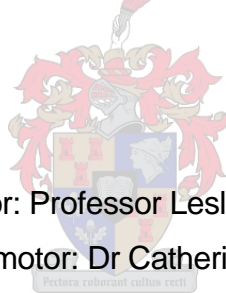**Space and survival: The aftermath of a fire disaster in a Cape Town informal settlement**

JACKIE STEWART

Dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) at the University of Stellenbosch

Promotor: Professor Leslie Swartz

Co-Promotor: Dr Catherine Ward

March 2008

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

…………………………………….   ……………………………………

Signature   Date

Abstract

This study is located in the Joe Slovo informal settlement, Langa, Cape Town. This is a settlement much like many other townships in South Africa in that it is a disaster-prone, marginalised community. On the 15 January 2005 a fire ravaged the area, destroying 2 590 dwellings and leaving 12 950 people homeless. This qualitative study attempted to explore the personal perspectives of the survivors of this shack fire within the wider context of communal and socio-political variables.

 A number of interviews were conducted, some with the fire survivors, and others with service providers in the field of disaster management. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory was found to be a useful lens through which to analyse the data. The fire event itself is shown to have been a precipitant of a far longer and more complex chain of events and ongoing struggles for survival. Reactions to the fire and subsequent events, furthermore, must be understood at a number of levels – including at inter-personal and inter-group levels. The principles and corollaries of COR theory enable a deeper exploration of the disaster especially in terms of resource loss and the implications of survivors having been disadvantaged prior to the fire taking place. A number of pre-event issues are presented in order for this context to be fully understood. Two obstacles to community intervention are emphasised as key. First, the reality of what COR theory terms 'communities within communities' has implications for survivor behaviour. Second, the focus on the acute aftermath of the fire, and what COR theory terms the 'avoidance of long-term needs' is also crucial.

COR theory facilitated the visibility of a link between the data and the use of space at an inter-group level. Despite the abolition of apartheid, segregation between groups in South Africa remains high. The current study made use of the social psychology of segregation to explore the inter-group conflict that emerged as the most salient and ongoing feature of this disaster. Although the current study is exploratory, it is hoped that it will encourage future research into the interface between space, inter-group relations and disaster.

Opsomming

Die huidige studie is gedoen in die Joe Slovo informele nedersetting, Langa, Kaapstad. Hierdie nedersetting is soos vele ander minderbevooregte woongebiede (*townships*) in Suid Afrika 'n gemarginaliseerde gemeenskap wat dikwels deur rampe getref word. Op 15 January 2005 het 'n vuur 590 wonings in hierdie area verwoes, en 12 950 mense is daklloos gelaat. Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie poog om persoolike perspektiewe van die slagoffers van die vuur binne die breër konteks van gemeenskaps- en sosio-politieke variante te ondersoek.

'n Aantal onderhoude is gevoer, somige met slagoffers van die vuur, ander met die diensleweraars in die breë veld van ramp bestuur. *Conservation of Resources (COR)* (Bewaring van Bronne) teorie was 'n sinvolle lens waardeur die data geanaliseer is. Die vuur self blyk die uitvloeisel van 'n veel langer en meer komplekse reeks gebeure en voortdurende stryd vir oorlewing te wees. Reaksies op die vuur en die daaropvolgende gebeure, moet verder op 'n paar vlakke verstaan word – onder andere inter-persoonlike en inter-groep vlakke. Die beginsels en uitvloeisels van COR teorie maak 'n dieper ondersoek van die ramp, veral in terme van die verlies van bronne en van die gevolge verwant aan die feit dat die slagoffers voor die ramp reeds minder bevoorregt was. 'n Paar relevante aangeleenthede wat die vuur voorafgegaan het word uitgelig om hierdie konteks beter te verstaan. Twee hindernisse vir gemeenskaps-intervensie word as sentraal beklemtoon. Eerstens, die realiteit van wat COR teorie as 'gemeenskappe binne gemeenskappe' ('*communities within communities*') indetifiseer, het gevolge vir slagoffers se gedrag. Tweedens is die fokus op die akute nagevolge van die vuur, en wat COR teories as 'vermeiding van lang-termyn behoeftes' ('*avoidance of long-term needs*') identifiseer.

COR teorie het die sigbaarmaking van 'n verband tussen die data en ruimte op 'n inter-groep vlak gefasiliteer. Ten spyte van die afskaffing van apartheid is daar steeds 'n hoë voorkoms van segregasie tussen groepe in Suid Afrika. Die huidige studie het gebruik gemaak van sosiale sielkunde van segregasie om die inter-groep konflik wat as die mees opvallende en voortdurende kenmerk van die ramp uitstaan, te ondersoek. Alhoewel die huidige studie ondersoekend is, word gehoop dat dit toekomstige navorsing oor die verband tussen ruimte, inter-groep verhoudinge en rampe sal aanmoedig.

Acknowledgements

A monkey and a fish were caught in a terrible flood and were being swept downstream amidst torrents of water and debris. The monkey spied a branch from an overhanging tree and pulled himself to safety from the swirling water. Then, wanting to help his friend the fish, he reached into the water and pulled the fish from water onto the branch. The moral of the story is clear: Good intentions are not enough. If you wish to help the fish, you must understand his nature.

Ancient Chinese Fable

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study arose from my work at the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture where I was employed as Head of the Counselling Department. One of the department's key projects is the disaster management programme, which developed and implemented a coordinated counselling response, for the Cape Town area, in the event of a large-scale emergency or disaster. It was as a result of this work that I came to recognise the complex processes at play in the aftermath of such events. This research project is therefore an attempt to explore the aftermath of disaster within the context of a Cape Town urban area. Disaster research and literature within the recovery phase has tended to emphasise psychiatric morbidity (Elklit, 2007; Raphael, Lundin, & Weisaeth, 1989). However, a number of studies have used a systems perspective to look at the implications of disaster for individual, relational, organisational and community resources (Erikson, 1976; Freedy, Shaw, Jarrell, & Masters, 1992; Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1989; Shalev, Schreiber, & Galai, 1993; Wright & Bartone, 1994), although even in this literature relatively little attention has been paid to the community-level effects of disasters (Phillips, 2002).

Parker (1977) pioneered such thinking by focussing specifically on the long-term recovery of a community where levels of trauma were studied 10 weeks after the disaster. Parker (1977) found that there was a correlation between maladjustment and loss of residence and possessions and disruptions to communal support networks. Similarly Lima, Pai, Santacruz, Lozano & Luna (1987) demonstrated that seven months post disaster, distress was linked to loss of possessions, disrupted employment, poor living conditions and dissatisfaction at not receiving sufficient governmental support. The literature that focuses on the long-term recovery after disasters suggests, therefore, that distress is associated with the loss of resources after the disaster, while much of the mental health literature tends to view distress as associated with exposure to the disaster itself (Bromet, Parkinson, Schulberg, Dunn, & Gondek, 1982; Eisen et al., 1993; Gleser, Green, & Winget, 1981; Green, 1982; Norris, Perilla, & Murphy, 2001; Raphael, Lundin, & Weisaeth, 1989; Shore, Tatum, & Vollmer, 1986).

Little is known about how individuals survive in the face of disaster and even less about recovery, which has always been the most understudied phase of disaster (Drabek, 2002;

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004; Phillips, 2002). Areas of disaster research that arguably merit closer attention are the socio-structural changes that take place in the aftermath of disaster, in families or in communities (Drabek, 2002). Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells (1995) argue that research is lacking in the key areas of decision-making, supportive communication, and potential organisational breakdowns or other obstacles that extreme stress engenders, and that studying these areas may contribute significantly to understanding how best to assist communities affected by disasters.

The current study will attempt to add to the above body of knowledge by focusing on the aftermath of disaster in South Africa, by exploring narratives of a fire disaster in an informal settlement. These narratives give voice to individual and collective difficulties and dynamics. "The magnitude of disasters is such that there are particular lessons that can be learned by investigating the collective reactions in the victims, as well as the associated communal processes that mitigate and aggravate the effects of these events" (McFarlane, 2005, p. 37).Given the paucity of disaster research in South Africa, it is hoped that this study will contribute to further advancements of research and theory around post-disaster processes.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 The history of Joe Slovo Informal Settlement, Langa, Cape Town

Langa is one of the Western Cape's oldest African[1] townships[2], having been formed in the 1970's. At the time of Langa's formation, influx controls were in place, particularly the Group Areas Act (No.41) of 1950 that determined the residential location of people according to race and which severely limited migration of African people into urban areas. Langa was one of the primary sites for the development of hostels[3]. There were numerous types of hostels

---

[1] In South Africa under apartheid legislation the population was divided into four groups based on racial classification, Black/African, Coloured, Asian or White. I will make use of these terms within the thesis because they are often referred to in the data and continue to hold great significance in a post-apartheid South Africa.

[2] A residential development, which, during the apartheid years, was, confined to non-whites.

[3] Single-sex labour compounds to house Africans while they were working in the 'white' urban areas (Ramphele, 1993).

situated there, for example, the Old Flats, Special Quarters, the Zones, and the New Flats (Ramphele, 1993). "The Zones" are of particular importance to the current study. This phrase refers to the old migrant hostels, which were single-storey brick buildings built in long rows. "The Zones" were said to be the worst accommodation amongst the hostels built in Langa (Ramphele, 1993). They are very dark inside due to the fact that there are few windows. The units were made up of three bedrooms (Ramphele, 1993). With the abolition of apartheid, these hostels remained the property of the City of Cape Town and were then rented out to families. At present these hostels are being upgraded as part of the Hostel Re-Development Project of the Provincial Government.

