency services do not enjoy mundane routine work such as administrative tasks. Support by administrative staff would increase the productivity and morale of members. It would also significantly decrease the frustration and stress caused by tasks they do not feel competent in doing. In order to implement this, however, the system will have to open itself up to outsiders, which will no doubt create additional problems in the short term.

Once again a clash is experienced between the needs of individual members and the system. It should be pointed out however, that the clash is experienced between the system and a particular subsystem of the system - the operational staff. The intensity of the emotions expressed during the interviews regarding this issue made it clear that this matter had to be attended to urgently. The wisdom in trying to reconcile administrative duties and operational work should also be questioned.

Members of the fire services complained of unnecessary work during quiet times. This confirms that, unlike members of the ambulance services, members of the fire services do have many quiet times and are not overworked and overloaded. However, they do have a need to be utilised constructively. To keep them motivated, management has the challenge of keeping these highly active, energetic members busy with something worthwhile and constructive. This leads to an obvious question: could this problem be alleviated by closer co-operation between the different subsystems, the Pretoria fire services and the ambulance services, and assistance with the heavy workload of the ambulance services? Is it not time
that, what Wheatley (1992) refers to as a more "fluid and flexible structure" be implemented? It has to be pointed out that this would make particular sense in view of the fact that almost all members of the fire services are in possession of at least a basic first aid training certificate.

A final comment that can be made relates to the claims of high absenteeism rates. Complaints were received from both the fire and ambulance services members. Apart from being stressful to colleagues, a high absenteeism rate in itself is normally a symptom of stress. The importance of taking a holistic view of this problem should be emphasised.

From the abovementioned results it appears that the way in which manpower is perceived to be utilised in the fire services and especially in the ambulance services is causing considerable stress among members.

10.1.8 Training received in the fire and ambulance services

The results indicate that members of the fire and ambulance services are satisfied with the training they received. During the interviews it was noted that members of the fire services seem to have a need for additional, more intensive training. Members of the ambulance services, however, seem to have a need for more practical training to equip them for the practical situations they have to deal with on the road. The needs in terms of training therefore, differ in the different subsystems.

It has to be pointed out that training on a regular basis has been proved to be more effective than an intensive one-off training course when the individual initially joins the organisation. Practical problems experienced from day to day can be more effectively addressed during refresher courses run on a regular basis, and development taking place on an ongoing and progressive basis.
Members require regular updates on the use of new equipment, technology and treatment methods, and are often also faced with situations not previously experienced (e.g., the side effects of a new drug on the market).

10.1.9 Priorities of needs

a. Priorities of needs in the SAPS

The results indicate clearly that the first priority of needs to be addressed in order to diminish the stress of SAPS members is the improvement of salaries (rewards provided by the system for inputs provided). This however, is a difficult issue to address, because it is not within the power of management of the SAPS to do so. Following the recent increments in salaries of members of the SAPS, this problem may have been slightly alleviated. It is, however, generally recognised that even more needs to be done in this regard.

A second important issue raised by the respondents is the need to improve communication in the SAPS. It is especially the information flow between top management (as a subsystem) and the different subsystems within the system which needs to be addressed. In particular this information flow needs to include direction and structure in terms of the future of the system. There is a need for a common vision which is shared by all members of the SAPS. Unlike the salary issue, management has the power to address this problem, and although management claims that it is doing its utmost to address this problem, it is by far not addressed sufficiently. It has to be recognised that management is facing an extremely difficult task in this regard. This is because of the complicated structure of the SAPS, the size of this organisation, the vast amounts of information that have to be conveyed...
to members nationally, the sensitivity of some of this information, and so on. It is essential therefore, that creative solutions be sought to address this problem. It also has to be recognised that the need for effective communication has traditionally not received priority in the SAPS. Apart from the fact that a large percentage of managers are not sufficiently trained in the skills of communication, there are also those who regard putting effort into communicating effectively as unnecessary and a waste of time. Clearly there is a need for skills training coupled with a change in attitude.

A considerable number of respondents mentioned increasing the manpower in the SAPS (resources required in order to fulfil the function of the system) as a priority in order to reduce their stress. The percentage of members of the Flying Squad who raised this as a priority is higher than that of Visible Policing. Previously it was mentioned that the shortage of manpower is apparently the highest in Visible Policing, possibly owing to its structure. Members of the Flying Squad place a relatively high priority on increasing the manpower. This can be interpreted, not as indicative of a critical shortage of manpower experienced in that unit, but rather as the expression of a need for quicker response times and better service (and hence the need for more people). Once again the relatedness of manpower to response times and an effective service illustrates the principle of circular causality.

The importance of improving logistics (resources required to fulfil the function of the system) was also mentioned as a priority. A lower percentage of Visible Policing members than members from the Flying Squad put this as a priority, although they indicated earlier that this is an important concern of theirs. This can be seen as an indication that, although shortage of equipment is a problem to them, they regard the
need for increased salaries and improved communication as higher priorities. During the feedback sessions the comment was made that logistics are available; supervisors should therefore complete the paperwork timeously and motivate requests with factual justification.

In terms of the systems approach the abovementioned results indicate that the priorities which need to be addressed in the SAPS as a system, are (1) the rewards offered by the system for inputs, (2) information flow in the system, especially between top management and the different subsystems, and (3) the availability of resources to enable the system to fulfil its function.

b. Priorities of needs in the fire and ambulance services

Two priorities in particular were mentioned by the ambulance services members: (1) the need to increase the manpower and (2) the need for better salaries. Members of the fire services, on the other hand, identified as priorities (1) the need to increase the manpower and (2) the need for more consultative and participative management.

From the abovementioned results it appears that members of both the fire and ambulance services view an increment in manpower as a priority.

According to the responses of members of the ambulance services an increment in manpower and an improvement in salaries were identified as the most important priorities. This was closely followed by shorter working hours, better logistics and better communication. There were only minor differences in the percentages of respondents who mentioned the respective aspects. This seems to indicate that the
The abovementioned aspects all play an equally important role in the stress which members experience. The stress they experience seems to be the result of a combination of aspects closely related to each other.

The results received from members of the fire services present a somewhat different picture. The two aspects most frequently mentioned by members were the needs to increase manpower and for more participative management. Members' complaint about the lack of participative management is in line with their responses to the question on management style (see 7.4.1.b.). Although they work exactly the same hours, the need for shorter working hours was very prominent in the responses from members of the ambulance services, whereas no members of the fire services mentioned this aspect (see 7.2.1.d.).

Needs for improved communication and the elimination of racism were also expressed by members of the fire services. However, the overall impression created is that, apart from isolated stressors they have identified, members of the fire services seem to be fairly happy with their circumstances. They do not experience the systems they function in as overly stressful. Members of the ambulance services, on the other hand, identified a number of stressors. Evidently their working conditions and the system in which they operate are responsible for a considerable amount of stress among them.

In terms of the systems approach therefore, the priorities identified by members of the ambulance services include (1) the resources available to the system to fulfil its function, (2) the rewards offered by the system, (3) quantity of inputs provided into the system, and (4) the information flow within the system. Priorities identified by members of the fire services include (1) the resources available for the system to
fulfil its function, (2) the need for subsystems to increase its ability to influence the larger system in terms of its functioning, (3) information flow within the system and (4) elimination of favouring one subsystem of the system as opposed to another. Although the priorities which need to be addressed differ in these subsystems, there are still striking similarities. Three priorities they identified overlap with those identified by members of the SAPS. These are: (1) the availability of resources to enable the system to fulfil its function; (2) rewards offered by the system; and (3) information flow within the system.

c. Priorities of needs in the traffic services

Members of the traffic services saw the improvement of communication, being consulted by management and better treatment by management as priorities. This indicates that there is a tremendous need for recognition (by management, the larger system, as well as the public, the supra-system) in the traffic services. Not only is the importance of traffic safety not recognised by the average South African citizen, but traffic violations are not seen as serious, and definitely not as a crime. More aggressive marketing campaigns about the importance of traffic safety could improve traffic safety in South Africa. It could also significantly reduce the feelings of isolation and of not being appreciated expressed by members of the traffic services.