Figure 1
Map of Joe Slovo
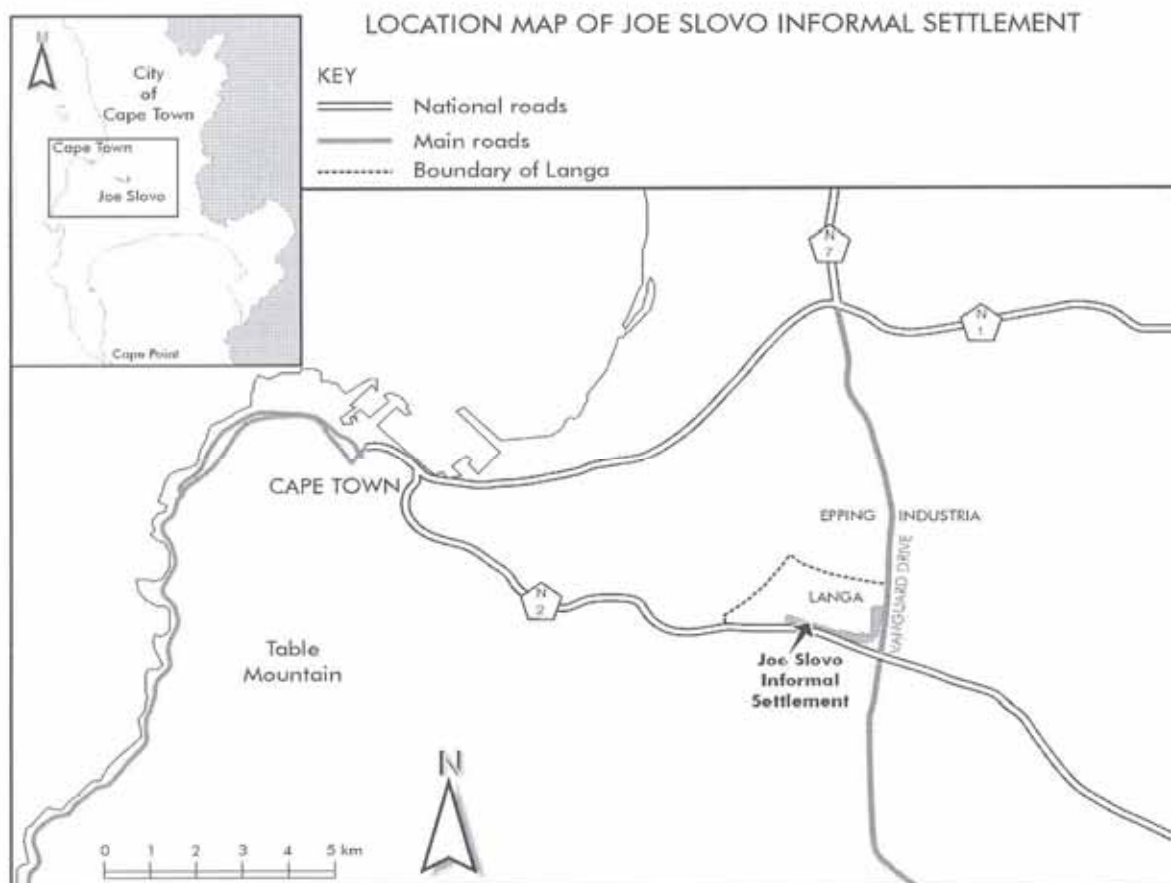
Joe Slovo (see Figure 1), as it is now lies, is on the piece of land that was supposed to define the edge of Langa. It is an informal settlement[4] situated on the eastern and southern side of Langa Township, in a narrow piece of land between the hostels and formal houses of Langa, and a 'coloured' settlement, Bonteheuwel. Joe Slovo began in 1994 as a result of a gradual influx of people to the area at the intersection of Vanguard Drive and Washington Street. This area was initially known as Mpumza Park but as it expanded it became known as Joe Slovo (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002).

 Influx control measures were done away with following the abolition of Apartheid in 1992. The Joe Slovo settlement that emerged was a direct consequence of a changing social and political landscape. It appears that the residents of Joe Slovo were old Langa residents, primarily migrant workers who had been living in backyard shacks[5] and hostels, but who moved into shacks on the nearby strip of unoccupied land when their families had moved from the rural Eastern Cape to Cape Town to join them (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). Joe Slovo was therefore seen as a halfway house for people moving down from the Eastern Cape, between the rural Eastern Cape and a possible move into formal housing as families found their feet in Cape Town. This resulted in tension between this group and the bonded property owners who had formal houses on the border of Langa. This created many problems for the formal homeowners whose property prices dropped significantly with the development of the informal settlement opposite them.

Despite the tension with the owners of formal housing in Langa, Joe Slovo was, and continues to be, a highly sought-after settlement primarily because of its positioning. It is close to industrial areas and an established transport network which links it to the central business district (CBD) (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). In addition to this Joe Slovo is geographically closer to the CBD and other forms of employment than most of the other informal settlements within Cape Town.

---

[4] Informal settlements refer to areas of land on which low-cost dwellings are situated; they are usually located on the periphery of cities. The dwellings or shacks are often made of corrugated metal, wood and sheets of plastic.

[5] An individual or family renting land in another residents' backyard. These dwellings are usually made of corrugated iron and wood.

Joe Slovo is densely populated and continues to have a constant flux of people moving in, now mainly from settlements nearby. "By 2000 the number of dwellings had grown to 4 300 – a staggering 100% increase between 1998 and 2000 on an estimated 30 hectares of land" (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002, p. 22). Numerous attempts by the local authority to evict people were unsuccessful. In 1998, with the withdrawal of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (No 52 of 1951, a piece of apartheid legislation intended to prevent migration to urban areas), it became illegal to evict people from their homes. In addition, an individual dwelling was not allowed to be demolished without a court order. These changes in policy proved extremely challenging to the local authority who desperately tried to control influx and the haphazard nature of informal settlements' growth (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). In addition to this they were under increasing pressure to provide basic infrastructure and health services. It was only in 1998 that the first toilets were provided to Joe Slovo (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The issue of providing services and infrastructure to informal settlements is extremely complex and made difficult by the absence of formal policies on informal settlements (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). Informally, services are provided on the condition that such settlements will be around for at least 3 years. It was on the basis on this condition that the electricity department agreed to provide basic electrification of informal settlements situated on council land.

1.1.2 The 15 January 2005 fire

On 15 January 2005 a devastating fire swept through the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement. Two thousand five hundred and ninety dwellings were destroyed leaving 12 950 people homeless (official statistics as quoted by one of Cape Town's disaster risk management officials interviewed). Figure2 and Figure 3 show aerial photographs of the affected area.

Figure 2

Aerial photograph of fire affected community

Figure 3

Aerial photograph of fire affected community

This was one of the biggest fire events in South Africa's history, although the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement is similar to many marginalised communities affected by large-scale fires in South Africa; "it has faced the recurrent threat of fire over the past decade, a risk aggravated by poverty, inadequate infrastructure and the ongoing influx of informal residents" (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002, p. 2). In that sense, investigating this fire may illumine the dynamics of other disasters that take place in South Africa.

As a result of my work at the Trauma Centre, in the aftermath of the January 2005 fire, I had a contact with a survivor from the affected community itself, which resulted me being given the opportunity to interview him. This interview was tape-recorded and allowed me to explore the impact of the fire on this individual, his family and his surrounding community. In addition to this, through my work at the Trauma Centre, I had a detailed conversation with a top official who had been involved with fire risk in this community for many years. These then served as "a preliminary reconnaissance" (Killian, 2002, p. 60) exercise to explore issues related to the specific disaster event before embarking on a research project.

It was evident from these interviews that the disaster had impacted at many levels, firstly with the survivors, not only as individuals but also as members of a community, and secondly, those who were involved in an official work capacity who spoke of a complex socio-political history relating to fire events in Joe Slovo itself. The current study will consider both individual and collective experiences of disaster in the light of the macro-level issues at play. It is certainly no coincidence that disasters have a tendency, worldwide and in South Africa, to affect the most marginalised and vulnerable sectors of the community (Drabek, 2002; Khondker, 2002; World Health Organisation, 2000). Although the majority of disasters take place in the developing world, affecting millions of people every year, disaster research in these areas ironically "remains virtually nonexistent, or at best, underdeveloped" (Khondker, 2002, p. 334) It is hoped that this study can shed some light on the complexities of disaster in South Africa in a way that will be meaningful and useful to a variety of audiences and in some way to provide a basis of understanding to fulfil what Drabek (2002, p. 128) refers to as the promise of disaster research, "to help to prevent or ameliorate human suffering".

1.1.3 The legal basis for disaster management in South Africa

In June 1994 there was a call for legislative reform in terms of the need for decentralised funding in the event of a disaster. Following a broad consultative process The Disaster Management Act (No.57) of 2002 (hereafter The Act) was promulgated on the 15 January 2003. The Act (NDMF, 2005: 1) provided for:

> An integrated and co-ordinated disaster risk management policy that focuses of preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, preparedness, rapid and effective response to disasters, and post-disaster recovery
> The establishment of national, provincial and municipal disaster management centres
> Disaster risk management volunteers

The Act also provided for a National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF), which set out four key performance areas (KPA's) and three supportive enablers to help achieve the objectives of the KPA's. KPA 1 referred to setting up integrated disaster management capacity at a national, provincial and municipal level. KPA 2 focused on the need for disaster risk assessment and monitoring. KPA 3 addressed the need for disaster risk reduction, while KPA 4 presents priorities and concerns with reference to response and recovery (NDMF, 2005). The three enablers referred to information and communication, education and training, and funding arrangements.

The Act (2002) similarly provided for Provincial Disaster Management Frameworks (PDMF) and Municipal Disaster Management Frameworks (MDMF), that is, frameworks at provincial and local government levels, which were to be consistent with the provisions of the Act and the national framework. For the purposes of the current study it is important to note that each municipality needed to establish and implement a framework for disaster management within their area of operation. The Joe Slovo Informal Settlement in Langa falls within the ambit of The Cape Town Disaster Risk Management Centre (CTDRMC), which is regarded as a municipal centre. At the time of the Joe Slovo fire, however, the framework for the City of Cape Town had yet to be finalised.

1.1.3.1 The declaration of a disaster

In terms of the current study it is important to note that the January 2005 Joe Slovo Informal Settlement Fire (2590 dwellings destroyed) was not declared a local disaster unlike the November 2000 shack fire in the same area (950 dwellings destroyed) that was declared a "National Disaster". There were a number of reasons for this; firstly changes within the disaster legislative framework meant that funding had been decentralised to local municipalities who were therefore more empowered and financially capacitated to manage a local disaster. Structural changes, however, needed to take place at national, provincial and municipal levels in order to support these legislative changes. This restructuring process was mid-way when the January 2005 fire took place with the consequence that the CTDRMC had not, as yet, appointed its staff and this meant that reporting and decision-making structures were in a state of flux. The decision of whether or not to declare a disaster therefore rested with the City of Cape Town's Mayor, rather than with disaster management specialists. According to The Act (2002) in order for a local state of disaster to be declared the municipality concerned must make the assessment that existing legislation and resources are unable to manage the scale of the event. The Mayor made the decision not to declare a disaster based on her assessment that the City of Cape Town had both the internal capacity and local funding resources to manage the situation on their own; it did not necessitate provincial or national assistance. In the past such an incident would have been declared a disaster in order to access centralised disaster funding.

1.2 Structure of thesis

The fire in question resulted in a complex chain of events to which are attached attitudes, emotions and behaviours. As a result of changes in legislation and the consequent restructuring processes within the City of Cape Town, the fire itself initiated a chain of complex events. It is my aim to guide the reader through some of these complexities in a systematic way that enables fruitful engagement with issues and dynamics within South Africa that (one could argue) go beyond the realms of this disaster. Because of the narrative structure of my thesis, and to avoid complex passive-voice sentences, I have chosen to refer to myself in the first person throughout.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of disaster research and literature. It explores key definitions and classification systems for disaster, as well as some recent trends and statistics. It highlights two over-arching frameworks for understanding the concept and implications of disaster. These frameworks are then examined in more detail and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is offered as a useful model for understanding this disaster. Chapter Three presents a discussion of the methodology employed in the study. It provides information about the methodological positioning of the study; the research design and data analysis processes, and concludes with some thoughts on the limitations and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four is included in order to provide a contextual and holistic appreciation of the complexities surrounding the 15 January 2005 Joe Slovo Informal Settlement Fire. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first section explores an evaluation report conducted in the Joe Slovo area, which deals specifically with fire risk in the area, and the second section details interviews conducted with some key service providers in the disaster field who made mention of pertinent pre-event information that potentially had great significance for the current study.

Chapter Five is the first of two results chapters. This chapter focuses on the results with specific reference to the interviews conducted with a number of professionals who were directly involved in managing the 15 January 2005 fire. In order for the chronic nature of this disaster to become visible I decided to follow a chronological approach in presenting the findings in relation to the acute event first, and then moving on to post-event issues, such as shifts in survivor behaviour and group dynamics. Chapter Six captures the results that emerged from in-depth interviews conducted with a group of Joe Slovo fire survivors. This mirrors the structure of the previous chapter and includes individual and community responses to the fire, the issue of loss and group dynamics.

Chapter Seven provides a detailed exploration and discussion around the salient issues that emerged in the analysis of the data. It makes use of COR theory (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) as a framework for structuring the analysis. The interface between the data and COR theory are detailed in terms of its core principles and corollaries, as well as a discussion related to the obstacles to disaster intervention (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993) as described by the service providers and survivors. The chapter concludes with the acknowledgement that further exploration is necessary into the role of space in inter-group relations and informal segregation within South Africa.

After having conducted a thorough literature review and having collected and analysed all my data using existing disaster theories I was cognisant of the fact that there was a wealth of information around space embedded in the data that remained unexplored. It was at that point that decided to make use of an unconventional thesis structure by re-engaging with literature from the perspective of space, conflict and identity in informal urban spaces in South Africa. I could have made the decision to re-organise the literature review but I decided that it would be confusing to the reader and it would take away valuable information about my journey in making sense of the data. Chapter Eight therefore offers a second framework for analysing the data in relation to social and place psychology that highlight the need to understand the interface between space, identity and group dynamics, dynamics that – from my data - clearly played out at a community level. This chapter focuses primarily on the South African context in an attempt to understand the possible roots and functions of segregation. The chapter looks at the history of segregation in South Africa, with special reference to the migrant labour system, and then explores the remnants of this system in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Nine draws on this literature to further the previous discussion chapter by hypothesising about the role that space plays in informal urban spaces in South Africa. I argued that space was very carefully negotiated and structured in Joe Slovo prior to the fire event. This negotiation formed part of local knowledge and was embedded in kinship networks that were originally formed during the migrant labour system as a strategy, at a communal level, to enable the survival of individuals. I made the point that in the post-disaster process of relocation these networks were fragmented leaving individuals struggling with a sense of belonging, identity and place. One of most salient and ongoing features of this disaster was the dissolution of social fabric. Given the fact that group boundaries are said to play a crucial role in regulating and ordering behaviour this could be seen to be the effects of group boundary fragmentation. Linked to this was the predominance of narratives relating to difference and diversity. I will argue that the survivors were attempting to reinstate group boundaries because it was these very boundaries that provided them with a sense of belonging and identity, especially in the absence of their homes. Within the context of the current study I will argue that the restoration and recovery processes in the aftermath of the 15 January 2005 Joe Slovo Informal Settlement fire were to be found within the complexity of the re-negotiation of space.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Whether natural or human induced, disasters by definition strike with such startling violence and unpredictable force that they leave in their wake individuals, families and communities ravaged by the immediate and long-term effects. Over the last decade the contributions to the field of disaster, whether at an interventionist or research level, have grown at a rapid pace as mental health practitioners, disaster management responders, academics, politicians and lay persons grapple with the complex and multi-layered issues and implications of disaster events. In order to embark on a comprehensive review of this diverse and multi-faceted field the literature review needs to begin by addressing a number of fundamental issues. These issues range from the debates around the definition of disaster, to the way in which disaster events are classified, and then to some international disaster trends and statistics.

With these fundamentals in mind the literature review then broadens its focus to a number of theoretical frameworks that speak to disaster research and response efforts. Two key themes emerged time and again while I was reviewing disaster-related literature. The first spoke to the life cycle of disaster events, i.e., that disasters do not begin and end with a single disaster event. They are more long-term in nature, more a chronic set of consequences than an acute event. This is an issue that is highlighted throughout the literature review as it is continually reflected in a number of theoretical arguments from varying sources. The second theme relates to the polarisation of disaster frameworks, which prioritise either an individual or societal/community focus. It is anticipated that both of these paradigms will hold great significance for the current study and as a result I have made the decision to mirror this polarisation within the structure of the literature review itself. I have therefore divided the review, from this point on, into an 'individual/micro-level' and a 'societal/macro-level' understanding of disaster.

Given my expectation that both paradigms would speak to the current study I was particularly interested the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory which was able to give a credible voice to individual stress narratives (Hobfoll, 1989), although later developments in the theory do incorporate something of a focus on the community (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). I have located it initially within the individual/micro-level paradigm, and the theory's extension (which acknowledged that its principles could be broadened to community stress) has been located

within the community/macro-level paradigm. These two paradigms, which up until this point in the literature review are considered separately, are then merged into an holistic and comprehensive exploration of COR theory in general. This proved to be a helpful template for understanding my data, as will be shown in the first Results chapter. The concluding section of this literature review deals specifically with an issue that is expected to be of fundamental importance to the current study and that is COR theory's perspective on the obstacles to disaster intervention at an individual and community level (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

2.1 Defining a disaster

In recent years there have been many disasters around the world, such as the Iranian earthquake in Bam, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, USA, and the tsunami in Asia. All of these incidents were vastly different in nature and yet have all been declared disasters by their respective countries. There is no consensus on a scientific definition of the term, and in fact there are over 40 definitions of 'disaster' in the literature (World Health Organisation, 2000). Some definitions focus on human losses, others prioritise number of injured persons, and yet others count material and economic losses. Definitions are key as they enable the exploration of a disaster's significant features, the conditions that led to it and its consequences (Lopez-Ibor, 2005).

According to the World Health Organisation (World Health Organisation, 2000) a disaster can be defined as, "a severe disruption, ecological and psychosocial, which greatly exceeds the coping capacity of the affected community". This definition reflects the majority of definitions concerning disaster research in that they make reference to events which threaten to disrupt communities or larger social systems (Killian, 2002). The World Disasters Report (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004) makes use of a more comprehensive definition of disaster as provided by The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) at the University of Louvain. CRED defines a disaster as a "situation or event, which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to national or international level for external assistance; an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction and human suffering" (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004, p. 168). I have decided to make use of this definition of disaster for the purposes of this thesis as it is the present working definition of disaster used to

compile and maintain the EM-DAT, a international disaster database[6] (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). It contains data on the occurrence and effects of over 14,000 disasters worldwide from 1900 until today. For a disaster to be entered into the EM-DAT database, a minimum of one of the following criteria must be fulfilled (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004):

- Ten or more people reported killed;
- One hundred people reported affected;
- Declaration of a state of emergency;
- Call for international assistance.

There are other features that are common to disasters worldwide (World Health Organisation, 2000):

1. A disaster disrupts social structures and cannot be managed or controlled by the usual social mechanisms. For example family members who normally rely on each other for support in normal circumstances or even in crises may find themselves incapacitated and unable to help themselves, let alone family members.

2. There are numerous variables that can mitigate the effects of a disaster. These include the ability of victims to adjust psychologically, the capacity of community structures to adapt to the crisis at hand, and the amount of help available.

3. The concept of disaster changes over time and among different cultures. An example of this could be found in the debates that have raged in America after Hurricane Katrina that took place on the 29 August 2005 and left two million people displaced (Hartman & Squires, 2006). Many people have argued that there is no such thing as a 'natural disaster' because vulnerability and hazard is primarily held by marginalised communities; disasters are therefore political, economic and social but not natural (Hartman & Squires, 2006).

4. Since catastrophic events are frequent in many developing countries, this may raise the threshold for an event to be considered a disaster. This should however not lead to

---

[6] "EM-DAT has been in existence since 1988; the USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) sponsors it. CRED, which is a World Health Organisation collaborating centre, has maintained this worldwide database on disasters. Priority is given to data from UN agencies, followed by OFDA, governments and the International Federation" (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004, p. 169).

a failure to recognise and respond to the adverse effects that may occur as this may undermine the morale and resources of the community even further, and may lessen its capacity to adjust. Lopez-Ibor (2005) similarly makes reference to communities who experience repeated disasters, such as flooding, and states that in these cases a culture of adaptation and resignation to disasters may develop.

2.2 The taxonomy of disaster

Despite disagreement surrounding the definition of disaster, there is consensus around their classification as either natural disasters or human-induced disasters (World Health Organisation, 2000):

- ➢ **Natural disasters** include earthquake, flood, cyclone, hurricane, tornado, landslides, volcanic eruption and drought.
- ➢ **Human-induced disasters** fall into two main categories:
  - ○ **Technological disasters** such as toxic, chemical and nuclear accidents, dam collapse, fire or transport accidents
  - ○ **Complex emergencies** include war and conflicts or one of these with a natural disaster

EM-DAT, however, categorises disaster events slightly differently and with significantly more detail (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). The database has two generic disaster categories, namely natural and technological, that are then divided into 15 main categories, each covering over 50 sub-categories.

2.3 Disaster trends and statistics

Over the decade 1994-2003 the numbers of reported disasters, both natural and technological, have risen markedly (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). The World Disasters Report makes use of the EM-DAT definition of disaster which refers to an event which overwhelms local capacity necessitating external assistance and is seen to be unexpected and highly destructive (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). From 1994 to 1998 the number of reported

disasters averaged 428 per year – from 1999 to 2003, this figure jumped by two-thirds to an average of 707 disaster events per year (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). The most notable rise was in developing countries, which endured an increase of 142%. In addition to this, from 1994 to 2003, deaths reported per disaster event were on average seven times higher in these countries than in developed countries (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). See Table 1 for the total number of disaster events from 1994-2003, broken down by continent and year.