In a sense the complaint about remuneration packages that was expressed by members could also be seen as a search for recognition. As was pointed out earlier, members of the traffic services seemed ambivalent about whether their remuneration packages are fair or poor. The priority accorded this matter is not so much an expression of economic difficulties as a call for recognition.
Only a few members mentioned the increase of manpower as a priority. However, reference needs to be made to an article published on the front page of the *Pretoria News* (Wednesday, 29 May 1996): "City's growing traffic nightmare - losing control of Pretoria's roads: While the population has rocketed, the increase in officers has been minimal." This article states that there is currently one traffic official for every 10 000 residents in Pretoria, two per 10 000 locally registered vehicles, three per 100 km of road, and four for every 10 000 vehicles on the road. There were 26 654 collisions in 1994 alone (costing the city R 500 million), and the Chief Traffic Officer of Pretoria, Tienie van Rensburg, is quoted as saying: "We're losing it. The department is unable to cope with all the demands placed on it." The responsibility of running an efficient traffic service is evidently extremely problematic, given the manpower and funding available to management - a problem that might not be very apparent to officials on the ground.

In terms of the systems approach priorities identified by members of the traffic services include (1) information flow within the system, (2) the need for subsystems to increase its ability to influence the larger system in terms of its functioning, (3) rewards offered by the system, and (4) availability of resources to enable the system to fulfil its function. Once again the similarities with the priorities identified by members of the SAPS, fire and ambulance services are noticeable.
10.1.10 Support received in the emergency services for managing stress

From the responses of respondents to the question of the support they receive within their organisations for managing stress, a number of interesting observations can be made.

The greatest source of support for managing stress in the SAPS seems to be social workers. This could also be an indication that the assistance members require in dealing with their stress is of a more practical than emotional nature.

It should also be noted however, that some members indicated that social workers are not to be trusted. They stated various reasons for this, but mainly complained about information not being treated as confidential. The same complaints are also lodged against the psychologists in the SAPS. It is possible that problems regarding confidentiality are sometimes experienced owing to the fact that the abovementioned professionals are part of a ranking structure which makes it difficult to refuse information to officers with higher ranks (i.e., their status in the system presents a problem, both in terms of refusing information to officers with higher ranks, and being approachable to members with lower ranks). However, it has to be pointed out that many of the accusations against the social and psychological services provided in the SAPS are based on hearsay and not on first-hand experience with these professionals. One psychologist explained that, in many cases, members inform their buddies that they have seen one of the professionals, and the buddies actually spread the rumour - not the psychologist or social worker. Evidently the credibility of these professionals in the SAPS should be addressed without delay if they are to be of assistance to members. For this they need the assistance of management. Management should honour the need for problems to be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality, and that these professionals are not to divulge such information. In reality, however,
these professionals as a subsystem are sometimes used by management to get rid of certain members, or to get members transferred outside their units, in order to avoid using the proper disciplinary procedures. Such incidences seriously harm the credibility of these professionals as a subsystem of the system, and could ultimately cause them to become superfluous in the system, because members could completely refuse to utilise their services.

In addition to mentioning the services of social workers and psychologists, members of the SAPS also mentioned the services of chaplains. The same comments made with regard to the social workers and psychologists also apply to these professionals. From the responses it became evident that members in the SAPS are aware of the services of the psychologists, social workers and chaplains. Although these are the formal structures provided by the system for giving support to members, they often are not utilised because they seem to lack credibility. It also has to be pointed out that mistrust of the system itself will also result in mistrust of the formal supporting structures provided by the system to assist members. The SAPS is a system historically characterised by an autocratic structure and is currently going through a period of change and insecurity about the future. It is inevitable that a certain measure of mistrust about the goodwill of the system will prevail among its members. For this reason the formal supporting structures provided by the system will also tend to be mistrusted.

A second very important source of support for managing stress in the SAPS seems to be buddies. In the case of the fire and ambulance services, responses clearly indicate that members' most important form of support for managing stress is the buddy system. Members of the traffic services seem to rely somewhat less on their buddies for support.
The buddy system is an informal form of support that develops between members spending a considerable amount of time together on a shift, and consequently sharing similar experiences. It has to be pointed out that the emergency services, as systems, have traditionally been fairly closed to inputs from outside. As a result of this they tend each to develop a culture of their own, and the group cohesion between members of a certain unit tends to become particularly strong. Because members have limited exchange of input with the larger environment (supra-system), they rely on each other for support, far more than members of organisations in the private sector. The system does not always approve of this informal subsystem which develops in a spontaneous manner. However, when managed correctly it can prove to be one of the strongest assets of the system. This informal subsystem also tends to have different norms, values and channels of communication to that of the formal system.

The fact that members tend to rely heavily on their buddies for support explains why they tend to become extremely upset when shifts are altered and buddies are separated. When working with members of the emergency services, one notices differences in the coping styles of members of different services. For example, during the interviews members of the ambulance services generally found it easier to talk about their problems than did members of the fire services, the SAPS or the traffic services. It could be for this reason that members of the ambulance services depend so heavily on their buddies to share their problems.

The reasons for this strong source of support in the emergency services are obvious: buddies spend a considerable amount of time together, they share common experiences, and become like members of one family. While the tremendous amount of support offered in this way should not be underestimated, it should be pointed out that such a strong buddy system can
become destructive as well. When participants in such a system are all traumatised and experience high levels of stress and burnout, they can offer no constructive support to each other. The result is that their symptoms become contagious and ultimately a whole shift can be affected. It should also be remembered that buddies seldom have the necessary skills to assist a member with serious problems. The buddy system can also cause considerable damage if buddies spread information which members who experience problems have told them in confidence, or start joking about members seeking professional help.

However, the buddy system is still the strongest form of support available in the emergency services to deal with stress. It should also be pointed out that, even though buddies cannot always offer advice, this is not always expected from them; a buddy is expected mainly to listen and to provide empathy.

It was encouraging to note that some members indicated that they consider their superiors (especially their immediate superiors) to be a form of support in dealing with stress. Some of them also indicated that, if their superiors cannot deal with their problems, they do refer the members for professional help. This should of course always be done with the greatest sensitivity, because some members tend to perceive this as victimisation or *labelling*. Support from superiors, also being a formal support structure provided by the system, should be encouraged because they are in close contact with members on a regular basis. These superiors may benefit from acquiring basic skills in recognising and dealing with members' stress. It should be kept in mind, however, that these supervisors are also in need of support. Their comments on the amount of support they receive from their own superiors as well as from members of their staff should be interesting.
Systems, such as the emergency services, tend to have definite hierarchical structures. Apart from the fact that this structure provides formal channels for communication within the system, it also provides a structure for support and a sense of security and stability to members. In the case of the SAPS however, this hierarchical structure is in the process of change, creating a sense of insecurity with members. Not only has the top management team changed recently, but a large number of individual supervisors and managers in the SAPS have been transferred to other units and sections. This, of course, also contributes to the sense of insecurity expressed by members.

It was somewhat discouraging to learn that such a small percentage of members of the SAPS and no members of the fire, ambulance or traffic services mentioned that they receive trauma debriefing after exposure to traumatic incidences. However, during the feedback sessions it was pointed out that debriefers are currently being trained in the SAPS in order to have them available eventually at each unit or station. No indication was received that this is the case in the fire, ambulance and traffic services. In April 1997 the researcher was appointed by the Pretoria fire and ambulance services as a specialist reservist with the responsibility to provide support to members in terms of stress management and trauma debriefing. Although the researcher has since experienced an openness and willingness among members to co-operate and discuss their problems with her, her relationship with management still tends to be fragile, with a tendency for management to be defensive. Although there is a dire need for a stress management programme in this organisation, management tends to be cautious of such a programme. Management seems to believe that too great an awareness of the stressful nature of their job (which would necessarily result from a stress management programme) could decrease employees' ability to cope successfully with their jobs. The researcher is facing the challenge to win the support, and obtain
the co-operation of management in implementing a practical and workable stress management programme for the fire and ambulance services.

It cannot be denied that trauma debriefing was done in some cases for individual members of the emergency services in the past. This debriefing, however, was mainly ad hoc, in that no formal structure existed within these systems for debriefing. If debriefing is done immediately after exposure to a traumatic incident it will save individual members (and their families) much pain and hurt. It will also save their organisations large sums of money in terms of indirect costs such as loss of productivity, absenteeism and sick leave. For this reason it is strongly recommended that formal structures be developed as soon as possible in all the emergency services to address this need. In Chapter Four reference was made to the ability of a system to renew itself. It was also pointed out that, according to chaos theory, a system tends to create new structure and order out of chaos. In essence trauma debriefing is an attempt to facilitate the process of self-renewal and of creating new order in a human system after the existing order in his or her life have fallen apart, and total internal chaos and disorder is experienced.

Some members of the SAPS, fire and ambulance services admitted that they manage their stress by drinking and socialising. Excessive drinking, like an attempt to commit suicide, is a cry for help. In terms of chaos theory it can be described as an attempt, although futile and destructive, by human systems to create order out of the disorder they experience inside. Instead of facing and addressing their problems, victims tend to "drink to forget", and find it easier to talk about their problems around a bar than when they are sober. In the short term members tend to find relief. There is no need, however, to elaborate on the destructive long-term effects this method of coping with stress has on the individual, his/her family, and the organisation.
One observation can be made though: it can be hypothesised that the percentage of members who manage their stress by drinking and socialising could be much higher. Not only does organisational culture in the emergency services (especially in the SAPS) seem to support this inference, but peer pressure to participate in this *macho* form of coping with stress is also tremendously strong (which illustrates a negative aspect of the buddy system). Addressing the problem of alcohol abuse in the emergency services will have to involve changing this culture inside these systems as well.

A comment should be made about the fact that no members of the traffic services referred to drinking as a form of managing stress. Three possible reasons could be stated for this: (1) members of the traffic services might have felt that it would not be appropriate for them, who have to enforce the law against driving under the influence of alcohol, to admit to this kind of behaviour themselves; (2) a tendency was noticed for members of the traffic services to deny any form of stress or problems that they might experience. This would include using drinking as a form of coping with stress; and (3) there is also the possibility that they do, in fact, not experience the same levels of stress that members of the other services experience. It could also be speculated that, although this form of coping was not mentioned, it most likely exists in the traffic services, like in all the other emergency services.

It should also be kept in mind that members of the emergency services are predominantly males. Males, far more than females, find it fairly difficult to express their feelings and talk about their problems. For this reason they find it easier to drink and socialise than to talk to their spouses (or someone they trust) about their problems.

The variety of suggestions received from members of the SAPS for improving the support received from management indicates that there are many different
expectations of the support available from management. This implies that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for management to satisfy everybody. It is also a human tendency to want to blame someone for one's problems and workers tend to blame management, while management tends to blame workers.

Although they are working within the same organisational structure, some members of the fire services indicated that they receive stress management training whereas no members of the ambulance services mentioned this aspect. It could be speculated that either members of the ambulance services are not subjected to this training (which is doubtful) or they do not regard this as a form of support to help them cope with their stress. Members of the ambulance services might have higher expectations than members of the fire services of the support they believe they should receive from management.

An aspect that raises concern is the number of fire, ambulance and traffic services members who indicated that no formal support is available to them for managing their stress. This should be seen in the context of the indication by some of the members of the fire and ambulance services that they are not sure what support is available to them. Only a few members of the traffic, fire and ambulance services stated that the city council does have an employee assistance programme where psychologists and social workers are available to assist them. However, respondents had complaints about these services. What this illustrates is that assistance is not necessarily unavailable to these members, but that there is a great deal of ignorance about the available services. This could be addressed by improved marketing of these services.

The question should also be raised whether the help that can be offered to members of the fire and ambulance services by staff of city councils' employee assistance programmes is sufficient. It should be pointed out that
professionals of the employee assistance programmes are responsible for providing support to all staff employed by a particular city council. Not only do the circumstances of these employees vary significantly, but the large number of employees they are responsible for makes it virtually impossible to provide sufficient support to all those who need it. The nature of the work of the fire and ambulance services as emergency services makes it essential that adequate supporting structures exist for them.

A number of members of the ambulance services stated that they receive support from a nursing sister at the station. Generally it is easier to seek medical advice than advice for emotional problems, because of the stigma that is still attached to receiving psychological treatment. It is for this reason that members tend to turn to a nursing sister for help with emotional problems disguised as physical problems. Discussions with these nursing sisters reveal that they fully understand and accept that it is part of their role just to listen and provide support. For this reason they fulfill an important function (on an informal basis) within the system.

An additional way of coping with stress was mentioned by members of the traffic services: isolating oneself. This is in line, once again, with the fact that members of the traffic services tend not to talk about their problems or admit to experiencing stress at all. Could this be the result of fulfilling a rather unpopular role in society and ultimately feeling rather rejected? Is it not a natural response then to isolate oneself? Whatever the case may be, much can be said about the possible unhealthy consequences of members not speaking to a significant other (whether inside or outside the system) about their problems.

The comments received to this question leave one with the rather uneasy feeling that members do not really know themselves what form of support
they want or need from the system. This is in line with the fact that they tend to feel uncomfortable when dealing with any emotional issues. This is why they cope with their stress through drinking and socialising, swearing, sick humour, aggressive behaviour, extra-marital affairs, smoking, and taking medication. In this way they attempt to escape from their problems rather than dealing with them. It also has to be pointed out that, in such circumstances, trauma debriefing will not be effective if it is done on a voluntary basis. It will work only if it is done as part of a standard procedure to which everybody is subjected. They would then not necessarily be admitting to experiencing stress, and would not have to seek help independently.

During the interviews it also became apparent that there are many misconceptions about what stress really is. Members generally have very limited knowledge about the symptoms of stress or how to recognise stress, let alone knowledge of how to deal with stress. For this reason stress management training should be part of their basic training, with regular follow-up courses.

In commenting about the formal structures available to members, it has to be pointed out that the intention of this study is not to evaluate the effectiveness of these supporting structures. The intention is to present the perceptions of members of the emergency services of the support they receive in managing stress. For this reason these structures will be commented on only briefly.

From the responses received from members of the emergency services, it is evident that members tend to regard with suspicion the professional caregivers employed to assist them with their problems. This is mainly because of a perception that information is not treated with confidentiality, and that members' personal information is placed on permanent record,
thereby jeopardising their careers. Professionals operating within these supporting structures face an extremely difficult task. This is due to the lack of credibility of these supporting structures (whether warranted or not), and to the macho image of members of the emergency services (which makes it difficult to admit to experiencing problems and seeking help). Not only are they often faced with a stubborn refusal of members to accept help, with insufficient manpower to provide an effective service, and with management who often oppose any attempts to implement proactive measures for managing stress in these organisations, but they also lack support for themselves. The result is predictable: caregivers employed in the emergency services often end up totally demotivated and suffering from burnout themselves. They also run the risk of becoming so caught up in the organisational systems of the emergency services that they lose their ability to create alternatives and to devise creative solutions to problems. This tendency is recognised world-wide among caregivers (Gilliland and James, 1993; Kurke and Scrivner, 1995). The question can be asked: while there is no doubt that such supporting structures are of critical importance in the emergency services, what measures are being taken to ensure that professionals providing this support do, in fact, receive adequate support themselves?