Table 1

Total number of reported disasters by continent and year (1994-2003) (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Africa	59	63	58	56	83	144	196	186	201	163	1,209
Americas	80	99	95	102	112	137	147	128	153	119	1,172
Asia	182	177	176	195	209	240	289	295	301	164	2,328
Europe	69	72	55	60	66	78	122	92	111	85	810
Oceania	17	8	17	15	17	15	13	18	18	20	158
High human development	*96*	*126*	*102*	*128*	*124*	*137*	*173*	*143*	*164*	*134*	*1,327*
Medium human development	*267*	*233*	*238*	*236*	*272*	*358*	*428*	*403*	*453*	*366*	*3,254*
Low human development	*44*	*60*	*61*	*64*	*91*	*119*	*166*	*173*	*167*	*151*	*1,096*
Total	**407**	**419**	**401**	**428**	**487**	**614**	**767**	**719**	**784**	**651**	**5,677**

Source: EM-DAT, CRED, University of Louvain, Belgium

2.3.1 Deaths drop, number of affected rises

Notwithstanding the increased numbers of disaster events reported over the decade, average annual death tolls dropped from 75,000 per year (1994-1998) to 59,000 (1999-2003)

(International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). The report postulates that the reason for the increasing numbers of people affected by disaster can be found in a number of factors (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). Two of key factors identified were:

1. An increase in the numbers of reported disasters, driven partly by a more variable global climate.
2. A rapid increase of population in poorer parts of the world, this combined with rapid and unplanned urban development has seemingly put more people at risk.

2.3.2 Development level determines disaster costs

The level of human development in a country appears to determine the intensity of impact that a disaster will have (see Figure 4 and 5) (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). This is analysed by comparing reported deaths and costs per disaster event. In the past decade natural and technological disasters, in high human development[7] (HHD) countries, killed an average of 44 people per incident, in comparison to disasters in low human development (LHD) countries that killed an average of 300 people. Interestingly, however, estimated costs of damage are reversed with HHD countries recording worth of damage 11 times higher than LHD countries (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). This has been explained by the high-value infrastructure within HHD countries.

---

[7] Levels of development are taken from the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI). "The HDI measures the average achievement in a country along three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. High human development (>0.85), medium human development (0.70), and low human development (<0.58) (United Nations, 2007).

Figure 4

Average number of deaths per reported disaster (1994-2003)[8] (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004, p. 164)
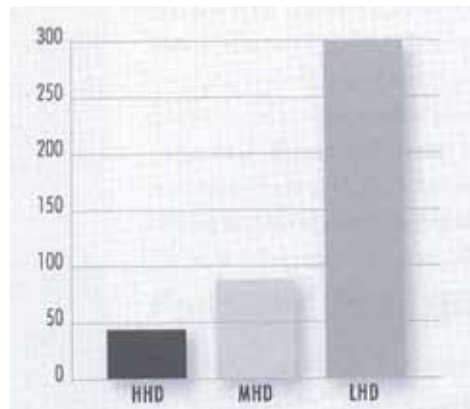
Figure 5

Average economic damage per reported disaster (1994-2003)[9] (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004, p. 164)

---
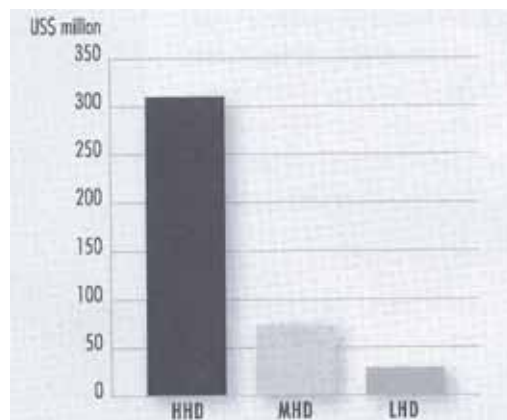
[8] Copied from the World Disasters Report (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004)

[9] Copied from the World Disasters Report (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004)

2.4 Key themes that emerged across disaster frameworks

2.4.1 The developmental approach to disaster

In the past there was a tendency for international disaster response organisations to equate disaster assistance with acute, basic needs provision, such a shelter, food and sanitation (World Health Organisation, 2000). In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition of the longer-term, psychosocial implications for survivors. Research reflecting such a developmental perspective of disaster was pioneered by researchers such as Parker (1977) who found an association between maladjustment and loss of residence, possessions and disruptions to communal support networks. This study indicated a distinction between initial levels of distress among survivors, which were linked to "mortality stress", fear of injury or death, and dysfunction after 10 weeks, which was associated with "relocation stressors" such as loss of residence (Parker, 1977).

More recently this was supported by research that demonstrated that distress, seven months post disaster, was less related to the acute event than to chronic problems that resulted from it, such as loss of possessions, disrupted employment, poor living conditions and dissatisfaction at not receiving sufficient government support (Lima, Pai, Santacruz, Lozano, & Luna, 1987). Similarly other, more recent, studies found that stress related to rebuilding or finding new homes, attaining goods to overcome material losses and restoring daily functioning were themselves associated with distress (Salzer & Bickman, 1999). This growing body of evidence has demonstrated that post-disaster stress is often as much associated with the long-term implications of disaster as it is with the acute traumatic event itself (Hutton, 2001). A recent example of this can be found in Hurricane Katrina. The acute event, the storms and floods, were compounded first by the poor disaster response and the delayed evacuation of at least 100 000 people (Crowley, 2006). The trauma was then "exacerbated and extended by a temporary housing program that could not have been more poorly designed and executed if it had been purposely intended to fail" (Crowley, 2006, p. 121).

Another example can found in Cape Town, South Africa, after the Manenberg[10] Tornado[11] that took place on the29 August 1999 when a tornado swept through four marginalised communities in Cape Town. In order to understand more about the current study it may be useful to reflect on this disaster that had some similar features to the Joe Slovo.   Five people were killed in the storm and over 200 injured. In one of the areas alone 1950 houses and flats were damaged to the extent that they had to be demolished (Crawford-Browne, 2000, p. iii):

> People who were at their windows or on the streets at 6am describe a dirty, blue/red glowing ball with electrical currents, which rushed through – taking roofs, breaking electrical wires and shattering windows. Those who saw it vividly describe the dirty smell of the wind, and the unbearable noise. They'll also tell you exactly where they were, what they did and how they reacted. It was terrifying to witness such an event

These affected communities had been subject to forced removals, racial segregation and consequent poverty and hardship during the apartheid regime, the effects of which are still felt today. These are factors that should not be underestimated when considering the impact of a disaster event. Although numerous organisations, institutions and state departments rallied to their aid, to provide shelter, food, counselling or support, there had however been no preparedness strategy on the part of community organisations and the reality was that they were all taken off-guard. In a study that was conducted by the Trauma Centre on behalf on the Mayor's Office (Crawford-Browne, 2000), it was found that the participants voiced a collective sense of disempowerment and outrage at how the disaster itself had been managed. The report argued that the communities had been traumatised first by the disaster itself, but secondarily by a number of other factors, such as perceived discrimination around reimbursements, insensitivity to experiences of trauma, and a lack of clear communication not only about what could be expected in terms of structural aid but in terms of "natural" reactions to trauma and resources for support. This has been referred to in the literature as "the second disaster", as so often the process of seeking help from government, voluntary agencies, and insurance companies is fraught with rules, red tape, hassles, delays and disappointment for the survivors (Myers, Zunin, &

---

[10] A formerly 'coloured' area in the apartheid era.

[11] The tornado affected a very large area including the townships of Guguletu, Manenberg, Tambo Village and Surrey Estate.

Zunin, 1990).   Such processes can be seen as counterproductive as they aggravate the recovery process (Lopez-Ibor, 2005).

It is clear that disaster cannot be seen as an acute, single, time-limited event but should rather be conceptualised as a chain of events that contain multiple losses and threats to loss, and even appreciable opportunities for gain (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993).   In this way disaster can be understood along a pre-post disaster continuum according to several inter-related disaster dimensions (World Health Organisation, 2000) as can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6

The psychosocial pre-post disaster continuum (World Health Organisation, 2000, p. 14)
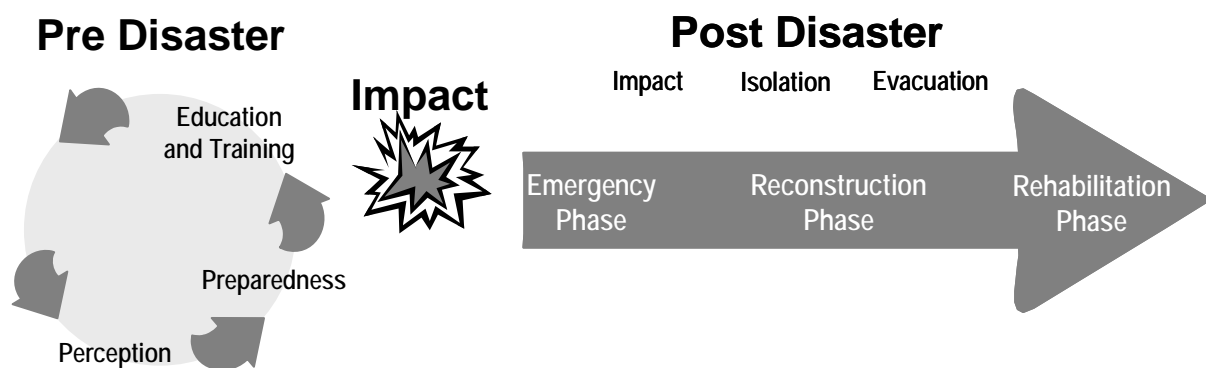
Nomdo (2002, p. 135), in a similar disaster continuum, makes reference to five key stages of a disaster event:

- Prevention: measures that ensure permanent protection from harm.
- Mitigation: policies and activities that reduce vulnerability to damage from future disasters.
- Preparedness: building a response and management capacity, before a disaster occurs, to facilitate an effective response when needed.
- Relief/response: Actions taken immediately before, during and after a disaster event has occurred to minimise loss of life and harm to people and their possessions in order in increase their chances of effective recovery.
- Reconstruction/recovery: Programmes that provide longer-term assistance for the disaster survivors.

Most communities, pre-disaster, appear to hold -as individuals do - a belief that disaster is something that happens to others. Consequently, communities may be under-prepared (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1989). Disasters tend to have a very low priority for the majority of people when compared to other societal issues, such as crime and unemployment (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1989). This is consistent with the fact that for many service organisations, everyday tasks, especially statutory tasks such as child protection, have a much higher priority than disaster preparedness. Both individuals and organisations tend to believe that the probability of disaster occurring is too remote to warrant the effort of preparation. All of these issues together with the fact that there is often little or no knowledge about the potential effects of disaster or of effective strategies for dealing with them means that communities are usually taken off-guard by disasters and quickly become immobilised by them (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1989).

The World Health Organisation (2000, p. 15) similarly reflects a longitudinal view of disaster a multi-dimensional model of the implications of disaster, a model that speak primarily to issues of chronicity:

1. The health dimension - the burden of providing health care using a fragile health system that often exists in disaster-affected developing countries;
2. The psychosocial dimension – the costs of providing psychosocial services which includes social integration and psychological and social rehabilitation of affected communities;
3. The economic dimension – the measures needed for reconstruction and long-term rehabilitation of productive systems;
4. The cost of humanitarian emergency assistance that was lacking long-term sustainability.