10.1.11 Co-operation between the different emergency services

From the responses of members a number of observations can be made.

The responses clearly indicate that respondents feel there is a very good relationship and good co-operation between members of the different emergency services. On the surface therefore, it seems that the co-operation is excellent between the different systems responsible for emergency work in the supra-system.
The overwhelmingly positive response from members of the ISU should perhaps be seen in the light of the fact that ISU members seldom have contact with members of the other emergency services. Members of the Flying Squad and Visible Policing, and of the fire, ambulance and traffic services have more and ongoing contact with members of the other emergency services. Therefore they display a more realistic attitude towards the co-operation that exists.

A high percentage of members of the traffic services commented on the good relationship between the emergency services. It was pointed out earlier that members of the traffic services seem to deny their feelings, their stress, and their problems. It was also pointed out that it is possible that they do not experience the same levels of stress that their colleagues of the other emergency services do. Most of them stated that a good relationship exists between them and the other emergency services. This could indicate that they either tend to deny the problems that do exist, or that problems that do exist are not a cause of stress to them.

Despite the claim by respondents that co-operation between the different emergency services is excellent, some problems were also raised. Some of these matters refer to problems experienced between subsystems of systems, and others refer to problems experienced between the different systems providing an emergency service to the supra-system.

More members of the ISU than members of Visible Policing or the Flying Squad commented on poor relationships between the ISU and the other SAPS units. Members of the ISU do tend to experience themselves as somewhat isolated from the rest of the SAPS (a subsystem not fully integrated into the system). The most significant reason for this is the fact that their function and working methods differ considerably from those of the other units in the
SAPS. It was also indicated earlier that their values, in terms of the objectives they pursue, seem to be different to those of the other units in the SAPS. Members of units in the SAPS who see their main objective as helping, serving and protecting the community tend to find it difficult to identify with the perception of most ISU members namely, that their main objective is that of maintaining law and order.

Some members of the ambulance services repeated their earlier comment on internal relationship problems and competition being experienced between the fire, ambulance and special rescue services, and on friction between the fire and ambulance services. This is evidently experienced as a problem, particularly by members of the ambulance services. It is indicative of a need for a clear definition of the specific roles of each of these services. When subsystems of a system tend to become too autonomous in their functioning the system is not functioning as a whole. The priorities and needs of the subsystem tend to become more important than those of the system.

Members of the SAPS, especially of the Flying Squad and Visible Policing, complained about the slow response times of the ambulance services. This can be explained by the fact that it is mostly members of the Flying Squad and Visible Policing who have to deal with the ambulance services. They are the ones who have to wait for the ambulances to arrive at a scene. Once again the principle of circular causality is clearly illustrated in that the behaviour of one system (or subsystem of a system) co-determines the behaviour of other systems (or subsystems of systems).

Members of the fire and ambulance services, the Flying Squad and traffic services complained about the lack of co-ordination at accident scenes. It was pointed out that this is especially the case with smaller incidents rather than larger ones (such as major disasters). During the feedback sessions to
management the comment was repeatedly made that regulations do exist for co-ordinating accident scenes. Comments from the respondents, however, indicate that for some reason or other problems do still occur, and that the rules and regulations laid down are not effective. Because each of these systems has its own ranking structure (hierarchical structure), norms and values, they tend to clash with those of other systems when members have to jointly operate at one accident scene. Members tend to get in each other's way at smaller accident scenes. Members of one system are also reluctant to submit to and accept instructions from members of other systems while jointly operating at an accident scene.

It seems that a fair amount of tension is also experienced between the fire, ambulance and traffic services. Members of the fire and ambulance services also complained about problems experienced with members of the SAPS (some comments to this effect were also received from members of the traffic services). These complaints could all be the result of inadequate co-ordination at accident scenes. Members of the different emergency services tend to get in each other's way and experience conflict because they have slightly conflicting functions at such scenes. In order to address this problem it is clear that agreement has to be reached between the different systems on an overall modus operandi at accident scenes.

10.2 OVERALL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS RELATING TO THE FINDINGS

A considerable amount of information was received from respondents during the interviews. Some of the issues raised were debated extensively in this chapter. It is important, however, to briefly highlight the main lessons learnt from this study.
It was stated earlier that members of the different emergency services tend to experience different stressors, unique to their particular organisation. The assumption was made, however, that certain stressors are commonly experienced by members of all the emergency services. Similar themes were, in fact, found for members of all the emergency services. In terms of the stressors identified by the respondents, four seem to be prominent:

a. The need for better salaries seems to be the most important and critical stressor for members of the SAPS. Members of the SAPS, and to a certain extent members of the ambulance services, seem to experience poor salaries as an important stressor in their lives. However, this need was also expressed by some members of the fire services and traffic services. People equate the impact and importance of their job with the remuneration package they receive. The lower the salary, the less important a job is perceived to be. The process, however, does not stop there. The next step is for the incumbent to measure his/her self-worth in terms of the remuneration package he/she is receiving. The rewards offered by the system therefore, is not only an indication of the values of the inputs provided, but also of the value of the individual member to that system.

b. The need for an increase in manpower was also expressed by respondents from all the different emergency services. This is a reflection that the resources provided by the system for subsystems to fulfil their function are inadequate. The greatest need for more manpower was expressed by members of the ambulance services, followed closely by the traffic services and members of Visible Policing in the SAPS.
Attention needs to be focused on the fact that the need for improved remuneration and the feeling of being overworked often go hand in hand. When a person is overworked, especially when experiencing burnout, it is not unusual to start questioning whether the salary the person earns justifies the amount of work and effort required, resulting in dissatisfaction with the inadequate compensation. However, this comment on burnout in no way suggests that the dissatisfaction expressed about remuneration, especially by members of the SAPS and ambulance services, is not justified. In fact, there seems to be widespread recognition that the salary scales of SAPS members, especially those in the lower ranks, need urgent attention. This is reflected in an article on the front page of *Beeld*, Monday, 8 April 1996: "*Polisie se geldsake drasties verbeter - konstabels kry die grootste verhoging...ingrypende salaris verhogings word verwag.*" (Police salaries to increase drastically - constables get the highest increase...considerable salary increases expected.) In this article it is stated that President Mandela expressed his concern about the salaries of SAPS members. This is in view of the rising levels of crime and increasing numbers of SAPS members resigning as a result of poor salaries. He expressed his support for considerable increases for members. Salary increases were indeed announced on Thursday, 11 April 1996.

c. A third stressor mentioned by a number of members of the different emergency services is deficient logistics. Once again this refers to resources provided by the system for subsystems to fulfil their function). This seems to be an especially strong need among members of the ambulance services, Visible Policing, the Flying Squad, and to some extent the traffic services. However, 50% of members of the traffic services felt that they have adequate logistics. Money allocated by the government for equipment is also often viewed as an indication of the
national importance of a service (such as the traffic service). Resources allocated to the system by the supra-system provide an indication of the value of that particular system to the overall well-being of the supra-system.

d. A stressor that featured on the priority list of each of the emergency services was that of insufficient communication, coupled with management's lack of consultation. This stressor relates to the information flow within systems, and the recognition by the system of the value of inputs from subsystems. As was pointed out earlier, effective information flow within a system is crucial to the overall functioning of the system.