2.4.2 Individual versus collective responses to disaster

A complex interaction of multiple factors both pre- and post-trauma determine the extent to which individuals are susceptible to developing stress responses in the aftermath of disaster. As early as 1972 it was proposed that there was a differentiation between individual and collective trauma (Erikson, 1976). Individual trauma was defined as "a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively" (Erikson, 1976, p. 303). Individual trauma therefore refers to a person directly

affected by a disaster event. The person is left feeling depleted, defeated and within the internal resources to cope. This is referred to in the literature in terms of stress and grief responses where an individual may be unable to return to work, help family members or themselves. Collective trauma, on the other hand, refers to "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (Erikson, 1976, p. 303). Collective or community trauma is less visible than individual trauma but has the potential to be as debilitating and over-whelming. It centres on the trauma of the community as a whole, which is often aggravated by the fact that resources have been destroyed, support structures stretched to their limit and general infrastructure incapacitated. The impact of disaster on social groups is said to be related to the adaptive mechanisms and abilities of the community (Lopez-Ibor, 2005). Within this context it is argued that social, political and economic factors can be more damaging and destructive to social cohesion than the disaster itself (Lopez-Ibor, 2005). An example could be found in Hurricane Katrina where the disaster was said to be more about race and inequality than the event itself as a result of the fact that it was the disadvantaged communities who were most at risk and they were primarily poor and African-American (Powell, Jeffries, Newhart, & Stiens, 2006).

These two types of trauma are not mutually exclusive but influence each other, for example an individual would find it difficult, if not impossible, to heal from the effects of individual trauma if the community itself remained fragmented (Bolin & Bolton, 1986). An example of this would be a survivor who needed to seek spiritual counselling but was prevented from doing so because his/her local minister was incapacitated due to the loss of his wife.

It is argued that both of these types of disaster trauma are importance; that they should be seen to lie on a continuum and that any attempt to see them as distinct will take away from their interdependence in that "social contingencies define the self and the self-in-collective comprises the community" (Hobfoll, 1998, p. 121). With this in mind, the literature review will now consider both of these approaches to disaster. First an individualistic approach will be explored which will focus on micro-level discourse, and then the discussion will explore the macro-level implications of disaster i.e. the socio-political backdrop to disaster and its after effects.

2.5 Disaster frameworks

2.5.1 Individual/micro-level understanding of disaster

Disaster-related literature that prioritises an individual approach to trauma primarily falls within two opposing camps: one that speaks to pathology and one to normality. I will now explore both of these approaches that attempt to explain and understand an individuals' response following a disaster event.

2.5.1.1 Psychiatric morbidity

Post disaster research has focussed primarily on the psychiatric morbidity of individual survivors (Bromet, Parkinson, Schulberg, Dunn, & Gondek, 1982; Eisen et al., 1993; Gleser, Green, & Winget, 1981; Green, 1982; Norris, Perilla, & Murphy, 2001; Norris et al., 2001; Raphael, Lundin, & Weisaeth, 1989; Shore, Tatum, & Vollmer, 1986) . These studies in general have supported the view that human responses to trauma were rooted within internal processes and pathology.

Research however has not supported the notion that PTSD is a typical and expected response to trauma, as is illustrated by three areas of particular interest within the trauma field: studies in the areas of prevalence, vulnerability and comorbidity (Yehuda & McFarlane, 1995).

2.5.1.1.1 Prevalence studies:

Prevalence studies have looked at the notion of expectation, i.e. that a disorder will follow exposure to trauma (Breslau, Davis, Andreski, & Peterson, 1991). It has been argued that in documented epidemiological studies it is difficult to find even transitory symptoms in more than 50% of the population, and in the majority, the symptoms will have usually resolved within 2-3 years (Yehuda & McFarlane, 1995). Thus, the available epidemiological data suggests that PTSD, and certainly chronic PTSD, is more unusual than usual following exposure to a variety of traumatic events.

2.5.1.1.2 Vulnerability studies:

Taking the above findings into account one has to question the assumption that exposure to trauma is in itself the sole risk factor for PTSD. Research into the issue of risk factors therefore became a priority. A number of factors have been significantly associated with PTSD including genetics (Eisen et al., 1993), family history (Breslau, Davis, Andreski, & Peterson, 1991), individual personality (Schurr, Friedman, & Rosenberg, 1993), past history of trauma (Zaidi & Foy, 1994) and life events (McFarlane, 1989). These studies show that vulnerability is not random and neither is it completely dependent on exposure to trauma.

2.5.1.1.3 Comorbidity studies:

Related to the vulnerability studies was the question of whether risk factors for PTSD were specific to PTSD, or indicated a general predisposition to psychiatric disorders including (but not limited to) PTSD. These findings certainly suggest that it is the exception rather than the rule for an individual to meet the criteria for PTSD exclusively (Breslau, Davis, Andreski, & Peterson, 1991; Freedy, Shaw, Jarrell, & Masters, 1992; Kulka et al., 1990). The very presence of PTSD may therefore indicate an underlying constitutional vulnerability rather than a normal response to an abnormal event.

2.5.1.2 The issue of normality

Despite a paucity of research within the trauma field itself, prior to official recognition of PTSD as a disorder, the idea that an individual would react in a 'normal' and expected way following an external stressor was supported from a number of different fields. A major contribution was made from early biological studies of stress in particular by the work of Walter Cannon (Cannon, 1932) and later Hans Selye (1956). Selye's work suggested that there was an expected common reaction, the 'General Adaptation Syndrome', to adverse external stressors, which involved a sequence of alert response, resistance response and exhaustion (Selye, 1956).

2.5.1.2.1 Definitions Of Stress

Stress researchers, although congruent in their view that stress plays a key role in people's lives, and is integrally linked with mental and physical health, disagree on the construct of stress itself. Theories of stress have been severely criticised because they lack a clear theoretical framework, which has made it difficult to study stress and its effects (Hobfoll, 1989). Some of the earlier definitions of stress referred to "a substantial imbalance between environmental demand and the response capacity of the focal organism" (McGrath quoted in (Hobfoll, 1989). More recently stress was defined as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The perception of traumatic stress that has been further criticised is one that focuses on an individual perception of stress as it separates stress from its original source in the external environment (Hobfoll, 1998). This creates a fundamental problem because stress is then defined as a subjective appraisal of an event and this immediately places it within the realm of neurosis (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). An alternative view that is proposed is one that postulates that stress appraisal is primarily objective. It is a reasonable interpretation of actual events and is not as idiographic as mainstream models assume.

Given the difficulties with existing stress theories a new model of stress was proposed, the Conservation Of Resources (COR), which was clearly testable, and comprehensively explained behaviour during stressful experiences (Hobfoll, 1989, 1998). It is parsimonious in drawing from a number of previous theories such as homeostatic (McGrath quoted in Hobfoll, 1989), transactional (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and cognitive (Spielberger, 1966) models of stress, and provides a clearer direction for future research on stress and stress resistance.

COR theory draws from the social learning theory idea that success is more likely if individuals seek to create and maintain personal characteristics (e.g. mastery or self-esteem) and social circumstances (e.g. tenure or intimacy) that will increase the likelihood of receipt of reinforcement and to avoid the loss of such characteristics and circumstances (Hobfoll, 1989). COR theory's definition of stress is derived directly from the social learning model and the following tenet: "Psychological stress is defined as a reaction to the environment in which there is (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of

resources, or (c) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Both perceived and actual loss or perceived gains are seen as sufficient for producing stress.

Having covered a basic introduction to COR theory I will now move onto a more detailed exploration of how it explains individual stress without resorting to notions of neuroses and pathology. This aspect of the literature review only deals with COR theory as applied to individuals. It is my intention, later in the chapter, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of COR theory as expanded to communities and larger social systems.

2.5.1.2.2 Conservation Of Resources Theory and individual stress

The idea that individuals seek to create a world that provides them with pleasure and success is one that has been acknowledged for some time within the field of psychology (Freud, 1900 in Hobfoll, 1989). Similarly COR theory emphasises the notion that individuals actively engage their environment in order to increase their chances of obtaining reinforcement (Hobfoll, 1989).

COR theory also draws on the work of Maslow (1968), who originally proposed that people seek physical resources, then (when their physical needs are met) social resources, then (when physical and social needs are met) psychological resources, in a hierarchical manner. The inclusion of resources as a concept in crisis theory has historical roots in the work of Caplan (1964) who stated that "the essential factor determining the occurrence of crisis is an imbalance between the perceived difficulty and significance of the threatening situation, and the resources available immediately for coping with the situation" (Ewing, 1978, p. 13). COR theory argues that resources are the single unit necessary for understanding stress. "Resources are defined as those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516).

The COR model goes further than previous stress models in that it attempts to predict behaviour when an individual is confronted with stress. It predicts that when confronted with stress, individuals strive to minimise net loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition

to this, the model also attempts to predict behaviour when an individual is not confronted with stress. COR theory postulates that when not exposed to stress, individuals will seek to develop resource surpluses in order to offset the possibility of future loss (Hobfoll, 1989).

I will now move on to an exploration of the macro-level implications of disaster and come back to COR theory within this framework as it broadened out to consider disaster/extreme stress from a community point of view.

2.5.2 Societal/macro-level understanding of disaster

I have decided to begin this section by broadly reflecting on disaster in developing nations and the issues that it consequently raises on the world stage. As the current study is based in South Africa I have then narrowed the review to issues of poverty and inequality within the South African context. This leads onto a topic that is anticipated to have great significance for the current study, which is the issue of urban vulnerability and disaster in South Africa. This then narrows the discussion further as these issues are then explored regionally to the area where the study was conducted, i.e. the Cape Metropolitan Area. This section concludes by focusing specifically on communities and ways of understanding their processes and reactions to disaster.

2.5.2.1 Disaster in developing countries

It is no coincidence that disasters are more likely to occur in developing countries rather than in their more developed counterparts (Khondker, 2002). This is argued to be more related to demographic and politico-economic reasons rather than 'natural' hazards (Khondker, 2002). Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the after-effects of disaster because they are usually economically disadvantaged, have limited resources, and have multiple potential risk and exacerbating factors of a psychosocial nature prior to the disaster event itself (World Health Organisation, 2000, p. 15):

> Poorer and lesser-prepared disaster-prone nations are plagued by health, medical, mental, and emotional distress problems, largely associated with violence, poverty and dislocation. It is particularly important to establish the relationship of poverty, collective and interpersonal violence and mental illness in crisis countries.