From the abovementioned certain observations can be made. It is noticeable that the stressors that feature on the respondents' priority lists concern working conditions and management style (problems experienced within the systems).

The common complaint received from respondents regarding the shortage of equipment as well as manpower is clearly perceived by members as a significant stressor. The fact was highlighted that shortages are not necessarily experienced in all subsystems of these systems, and that the problem might be alleviated by a new approach to the distribution of these resources within the larger systems. It was also pointed out that the use of civilians (and even reservists) may also alleviate this problem. It is essential, however, that attention first be given to the structures within these systems before embarking on the obvious solution: obtaining more manpower and equipment. The approach these systems take to civilians entering these systems also has to be addressed. Team work has to be established between members and civilians, roles have to be clearly
defined, and the attitude of members will have to be addressed to ensure that civilians are perceived as assisting members to realise the vision of the organisation, rather than being in competition with members.

This study emphasises the need for a more democratic management style which allows for more employee participation. This will only be obtained, however, if management’s fears of losing control is addressed. Top management is instrumental in assisting middle management to deal with these fears. These fears can be dealt with through management training programmes, and by introducing management to the valuable lessons to be learned from the principles of chaos theory. It should be emphasised that an increase in employee participation should not necessarily imply a decrease in discipline. Instead of taking an autocratic approach to discipline, the focus should be shifted to the development of teamwork. Once a strong team spirit is established within a unit or a shift, the responsibility for maintaining discipline automatically tends to shift from the manager to all members of the team. Peers will then tend to ensure that buddies adhere to the rules and regulations (some of which were laid down by the team itself) in order to maintain the unity and identity of the team.

Wheatley (1992) highlights the principle of "Think globally, act locally". She believes that “acting locally” is a sound strategy for changing large systems. Little by little, system by system, enough momentum is developed to affect the larger society. This principle emphasises the importance of teamwork. Once one unit or shift in the organisation functions effectively, others are likely to follow this example. Campbell et al. (1994) emphasise the fact that a system is a “whole greater than the sum of its parts”, and what makes it greater is the process by which the component parts work together. If they work in harmony the whole is
seen to be integrated and efficient. The components should be in such a relationship that they contribute to the smooth working of the whole.

The study also highlighted the need for management to remain in touch with what is happening on the ground. Although management tends to be pressurised for time, the value of keeping in touch with the realities members are faced with on the ground can not be overestimated. It should also be pointed out that management can not successfully develop teamwork in units if they do not spend time with members and also become a member of the team.

The fact that the study highlighted the strong need for improved communication should not be surprising, especially in a time period where these systems have to deal with rapid and extensive changes. It was pointed out that, especially in the SAPS, several attempts are made to address this need. It was also pointed out that members often complained about too much information. There is not necessarily a shortage of information - there is a shortage of direction. What is needed is a common vision, created by and shared by all employees of the organisation. This vision should incorporate intrinsic motivators to the job such as "helping people". It was pointed out that the system needs to find security within itself because the supra-system will constantly change. Wheatley (1992) explains: "Self-renewal is what facilitates orderly change in turbulent environments. In human organisations, a clear sense of identity - of the values, traditions, aspirations, competencies, and culture that guide the operation - is the real source of independence from the environment." (p. 94) Once a common vision is created communication should centre around how to put this vision into practice. What employees ask for is not necessarily more information, but direction. Wheatley (1992) aptly points out that "When a customer (in the case of the emergency services, a
member of the public) comes in contact with anyone from the organization, no matter his or her position, the customer experiences the total organisation, for good or ill" (p. 95). This emphasises the importance of a common vision throughout the organisation.

A need which was identified, and which relates to the need for improved communication, is the need for clear definition of terms. It is essential that the same meaning of terms such as "employee participation", "victimisation" and "affirmative action" be shared by all members of the organisation. It is impossible to work towards a common vision if clarity is not reached on such issues.

These are problems that cannot be addressed by the individual - regardless of the amount of stress management training or psychological support he or she receives. This is reflected in the following comment of a respondent: "When I joined, I knew my work would be demanding, dangerous and stressful. I knew I would be exposed on a regular basis to all types of trauma. I was prepared to face that. I can, however, not face that and the additional stress of insufficient pay, lack of communication by management and lack of sufficient equipment to do my job. If we are to do this job we need sufficient back-up and support to assist us. We are only human."

The findings indicate that the stress of most members has to be addressed primarily at organisational level. The problems experienced are not so much at the level of traumatic inputs from the supra-system, criticism or rejection by the supra-system, or even insufficient skills for managing stress. They are on the level of information flow within the system, resources provided by the system for subsystems to fulfil their function, and for rewards provided by the system for inputs provided. In order to address these problems effectively a holistic view will have to be taken of these different systems. This will make
it possible to determine whether resources can be more equally distributed or be made more readily available. It will also enable management to determine a strategy for more effective information flow within each one of these systems. A more holistic approach would also make it possible to investigate different possibilities of obtaining more funding from the supra-system to reward members more adequately.

Members seem to have a strong need for recognition and more adequate rewards by the system. It was pointed out that management is not always in the position to drastically improve salaries. Management is, however, in the position to provide recognition and different forms of reward (such as organising social or sport events, providing time off for overtime worked, etc.).

The study indicated that members not only have a need for recognition by the system, but also from the supra-system. This seems to suggest that serious attention needs to be paid to the promotion of the public image of all emergency services. The need for education of the public about how the emergency services function was expressed on various occasions. This situation could be addressed by launching a national campaign, not only to inform members of the public about the functioning of the emergency services, but to also change their attitudes towards members of these services.

Another valuable lessons learnt in this study relates to the positive stressors experienced by members of the emergency services. The majority of respondents consider the adrenaline and action associated with their job, the fact that they help, save and protect people, and the close relationships that develop with buddies as positive aspects of their job. These are what Wheatley (1992) refers to as the intrinsic motivators of the
job. These aspects will have to be considered when developing programmes to effectively manage the stress of these workers. Recognition has to be given to these aspects and ways will have to be found to use them more constructively in stress management programmes. This is illustrated by the fact that the researcher often finds it difficult to obtain the co-operation of members in managing their stress if she focuses on the negative consequences it might have for the individual if extremely high stress levels are ignored. She finds it easier to obtain their co-operation if she focuses on the fact that, if they manage their stress levels effectively, it will enable them to render an even more efficient service to the people they serve, and that it will enable them to assist their buddies more effectively in dealing with stress.

The study also indicated that not all aspects of racial integration in the emergency services have been sufficiently dealt with. Serious attention will have to be given to address practical problems experienced with racial integration, as well as with the change of attitudes. This, however, is easier said than done. It was pointed out earlier that, although structures and the racial composition of members of the emergency services may have changed, it is essential that the attitudes and fears of members of all races be addressed. It is also essential that members of the different races and cultures develop a better understanding of each other. To address this problem through culture awareness training programmes might be of some help, but seem to be too simplistic. Once a strong team spirit is established in a unit or on a shift, teams might benefit from sessions where the fears and frustrations of members of all races represented in the team are exposed and discussed openly. Caution needs to be taken, however, that these sessions are facilitated in a sensitive manner, and that positive aspects are also highlighted.
The need was highlighted for a new approach to organisational structure in the emergency services. Not only is there a need for structures to be more fluid and flexible, but also to be more functional. Care should also be taken that structures enhance the unity of the system as a whole, and not the autonomous functioning of subsystems. Wheatley (1992) explain this as follows: “...avoid rigid or permanent structures and instead develop a capacity to respond with great flexibility to external and internal change. Expertise, tasks, teams, and projects emerge in response to a need. When the need changes, so does the organisational structure” (p. 70).

This ideal can not be obtained without a clear organisational vision. Once employees share a common vision, they understand and accept the necessity of co-operating with other subsystems in the system. Wheatley (1992) aptly points out: “We will need to stop describing tasks and instead facilitate process. We will need to become savvy about how to build relationships, how to nurture growing, evolving things. All of us will need better skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating groups, because these are the talents that build strong relationships. It is well known that the era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player.” (p. 38) She continues: “In a traditional organizational chart, where we draw lines to connect roles, it would be a breakthrough to think of the lines as reaction channels, lines along which energy is transferred to facilitate the creation of new things” (p. 70).

Another lesson learnt from the study was that there is a dire need for comprehensive stress management programmes within these systems. There is a need for stress management training to enable members to recognise stress within themselves and their buddies, to assist them to cope with their stress, and to know when to seek help. Training is also required in obtaining more balanced life styles, because it is essential that
a holistic approach be followed with regard to stress management in the emergency services. The roles and credibility of professionals assisting members need to be addressed urgently. Consideration also needs to be given as to how these professionals can become part of the different teams in the emergency services, and not function as a subsystem on their own. Functional structures need to be developed to deal with trauma debriefing timeously. The successful introduction of any stress management programme will depend on the co-operation of all members of the system - management, as well as staff. For this reason management and employee participation in developing such a programme is essential.

The study also highlighted certain problems experienced in the co-operation between the various emergency services. Improved co-operation will only be achieved if members of these different systems make a mind shift towards seeing each of these services as a subsystem of a larger "emergency services" system. Hopefully this will be achieved with the introduction of the 107 Centres (the equivalent of the 911 Centres in the United States).

Finally, the study also highlighted the importance of feedback of research findings to the system. Wheatley (1992) emphasises the importance of this form of feedback when she states: "As a consultant, the most important intervention I ever make is when I feed back organizational data to the whole organization." (p. 115) She continues: "When the organization is willing to give public voice to the information - to listen to different interpretations and to process them together - the information becomes amplified. A small finding can grow as it feeds back on itself, building in significance with each new perception or interpretation." (p. 115) During the feedback sessions conducted with participants to the study, as well as with management, new information was obtained, and
possible explanations for findings were offered, which were subsequently included in the comments on the findings. However, it is not only the research study which benefited from these feedback sessions. As was pointed out earlier, during the feedback sessions new relationships were established between members of the different units and different emergency services attending these sessions. Arrangements were made for future co-operation during these sessions. A number of managers who attended these sessions took careful note of the suggestions offered by participants, and actually followed up on these.

During the interviews respondents not only raised issues such as poor salary scales, manpower shortages, lack of logistics, and lack of communication and consultation. They also offered suggestions for improvements. These are also presented in this study. Some of these suggestions demonstrate that a number of the issues raised could be addressed in innovative ways. In reality management may be unable to address some of the issues raised (such as increasing members' salaries) owing to a lack of funding. However, management is in a position to address the majority of the issues, such as the lack of communication and consultation. It is in addressing these issues that the challenge for the future lies.

In Chapter Eleven concluding remarks on this study will be made.
CHAPTER ELEVEN : CONCLUDING REMARKS

Most of the issues highlighted in the literature study as stressors for members of the different emergency services are supported by the findings of this study.

Chapter Three lists the five main causes of police stress as indicated in the literature. These include organisational stressors, characteristics associated with police work, personal and family concerns, judicial concerns and stress caused by the government (e.g., the role of the SAPS is determined by the government of the day). The results of this study confirm that organisational stressors (such as management style and communication) are the most significant stressors experienced by members of the SAPS. Although members of the SAPS mentioned very few negative aspects associated with their job, some commented that their job is dangerous, and that they experience stress as a result of the negative public image of the SAPS. Apart from occasional remarks about having little time to spend with their families and that negative attitudes from the public sometimes endanger their families, members of the SAPS expressed no real concern about personal and family issues. However, these issues were not directly addressed during the interviews. If members had been specifically questioned about personal and family concerns, the findings in this regard as reported in the literature might have been confirmed.

Judicial concerns and the role of the government are also listed in the literature as stressors for police officials. During the interviews no direct reference was made to judicial concerns. Some members felt, however, that the public should be educated about the role of the SAPS. Chapter Ten indicates that members of the SAPS are often unfairly criticised by the public.
and the media for aspects that fall under the jurisdiction of other departments, such as the Department of Justice. Some members attributed the negative public image of the SAPS to the politicisation of the role of the SAPS, and the fact that the SAPS previously had to enforce unpopular laws introduced by the National Party.

The main causes of stress for ambulance workers, listed in Chapter Three, are organisational stressors, management style, ineffective communication, stressors relating to patient care, low job status and remuneration, and lack of support systems and personal coping skills. The results of this study confirm that ambulance workers regard certain organisational stressors (such as the lack of operational careers, poor facilities and elitism), management style (such as victimisation, and older management's tendency to feel threatened) and ineffective communication (such as lack of consultative, participative management) as major stressors. Members of the ambulance services also identified issues relating to patient care as stressful (such as the fact that their work is dangerous, that experts are not on the road, that they are understaffed, their areas too big and their response times too slow). This again confirms the findings quoted in the literature. Although these members did not complain directly that their low job status is a source of stress, 38% listed an improvement in salaries as a priority. As was pointed out earlier, job status is often closely linked to remuneration. Their perception that they have no personal coping skills or support systems is confirmed by lack of reference by any members of the ambulance services to having received stress management training, the indication by 54% of them that no formal support systems are available to them, and the lack of reference to the employee assistance programme available to employees of city councils.

The academic literature highlighted one main stressor for firefighters, namely the nature of their work. Previous studies found that firefighters often tended
to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of disasters, and helpless when faced with the suffering of victims and the pressure of the work. These findings are not confirmed by the results of this study. Only eight percent of these members stated that their work is dangerous. Although some firefighters indicated that they have marital problems due to their highly stressful job and long working hours, most complaints related to organisational issues (such as autocratic management style and lack of participative management). They focused on positive aspects of their job, such as helping people, and the adrenaline and action associated with them.

Chapter Three noted that a key stressor for traffic officials, highlighted in the literature, is that of minibus taxis. This is confirmed by the results of this study. Twenty percent of these members said that taxi drivers tend to team up against them, and 30% regarded their work as highly dangerous. However, these were not the only issues raised by members of the traffic services. They also identified organisational issues such as poor communication, lack of consultation, poor management style and lack of manpower as stressors.

It is assumed that most respondents expressed their feelings, views and problems honestly during the interviews. A number of them commented after the interviews that they had found it therapeutic to talk to someone about the problems they experience. During feedback sessions to the respondents and at a later stage to management, the attendees confirmed the findings of this study. These findings also confirm the researcher’s personal experience, having worked closely with members of the emergency services for a number of years.
The findings of this study give rise to specific recommendations by the researcher. The study suggests that stress in the emergency services could be approached in three different ways.

a. The first is to apply the principles of chaos theory. This assumes that there is underlying order in the chaos that prevails in these systems (e.g., the increasing number of suicides, members suffering from burnout and/or post-traumatic stress disorder, high numbers of medical boardings and high turnover in personnel) and that these systems should perhaps be left to fall apart so they can renew themselves. In doing so it is also assumed that (1) the high levels of crime, violence and accidents experienced in South Africa will eventually decrease, and that stability will evolve from the turbulent and radical changes currently experienced by all South Africans; (2) clarity will be reached on the specific role of each of the emergency services (possibly through implementing the 107 Centres); (3) members will adapt to internal organisational changes once all integration processes are complete and new structures are in place; (4) those members who are unable (or unwilling) to adapt will eventually choose to leave these systems; and (5) that this will result in a decrease in stress experienced by members of the emergency services.

b. An alternative to the above is to take a holistic view of the problem. This implies that a national structure, policy and procedures regarding stress management be developed and implemented for all emergency services. This structure could include resources (independent of the emergency services), such as psychologists, social workers and chaplains to provide support to members. As was pointed out in Chapter Eight, members suggested creating neutral, independent stress clinics for all the emergency services.
Another option which does not exclude the previously mentioned suggestions, is to address problems specific to particular emergency services. Some of the problems highlighted in this study are specific to an emergency service, or even to a section of an emergency service. Such problems can not be addressed through national policies and procedures, but only at the level where they occur. Examples of such problems include the need to use civilians to run control rooms, or for traffic officers to receive training in dealing with minibus taxis.