Economic development, poverty and mental health are strongly related within the context of disaster (World Health Organisation, 2000). One useful conceptual model is that of overlapping clusters of problems that are often experienced in developing countries (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995) (see Figure 7). These problems are usually present prior to the onset of a disaster and are in turn exacerbated by the disaster itself. The Social Pathologies cluster includes problems such as violence, family breakdown and substance abuse experienced in the pre-disaster community. Health Problems refer to heart disease, depression and stress-related conditions as well as behaviours that contribute to chronic illnesses. Issues of unemployment, poverty, limited access to education, weakened health services; stressful work conditions and gender discrimination are all included in the Exacerbating Conditions cluster. In the aftermath of a disaster many of these components will be magnified (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995).

Figure 7

Model of overlapping clusters of problems[12] (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995, p. 7)

2.5.2.2 The socio-political nature of disaster in developed countries

Examples of the socio-political nature of disaster are often found in developed countries where disasters often serve to increase awareness of the lack of social justice and equity within the communities in which they occur (Drabek, 2002; Quarantelli, 1998). The impact of a disaster relates not only to acute issues but also to pre-existing resource relationships and socio-economic resources (Hewiit, 1983 in Hutton, 2001). Morrow (1999, p. 2) similarly postulates that "the effects (of a disaster) on any particular household, result from a complex set of interacting conditions, some having to do with geography and location, some with dwelling, and still others with the social and economic characteristics of people living there."

---

[12] Copied from (Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995).

It is therefore important to develop an overview of the economic and social circumstances in which disasters occur. Some theorists argue that communities that are of lower socio-economic status, whose inhabitants are less educated and from ethnic minority groups, are not only more vulnerable to disasters but tend to receive less government assistance in the aftermath of the event itself (Bolin & Bolton, 1986; Oliver-Smith, 1996). Hutton (2001) argues that post disaster distress is best examined within a socio-structural perspective which takes into account not only the individual's capacity to overcome material and physical losses, but the underlying social, economic and political relationships which determine recovery capacities. In this view, a disaster represents a collective stress experience and recovery a social and communal phenomenon. A very recent case in point can found within the context of Hurricane Katrina. The events which followed were without parallel in American history, and spoke to issues of poverty and racism (Hartman & Squires, 2006, p. 1), for example:

- Accusations of dereliction of duty levelled at the Red Cross Society, which ultimately led to the resignation of its president, and state and federal investigations.
- Alleged mishandling of foreign aid.
- Moratoriums placed on mortgage foreclosures and evictions in New Orleans.
- Post-Katrina insurance claims that over-whelmed insurance companies and put the federal flood insurance programme in debt to the tune of $23 billion.
- The U.S. Military experienced capacity problems because of its presence in the Middle East and was consequently unable to send National Guard, reservists, or active personnel to assist as it has done in the past.
- Many personally affected police officers went 'absent without leave' (AWOL) in order to attend to the needs of their own families.
- There were incidents of racism that made national and international news.
- The visibility of a racially divided city and nation that was illustrated by dramatic footage and photographs of the helpless victims who were primarily poor and African-American.

It is clear that catastrophic natural events cannot be controlled but the underlying socio-economic factors can be (Powers, 2006). Such arguments and discourse led to a very public and national dialogue about race and class in the USA. The links between race, equity, justice and democracy were put front and centre of this debate as the disaster illuminated one startling truth: in times of disaster disproportionate hardship is placed on those least able to afford it, the disadvantaged (Powell, Jeffries, Newhart, & Stiens, 2006). Hartman & Squires

(2006) provided a powerful example of social capital and access to resources by reflecting on a private hospital in New Orleans where one of the doctors managed to evacuate patients, and cut through government red tape, by chartering two planes because he knew Al Gore, the former Vice President (Hartman & Squires, 2006). This was not possible in the public hospitals. Access to resources meant that those with means left when the storm was approaching, leaving behind the economically disadvantaged who had no means to escape.

New Orleans was much like many other cities in the USA in that it was characterised by extreme levels of poverty and racial segregation (Hartman & Squires, 2006). Hartman & Squires (2006) argued that racial disparities and poverty were the result of a long history of institutional and structural racism in America.

With the Hurricane Katrina example in mind that the literature review will now focus on issues of poverty and inequality in South Africa in general as a backdrop to exploring these issues within the context of disaster.

2.5.2.3 Poverty and inequality in South Africa

South Africa, similarly, remains a divided and unequal society despite the formal abolition of racialised barriers (Foster, 2005). There has been much debate in recent years about the persistence of dynamics and processes introduced by apartheid that have continued to reproduce poverty and perpetuate inequality in South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; May, 1998, p. 45):

> The specific history of South Africa appears to have set in motion forces that potentially trap individuals, households and groups in poverty. These forces include skewed access to resources, institutional failure and the operation of markets.

Poverty has been conceptualised not as a static condition, but rather one that is fluid, so that individuals to move in and out of disadvantage as a result of life-cycle changes, specific events or deterioration in external conditions (May, 1998). In a qualitative study of personal narratives of poverty in South Africa (May, 1998, p. 41), it was said that:

> Generally, the picture that emerges from almost all of the studies comprises continuous ill health, arduous and often hazardous work for virtually no income, no power to influence change, and high levels of anxiety and stress.

The issue of vulnerability was closely linked with the notion of poverty as it resulted not only in a lack of assets but an inability to devise appropriate coping or management strategies in the event of a crisis (May, 1998).   High levels of inequality were found, which meant that South Africa was the second highest country in the world for unequal distribution of income (May, 1998). Poverty rates were closely correlated with race (May, 1998), and the racial breakdown showed rates of poverty highest among Africans (61%) and lowest among Whites (1%). This inequality was demonstrated using income shares (May, 1998, p. 24):

> The poorest 40% of households, equivalent to 50% of the population, account for only 11% of total income, while the richest 10% of households, equivalent to only 7% of the population, accrue over 40% of total income.

A similar pattern was found when taking each race group separately, with an ever-widening gap between the wealthiest and the poorest segments of each population group (May, 1998). Another significant finding was that rural areas had a poverty rate of 71% in comparison to urban areas of 29% (May, 1998). When the analysis was extended nationally it was found that poverty was also distributed unevenly among South Africa's nine provinces. The Eastern Cape (71%) and Northern Province (59%) showed the highest poverty rates in contrast to rates in Gauteng (17%) and the Western Cape (28%) (May, 1998). (See Figure 8 with Provincial breakdown). See Addendum A for map of South Africa.

Figure 8

Provincial poverty rates[13](May, 1998, p. 28)

These issues link with a central concern in South Africa, that is, the spatial dimension of poverty and inequality.   Apartheid planning served to displace the problem of poverty

---

[13] Copied from the Poverty and Inequality Report (May, 1998).

geographically within the country and thereby reduce its visibility (May, 1998). The poor were removed to the margins of South Africa to be allowed access only as migrant labourers in "a system of exploitation and asset stripping where the wealth of whites grew at the expense of Africans living in rural Bantustans" (May, 1998, p. 208). With the collapse of the apartheid system came a huge influx of disadvantaged individuals into the cities creating a more visible urban poverty and inequality issue.

Housing has been shown to be a critical asset in decreasing household vulnerability (May, 1998). It provides not only space and shelter but enables investment choices and opportunities. It is acknowledged that the housing sector has not been operating well in South Africa and this has had major implications for the performance of the economy, the efficiency of cities and the welfare of the marginalised (May, 1998). A number of factors are said to be responsible for this, such as inadequate national budget, the limited capacity of the construction industry, low incomes, high unemployment, migration to and from urban areas, high transport costs and limited access to credit (May, 1998). Informal housing is said to be the most prevalent means by which the poor access shelter in South Africa (May, 1998). Some examples of informal housing are self-built traditional structures, hostels, backyard shacks, garages and spontaneous informal settlements (May, 1998). Many of these forms of shelter are regarded as illegal, have insecure tenure, and are characterised by limited services, overcrowding and inadequate or deteriorating physical conditions (May, 1998).

2.5.2.4 Urban vulnerability and disaster in South Africa

Disaster-related vulnerability is argued to have as much to do with social and economic factors as it does with climatic or other threats (Nomdo, 2002). Communities that face disaster risk in densely populated peri-urban settlements are often least able to protect themselves from recurrent threats, such as floods and house fires (Nomdo, 2002). Such communities face increased risk of death, injury, illness, and income and property loss. In addition to this, a disaster event further worsens these existing vulnerabilities and can seriously undermine development gains and investment (Nomdo, 2002).

Disasters are extremely costly and have a profound impact on the poor and marginalised in both urban and rural areas of South Africa. The point, made throughout this literature review

by numerous theorists and bodies, is again emphasised that disasters exacerbate and unveil underlying underdevelopment and poverty issues:

> The poor often reside in poor, degraded urban environments and have inhabited areas classified as unsuitable for residential settlement. The issue in cases such as these is often not so much the lack of land but rather the lack of access to land not prone to hazards. A number of barriers to sustainable development therefore exist that are specific to South Africa's history (May, 1998, p. 249).

2.5.2.4.1 Disaster and the Cape Metropolitan Area

Research conducted by DiMP (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, University of Cape Town) consolidated disaster event data for from 1990-1999 (Nomdo, 2002). It is not surprising that the above issues of national concern are reflected within the Cape Metropolitan Area [14](CMA). The high levels of income inequality and distribution of resources are argued to have stemmed from apartheid policies of the past (Nomdo, 2002). Urbanisation has compounded these problems by placing increased pressure on infrastructure and basic services. Each disaster event further aggravates the situation as these communities struggle to re-build their lives, the implication being long-term suffering and distress (Nomdo, 2002). Figure 9 demonstrates the CMA disaster profile from 1990-1999:

---

[14] The CMA is located within the Western Cape province of South Africa and covers an area of 2 159 square kilometres. It is 98% urbanised with 62% of the population of the Western Cape living in the area. The total population is 2.9 million. It has an unemployment rate of 16%, the highest in the Western Cape (Nomdo, 2002).