Although respondents expressed concern mainly about organisational issues, there is no doubt that they are regularly exposed to traumatic and dangerous situations. The total absence of reference to these negative aspects of their work (e.g., violence, bloody accidents, death, shooting incidents, etc.) is noteworthy. Members of Visible Policing and the ambulance services mentioned that their work is dangerous, but certainly did not regard this as an important stressor. On the contrary: the responses received give a clear indication of just how dedicated they are to their jobs, how much they enjoy them, and the many positive rewards they experience in them.

However, it has been stated that it is the accepted norm in the emergency services that “cowboys don’t cry”. Members tend to believe that they should be immune to any effects of regular exposure to trauma. However, the effect that this regular exposure to trauma has on members should not be disregarded. It would appear that members find it painful to talk about and deal with these experiences. For this reason they find it easier to avoid dealing with them than to admit to themselves that they are affected by them.

Urgent attention needs to be paid to the lack of debriefing for members of the emergency services after they had been exposed to traumatic incidents. The
individual trauma should be addressed at higher levels in the system. It seems imperative that structures be developed to ensure that debriefing is done immediately after exposure to such an incident. In this way the system not only addresses the immediate needs of individual members, as well as those of whole subsystems, but also ensures the future well-being of the system. In order to achieve this, however, the credibility of professional caregivers employed by the system needs to be addressed. Sufficient support should also be provided by the system to ensure the well-being of these individuals.

In order to address the stress of members of the emergency services effectively, however, it is important firstly to create an awareness among members of the destructive consequences of stress (both at organisational and individual level). There is still a strong sense of denial (and ignorance) among members of the emergency services about the fact that they do experience high levels of stress. They also fail to recognise in themselves the consequential effects of their regular and sustained exposure to traumatic situations. To address their stress effectively, this attitude has first of all to be replaced with a willingness to admit to experiencing stress, and a willingness to accept help. A sympathetic system that has the resources to assist members would be a prerequisite for this.

It is also important to comment on the co-operation between the different emergency services. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they experience good co-operation between the different emergency services. However, comments were also received which indicate that there is room for improvement in certain areas, such as co-ordination at accident scenes.

Many suggestions were received indicating the need for improved communication and co-operation between the different emergency services operating in a specific area. This calls for regular contact, both formally and
informally, not only between management of the different emergency services but also between members at grassroots level. However, this suggestion can be taken one step further: it could be made applicable to the more constructive management of stress in the emergency services.

In most emergency situations, such as accident scenes, members of the SAPS, fire, ambulance and traffic services are present and are exposed to the same traumatic circumstances. In the case of a particularly traumatic scene debriefing is required by all members present. It would be far more productive and cost-effective for one person to conduct a single debriefing session than for several persons to conduct separate but identical debriefing sessions for each of the emergency services. For this reason management should be encouraged in future communication between the different emergency services, to consider co-operation at this level. A more holistic approach to stress management in the emergency services is proposed.

A significant aspect of this study is that it has identified and exposed certain problem areas in the emergency services. If not addressed effectively, these problem areas will inhibit any attempt of successfully implementing and running programmes for constructive stress management in the emergency services, and will also affect the overall effectiveness and smooth running of these essential services.

It is essential that the interpretation of the findings be done in the context of the time-period during which the interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted during February and March 1995 - nearly a year after the April 1994 elections. This can be described as a time-period during which all members of the South African society were faced with severe and rapid changes. The emergency services, like all other organisations in South Africa, were facing problems relating to these changes. The supra-system itself was
rapidly changing, and consequently each system within the supra-system was also changing. Organisations such as the emergency services, and especially the SAPS, experienced dramatic changes in their internal structures, as well as in their external role and methods of operation.

The abovementioned provides a context for evaluating comments about uncertainty regarding the future, certain problems experienced in terms of racial integration, comments about the public image of the SAPS, etc. The researcher believes that the information presented in this study contributes to a better understanding of the stressors experienced by members of the emergency services during this particular time-period. Several research questions can also be identified from the findings of this study for future research. It has to be emphasised that the emergency services are essential in creating and maintaining peace, stability and security in the country. In view of the importance of the role they have to play it is essential that they function at optimal level. For this reason constant research of this nature is of critical importance.

Six of the most important research questions for future research that were identified by the researcher, are the following:

a. The picture presented in this study has no doubt changed dramatically in the two years that have since passed. An important research question would be to establish to what extent the situation in the emergency services has improved (or deteriorated) in terms of the type of stressors experienced by members, the priorities given to the different stressors, the level of support members receive for managing stress, and the level of co-operation between the different emergency services. Research of this nature will enable researchers to establish the effect of rapid change and transformation on employees' stress levels. It will also provide an
indication of the level of support that will in future be necessary to enable emergency service workers to manage their stress.

b. A second research question that could be formulated from this study relates to the changes taking place in the supra-system that necessarily have an effect on these systems. To what extent have changes in the supra-system affected the management style and cultures of these systems? Have the ranking systems and authoritarian management style characteristic of the emergency services been replaced with significantly more informal structures and a more democratic, participative management style?

c. A third research question that can be formulated concerns the buddy system (see 8.1.a. and 10.1.10.). Members of the emergency services often refer to themselves as being part of one big family. The characteristics of a healthy family are that it provides nurturing for its members while, at the same time, it provides space for individuation of its members. The buddy system provides nurturing to members of the emergency services, and can be one of the most valuable assets of the system. However, a strong buddy system also has the potential to become destructive in that it tends to prevent individuation of its members. The pressure on members to conform can be extremely high. While the ideal would be to find a balance somewhere, the question is, how can such a balance be found? Research has not yet succeeded in providing answers to this problem.

d. A fourth research question, which is related to the one stated above, concerns debriefing. Currently controversy exists around the effectiveness of trauma debriefing (Raphael, Meldrum and McFarlane, 1995). There is also uncertainty about who should do the debriefing: a
buddy trained to do debriefing, a professional person inside the system, or a professional outside the system?

It still has to be proven beyond doubt that debriefing does work. The advantages and disadvantages of debriefing done by the different parties mentioned above also need to be considered. Debriefing done by a buddy has the advantage of a person who is familiar (and credible) with the circumstances and the people involved. However, this person often does not have the skills required to handle particularly difficult situations. He/she may not be objective enough, and may also be traumatised. A professional person who is part of the system, on the other hand, has the advantage of understanding the system. This person may however, be caught up in the red tape of the system. He/she may be at officer level and may therefore not be entirely objective, because he/she operates from within a management frame of mind. This person may also experience credibility problems. Members might doubt the confidentiality with which information will be treated. A professional person who is an outsider to the system, may have the advantage of not already being traumatised. He/she may be seen as objective, but may have a limited understanding of the system and the way in which members operate. This person may also experience credibility problems. Members might close up to an outsider to the system.