Figure 9

Cape Metropolitan area disaster profile (1990-1999)[15] (Nomdo, 2002, p. 144)
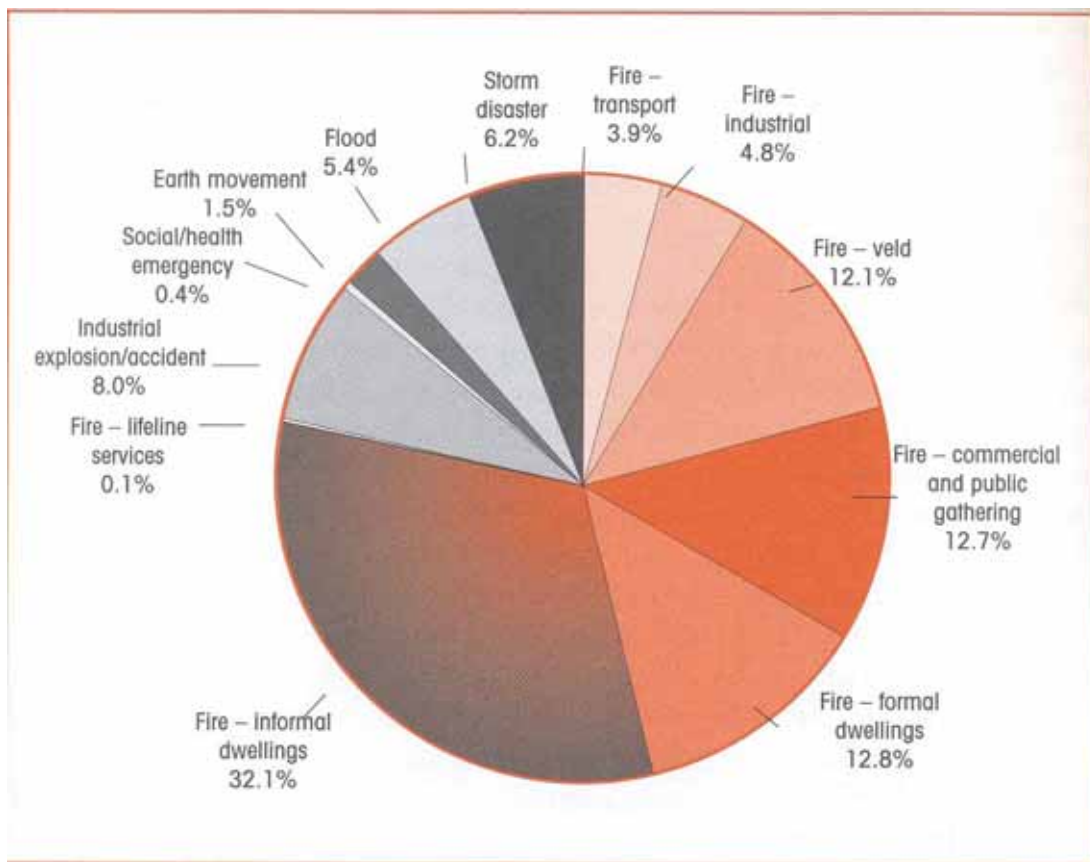
There is clearly a predominance of fire events in informal settlements (32%) that have often resulted in deaths (Nomdo, 2002). Formal dwellings and industrial institutions were almost always insured but such resources were not available for dwellings that were burnt down in informal areas (Nomdo, 2002). The frequency of these events, often small-scale, led to extremely costly impacts on these marginalised communities (Nomdo, 2002).

2.5.2.5 Communal processes

There is general agreement in disaster literature that little is known about the way communities manage traumatic stress, even though much more is known about this in individuals (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004). Mainstream disaster research has been criticised for paying little attention to how

---

[15] Copied from (Nomdo, 2002).

community stressors impact the group, organisation, community or society (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). It has been argued that little appreciable research has addressed how individuals' reactions are mediated by the way community stressors impacted their community. "Some investigators have speculated on the community level and some have provided insightful descriptions, but usually in a piecemeal fashion, without reference to a general theoretical framework" (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995, p. 137).

Many theorists have called for new models of stress that focus on the aftermath of disaster within the context of community processes (Hutton, 2001). There is growing consensus against coping being seen as an individualised process where the individual is seen as the unit of interest (Ibanez, Buck, Khatchikian, & Norris, 2004). An individual-in-social context perspective has been emphasized whereby the collective nature of coping is seen to be unit of interest (Ibanez, Buck, Khatchikian, & Norris, 2004). One such theory is the multivariant risk factor model which frames disaster within a social context and takes cognisance of individual and societal variables (Freedy, Resnick, & Kilpatrick, 1992). Three broad categories of variables are included in this model, namely pre-, within-, and post-disaster factors (Norris, Perilla, Riad, Kaniasty, & Lavizzo, 1999). Pre-event factors refer to demographic characteristics, history of traumatic events and pre-existing resources, for example, coping skills and support. Within-disaster factors include the objective details relating to the individuals' exposure and their subjective experience of the traumatic event. Post-disaster variables relate to ongoing coping strategies, support structures and severity of long term loss (Norris, Perilla, Riad, Kaniasty, & Lavizzo, 1999). This model has proved to be an extremely useful framework for predicting risk for poor psychological outcomes in the event of a disaster (Norris, Perilla, Riad, Kaniasty, & Lavizzo, 1999).

Norris and Kaniasky (Norris & Kaniasty, 1996) similarly focussed on social support as a key resource to survivors of disaster. They demonstrated in a post-disaster context, through the application of the social support deterioration deterrence model (Norris & Kaniasty, 1996), that perceived support mediated the long-term effects of psychological distress.

Norris et al (Norris, Perilla, Riad, Kaniasty, & Lavizzo, 1999) make the point that one of the most critical elements for understanding the post-disaster environment is the level to which

resources are lost. Hobfoll (1998) promoted and broadened the analysis of the psychosocial nature of community stress based on the notion of resource loss (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). COR theory is therefore now presented as a general theoretical framework for understanding the influence of extreme stress on communities and how this in turn reverberates down to the individual level (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

2.5.2.5.1 Conservation Of Resources Theory and community stress

COR theory will now be explored in terms of its relevance to communities. Communities, like individuals, strive to obtain, retain and protect their resources (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). COR theorists argue that when a community is beset by a disaster it is imperative that the loss and gain of resources experienced by the community are addressed. The objective nature of stress is emphasised by the theory's position that individuals and communities will perceive stressful events in the same way as they are capturing objective information that is real and tangible (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). Actual resource loss and how resources are used to limit loss cycles will impact greatly on what kinds of meanings are constructed by the people affected, and whether they perceive themselves to be survivors who have a sense of communal cohesion or as victims who feel socially isolated and alone (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

COR theory is particularly useful as it can be adapted to the relationship that exists between individuals and larger social systems and between groups and organisations and larger social systems (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). COR theory acknowledges the relevance of social structures, as they allow access and acquisition of resources. Work, for example, may provide a salary and a sense of self-esteem, two fundamentally important resources. Interestingly COR theory argues that there is a minimal level of a number of resources that are necessary for psychological and physical well-being. If social structures do not provide or block access to these resources, the consequence will be found in negative psychosocial processes (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993).

Having briefly explored COR theory from an individual and community standpoint I shall now consider COR theory as a major theoretical framework within the disaster field as it enables both a micro- and macro-level level perspective that is anticipated to explain potential results in the current study.

2.5.2.5.2 COR Theory and disaster/extreme stress

In COR theory stress is framed within the context of loss of resources. People's actual loss of resources and their perception of that loss are primary determinants of their reactions to stress (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). These perceptions are said to be realistic interpretations of the environment and that others in that same environment would make similar interpretations, especially in the face of major community stressors (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). Extreme stress is defined as, "those events and circumstances that, because of their objective nature, place massive demands on individuals' abilities to maintain psychological wellness, behavioural and cognitive functioning and physical integrity" (Hobfoll, Dunahoo, & Monnier, 1995, p. 30). It is posited that existing resources are extremely valuable to individuals and communities as they can act as a protective factor buffering against the negative impact of resource loss (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). Therefore, the impact of different stressors depends on how extensive the loss was, how critical the lost resources were, and how many other resources are available to protect against further resource loss.

Resources

According to COR theory resources fall into 4 categories (Hobfoll, 1989):

- Personal characteristics: These are attributes that are valued in and of themselves or that facilitate the acquisition or protection of other resources. For an individual this may, for example, be occupational skills or a sense of self-esteem. These personal resources aid stress resistance and can therefore be seen as protective factors. At a community level examples would be community pride, or community cohesion.

- Object resources: These resources are valued because of some aspect of their physical nature or because of their acquiring secondary status based on their expense or rarity. These are tangible material goods, such as a car, a house, or clothing. A home has value because it provides shelter, whereas a mansion has increased value because it is also an indicator of status. Examples on a community level would be roads, bridges, and industry.

- Condition resources: This refers to social structures and circumstances that are valued and sought after. On an individual level this may be tenure or seniority at work, or a good marriage. For a community this may refer to availability of employment, or quality of emergency services.

- Energy resources: These can be exchanged or used to obtain and retain other resources, for example time, money and knowledge. An individual would require money, credit or insurance, and, similarly, a community would need these resources as well as fuel reserves, government assistance and the like.

Principles of COR theory

COR theory is based on a number of principles and corollaries that can aid in predicting and developing interventions for individuals and communities after major stressors (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000):

Principle 1: The Primacy of Loss

COR theory proposes that resource loss is more powerful than an equivalent resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995; Monnier, Cameron, Hobfoll, & Gribble, 2000). This can be seen when one considers how long it takes to acquire a resource such as a house when compared to how quickly it can be lost through floods or a fire (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). COR theory proposes that resource loss is strongly related to distress, and is more important than demographics or coping variables in psychological outcomes for people post disaster (Hobfoll, Dunahoo, & Monnier, 1995). It is argued that an equal, yet opposite, impact of resource gain has not been found. Gains are however important in the face of loss, because they can be used to stop or curtail losses (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Loss and gain cycles (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000, p. 328)
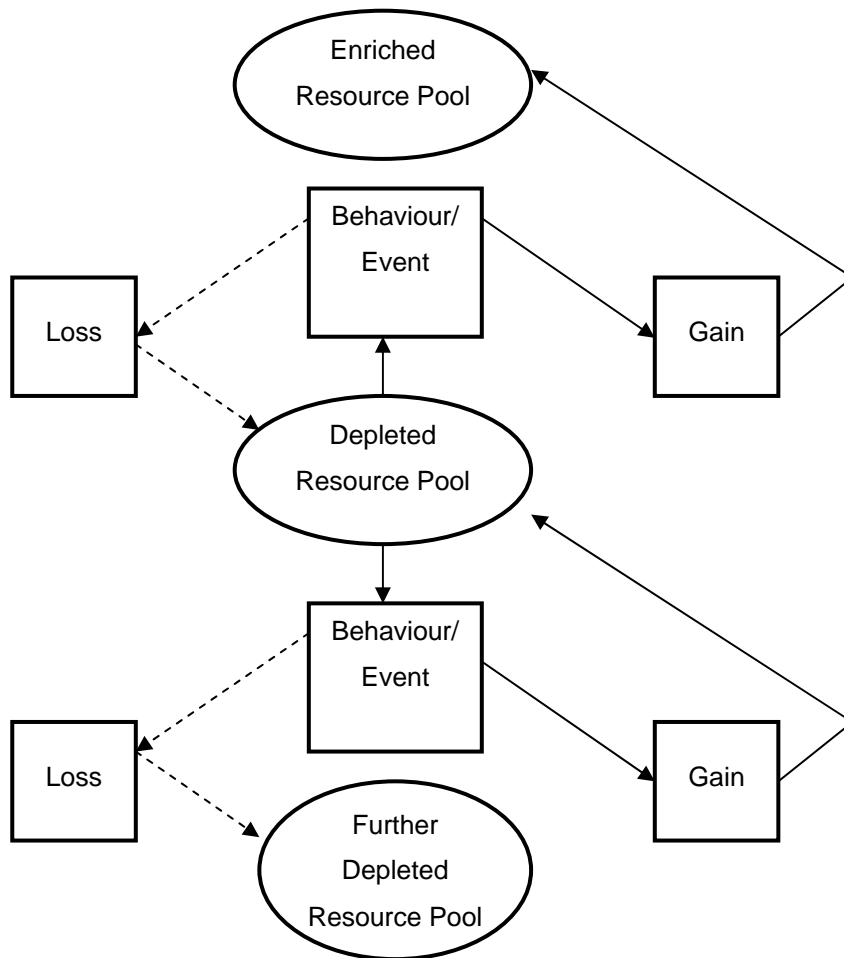
Principle 2: Resource Investment

Because resource loss can have such a profound impact on individuals and communities, it is essential that efforts are made to obtain new resources and to retain and protect existing resources. Investment of resources can offset current loss, protect against future loss or contribute to resource gain (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). Resource investment can therefore improve well-being and be viewed as a key component of the coping process. High levels of investment may however lead to a depletion of resource reservoirs, especially if gains are not made, which can reduce defences against future stress.   In other words those who invest wisely will increase their resource reservoirs, while those who invest poorly will reduce their resource reservoirs (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). Stress can therefore be eliminated or its duration reduced if additional resources are gained.