The many contradictory findings around trauma debriefing seem to suggest that this area still needs to be researched extensively. Possibly consideration could be given to making professional helpers part of the buddy system. This could only be achieved if the helper also becomes a buddy. This will require him/her to spend time on the road with operational staff and become a member of the team.
e. Another possible research question relating to debriefing and stress management in general concerns the negative attitudes that members (as well as management) have about debriefing and stress management. While members often see this as admitting to not being tough enough to handle the stressors of their job, management often sees it as an unnecessary waste of time and money. It is important that these fears and prejudices be addressed, and solutions be found to incorporate stress management and debriefing programmes with practical concerns (such as time, money, confidentiality, not fostering a sick role among members, etc.) about such programmes. Effective stress management programmes need to be developed for the emergency services. These programmes should not involve huge expenditures in terms of time and money. They should however, enhance the productivity of the system, as well as the general well-being of individual members. How this can be done in practice remains an open research question.

f. With 107 Centres already in operation in Krugersdorp and Kempton Park, a sixth, and very obvious research question can be identified. It concerns the effect these centres have on the overall co-operation between the emergency services. It is intended that the concept of “107” as the one and only emergency number for South Africans be eventually implemented nationally. The 107 Centres are control rooms (communication centres) run by local authorities, and which are in contact with all the emergency services. In the case of an emergency members of the public just dial “107”, and the relevant emergency services are alerted by the control room staff. Theoretically speaking this concept should not only improve the co-operation between the different emergency services, but response times should also be improved. Whether or not this is the case in practice, needs to be researched.
The abovementioned research questions provide challenges to future researchers. Management of the emergency services is also provided with a challenge. The challenge that lies ahead is to create organisational climates of co-operation and consultation in which problems are approached as challenges, and support for managing stress is provided (and accepted). Climates should be created that will be conducive to managing stress in a constructive way.

Campbell et al. (1994) appropriately remind management of the following: "People in organizations are ultimately trying to balance their individual needs for respect, power, wealth, achievement, and belonging with the group needs of co-operation, following orders, carrying out difficult tasks, personal sacrifices, etc. When the personal needs can be met through work, an employee will be satisfied and should continue to work for the good of the company; however, if work is unsatisfying or threatening to an individual's well-being, he will begin to work more for himself than for the company. In this scenario, an employee tries to build his own personal security or power base, which usually conflicts with the needs of the organization." (p. 24)
I was appointed as specialist reservist for the Pretoria fire and ambulance services in April 1997, and is responsible for providing support to members in terms of stress management and trauma debriefing. Since then I have spent considerable time on the road with members of both the fire and ambulance services. Initially I saw it as a challenge to gain credibility and the trust of members in order to support them. Fairly quickly I became, I would like to believe, a member of the team. The members increasingly share problems with me. At first they tended to discuss work-related problems, and later they started sharing personal problems as well. I would take turns riding with different rescue vehicles, and different members of each shift.

I became aware of subtle differences in my motivation for being a reservist. I was still extremely concerned about the emotional well-being of the members, but something else now emerged. Along with the rest of the members I would feel bored and disappointed if it was a slow shift without any "excitement". One night I sat in the control room and complained that we had not been required to respond to a single call that night. A paramedic replied: "I see you have become addicted to this job like the rest of us."

This person used an interesting word: addiction. I wondered if this was the reason members of the emergency services found it so hard to leave. If it is a form of addiction, what exactly are they addicted to? Every time I heard a siren I would feel the urge to know where it was heading and to be on that response car, ambulance or fire engine. I started asking myself why I felt that way.
The findings of this study highlight the importance of the buddy system to members of the emergency services. As I slowly became part of the team I began to experience some of the benefits of this informal support system. By now most of the members were well-known to me, and we have come to a mutual understanding that, when I am present at a call, I attend to bystanders while they attend to the victims. However, in the case of talking people out of attempting suicide, they provide back-up and protection while I attend to the person. We seem to have unspoken agreements: I assist them in attaining certain life skills, while they help me in gaining medical knowledge; I protect the confidentiality of the information they share with me, while they protect me from physical injury at scenes. Recently I attended the funeral of one of the firemen who died on duty. As I shared in the sense of loss and grief of the members of his shift, I started to realise exactly how important the buddy system is and what a strong hold it has on members. It is for this reason that some members openly confess that they would have left the service years ago, but they could not face losing their buddies.

I soon discovered the second reason for the addiction to emergency work. Not long after my appointment as a reservist I realised that I had become addicted to the adrenaline, “excitement” and action associated with this work. I would book onto a shift with a feeling of anticipation and excitement, wondering what I would experience that night. I found myself thinking of my full-time job as boring and mundane because of its routine nature and predictability.

However, being on a “high” with adrenaline is perhaps not the only addictive factor in responding to emergency calls. During my past six months with the emergency services, the word “life” has taken on a whole new meaning. As an emergency worker one is regularly exposed to situations that most people never experience during their lifetime (e.g., a psychotic patient attacking one
with a burning cigarette, or a person trying to cut his wrist while one is watching). I have learned to appreciate life, and not to be surprised by anything people do. To experience so many facets of life also becomes addictive, and this may be another reason why emergency service workers find their work fascinating.

I was perhaps fortunate in not having been exposed to dead or mutilated bodies shortly after joining as a reservist. I spent months on the road without experiencing a single resuscitation. I recently was exposed to death, and a number of particularly badly mutilated bodies and was truly amazed to discover that although I was repelled by the sight I also felt urged to discover the limits of my tolerance for such scenes. I realised that, just as one could not predict how one would react when exposed to such scenes for the first time, one could also not predict how one would react the next time. It is as if one enters into a contest with oneself to test one’s limits.

Confirmation of this response by a number of members suggested that this was another aspect of the addiction to serious trauma: the testing of one’s own limits. This contest with oneself may take different forms. It may be a test of physical or psychological limits, or even the limits of one’s skills and capabilities (e.g., when a paramedic fights for the life of a patient, he/she is actually in a contest with death). This may explain why members of the emergency services tend to find risky, high-speed car chases exciting and why they refer to the most gruesome of calls as a “great call”.

Another factor that appears significant in causing members of the emergency services to become addicted to their work is the feeling of “being in control”. They sense the relief on relatives’ and bystanders’ faces when they arrive at a scene. It evokes in emergency workers a powerful feeling of heroism, of
being able to make a difference. It makes them feel appreciated and increases their sense of self-worth.

Another aspect is closely linked to that of control. An emergency worker, when responding to a call, walks into the home of strangers, asks personal questions and takes decisions on their behalf, but is not perceived as invading their privacy. When trying to talk people out of attempting suicide I tend to get emotionally close to the "victims", as well as their loved ones, in very little time. When in crisis, people trust emergency workers with very personal details of their lives. In most cases they confide in them, allow these workers to take decisions on their behalf, and trust them to give them the best care and advice. To relate to people at such a deep and personal level once again makes emergency workers feel valuable and appreciated, and increases their sense of self-worth. However, relating to people at this level also has disadvantages. It causes the emergency worker to become emotionally involved with, and even to feel responsible for the people they deal with, which automatically increases their stress levels.

Neither this study nor my personal experiences necessarily provide the full answer to why members of the emergency services are addicted to their job. However, I believe I have come to understand some of the reasons for this phenomenon:

1. The close relationship between buddies
2. The adrenaline and action associated with the job
3. Experience of so many different facets of life
4. Tests of one’s own limits
5. The feeling of being in control
6. Relating to people at a psychologically intimate level in a short space of time
During the interviews it became obvious that, irrespective of the high levels of stress that members of the emergency services experience in their work, and of the trauma they are exposed to, their love for and dedication to their work has in no way been dampened. The dedication and commitment to what they do is reflected in their responses to the question about the positive aspects of their job. The positive elements that members identify in their work is the key to managing their stress constructively. Stress management programmes should be developed around these aspects.

The men and women in the emergency services are dedicated to serving those in crisis. They deserve to have their own well-being protected.


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