41

The Cycle of Loss and Gain

Corollary 1: Greater resources reduce vulnerability to resource loss:

In order to counteract resource loss one needs a pre-existing set of resources. COR theory therefore posits that individuals and communities that have more resources to start with are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gain.

At a community level it therefore holds that resource-endowed communities will be better able to invest resources to aid the community in the face of an extreme stressor and will be more likely to have resources that fit the demand of the crisis (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000).

Corollary 2: Initial loss begets future loss:

Initial resource loss increases one's vulnerability to further resource loss as one has fewer resources to cope with any additional stressors after the first loss event. This cycle of loss has been labelled a loss spiral (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). Resources exist within a community because they are needed for the development and prosperity of that community and its members. When resources are disrupted, so too are the natural processes of that community. This interrelationship between resources suggests that resource loss in one domain will reverberate into other domains. One loss event (for example, a fire) will therefore lead to further loss of resources (for example, unemployment, homelessness, and draining of financial reserves) and propel a community into a loss spiral (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000).

Trickett in (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) suggests that the longer resources are strained and the more resources expended the more difficulty a community will have in meeting its usual obligations. Similarly Kaniasky & Norris (1993) found that chronic stress depletes resources both because stress results in resource loss, and because repeated investment and loss of resources eventually leads to partial or full depletion of resource reserves.

Corollary 3: Gain cycles:

Gain cycles are said to be a slow process and are far less powerful than loss cycles (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). According to COR theory, resource gain usually requires risk-taking in order to meet goals or aspirations (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). These risks are taken because of the desire to better oneself or the social system in which one exists. The consequence of a positive outcome would be an increase in the number of available resources to protect against future loss and to add to resource reservoirs.

Corollary 4: Guarding resources

COR theory argues that because resources are highly valued by individuals and communities they are fiercely protected and defended (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). This enables resource reservoirs to develop and grow to the extent that they could be used at a later point to buffer against the negative impact of resource loss. This is particularly true for individuals and communities that have few resources. Jerusalem et al in (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) found that individuals who experienced personal loss were less likely to invest in helping others in their community who were more seriously impacted by a community stressor. Having themselves lost resources; they may have felt that this further resource expenditure would have placed them at undue risk.

The literature review will now pay specific attention to the issue of intervention within the context of disaster, as this is an issue anticipated to be of great importance for the current study.

Intervention in the community

A series of recommendations were put forward that emanated from COR theory's key principles for intervention with individuals (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). These recommendations were broadened to encompass the needs of communities and to explain reaction to and recovery from extreme community stress (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). A number of community intervention correlates were then proposed (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995, p. 146):

1. As loss of resources is the critical determinant of psychological and health outcomes, interventions must first concentrate on halting or limiting loss cycles.

2. Although resource gain is seen as secondary to loss, initiation of gain cycles can help to counteract loss cycles.

3. As loss cycles can quickly spiral, it is essential that intervention aimed at halting loss cycles proceed early and intensively. This is particularly relevant to resource-deprived communities as their natural resources are vulnerable to rapid depletion.

4. Because additional resources are required for coping, resource loss will result in a difficulty to master everyday stressors. Therefore secondary losses can be expected as spin-offs from primary losses attributable to the disaster.

5. As resources are interconnected, resource loss in one domain will reverberate to other domains. Loss of community mastery, for example, may lead to a depletion of social connections in the community, and vice versa.

6. Communities that have a lack of resources will often react in unexpected ways because they make use of whatever resources they have available to them even if there is a poor fit with the demand. For example, police may need to assist fire fighters, despite their lack of training.

7. As even successful coping demands resources, communities that are coping well may begin to struggle as their resource reservoirs become depleted. It is therefore necessary that aid to a community occurs before this point, rather than pouring resources into a community or situation that is already in a loss spiral.

Obstacles to community intervention

Intervention at a community level, in the aftermath of a disaster event, has numerous pitfalls and potential long-term problems. Four common obstacles to community intervention have outlined by COR theorists in an effort to enable interventionists to avoid them in the future (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995):

- Identification of communities within communities
- Pressure cooker effects
- Political processes and agendas
- Avoidance of long-terms needs

Identification Of Communities Within Communities

Underestimating the diversity of a community can severely impede intervention processes (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). From a resource point of view sub-communities will vie for protection of their community and act to limit their community losses and halt or minimise loss cycles. It is therefore imperative for interventionists to seek to understand what each community stands to lose and gain as this allows them to determine what position they may have towards the intervention provided by authorities. They also make the point that resource-deprived communities may lack spokespersons to make their case in the clamour for resources provided by interventionists.

It is suggested that in order for intervention to be successful interventionists must find common goals of different sub-communities, bring them together during times of crisis, avoid making political gain out of community differences, and ensure equitable distribution of intervention resources (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

Defusing The Pressure Cooker Effect

Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells (1995) make use of the concept of 'stress contagion' whereby people's stress is shared when they interact. Rather than decreasing the negative impact of stress, such social interactions may actually exacerbate negative stress sequelae. It is within this context that the phrase "the pressure cooker effect" was coined, which, it is argued, is the result of social interactions that often focus on sharing rumours which are almost always uniformly negative (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995, p. 149). It is argued that the strength of the rumour generates more force than any attempt to quell it. Following COR theory it holds that rumours indicating gains will quickly lose momentum, whereas negative rumours will quickly grow in their intensity.

It is recommended that interventionists pay special attention to this process and assign a single authoritative source the role of information gatherer and disseminator (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). This person must be free and honest in sharing information because otherwise they either lose credibility or lose their status as disseminator of information.

Political Processes And Agendas

It is imperative that interventionists come to terms with the fact that disasters and other major community stressors are political events (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). As a result political processes and their own fight for resources often emerge and play out in disaster response programmes. Leaders, including politicians and agency and department administrators, will act to limit resource loss to themselves and their constituencies and may even attempt to make gains from the pain and suffering of others (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). Leaders often try to take credit for successes and avoid being associated with any negative fallout (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). This socio-political process is counterproductive because it is likely to engender a climate whereby action is not taken because of a fear of failure (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). "Actions are considered for their potential negative side-effects rather than their positive impact, even if the positive impact far outweighs the negative consequences" (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995, p. 150).

Leaders working in the aftermath of disaster are likely to feel isolated and under attack and this could subsequently lead to an "us and them" siege mentality that would prove harmful to intervention processes (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). It is therefore recommended that mental health professionals assist authorities by helping them deal with their own distress, and their difficulties caused by their lack of sleep, attacks by the media, and fear of their own political or employment futures (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

Addressing Long-Term Needs

Although it is crucial to act as quickly as possible at the time of the event to limit or interrupt loss cycles, it is also important to continue to address long-term, chronic losses associated with the event (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). As resource reservoirs become stretched there are fewer resources available to address long-term needs. This may especially occur when the original event resulted in such severe loss as to render individuals or communities handicapped in dealing with normal life events (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). It becomes extremely difficult for communities or individuals to adopt a survivor role when they continue to be assaulted by such ongoing demands (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995).

This chapter has provided an overview of disaster-related literature and research. It has been acknowledged that acute disaster events impact at an individual, community and societal level. In addition to this they need to be seen holistically in terms of having pre- and post-event dynamics and implications. COR theory was explored as a useful framework for understanding the systematic nature of disaster and potential obstacles to intervention in communities. The next chapter will focus specifically on the current study in terms of its methodology, design and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will begin by considering the study's methodological positioning. It then moves on to look at the research questions that it is attempting to explore. Following this I focus on the data collection processes and how the data was later analysed. Finally, the limitations of the methodology and ethical considerations are highlighted.

3.1 Methodological positioning

The current study operates primarily within a qualitative methodological framework. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall (1994, p. 3) describe qualitative research as:

> An attempt to capture the sense that lies within, and that structures what we say about what we do; an exploration, elaboration and systematization of the significance of an identified phenomenon; and the illuminative representation of the meaning of a delimited issue or problem.

Disaster research has a rich history in well established qualitative methodologies dating back to 1920 (Phillips, 2002). Qualitative enquiry is essential when embarking on problem areas upon which little empirical research has been done (Killian, 2002), as is often the case in the field of disaster research. This approach seemed necessary when venturing into the field of disaster research in South Africa, which is in its infancy. I was therefore mindful of remaining open to new ideas, and fresh perspectives that might emerge from the data being collected.

This study therefore explores the aftermath of a fire disaster, using the narratives of service providers and survivors in order to capture a rich, thick description of how the disaster was experienced at individual and collective levels.

3.2 Research questions

Eagle (1998) points out that in contrast to quantitative analysis, qualitative research is generally focussed upon describing a phenomenon in depth rather than proving something about it. It is therefore unusual to frame qualitative research questions in the form of an

hypothesis but rather to phrase the question in terms of defining the phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Eagle, 1998). The overarching research goal of the current study can be stated as follows:

To explore the personal perspectives of the survivors of the 15 January 2005 Joe Slovo shack fire within the wider context of communal and socio-political variables.

Within this exploration two inter-related research aims/questions were identified:

1. *What were the reported consequences of disaster for a group of individual fire survivors of the January 2005 shack fire?*
2. *What were the implications for communal dynamics in the aftermath of the fire disaster?*

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 The interviewers

The researcher is a licensed social worker, with long experience in the field of trauma, and until quite recently headed the Counselling Department at the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture[16], as well as the disaster management programme the Trauma Centre provided for the City of Cape Town. It was in the context of this latter position that she first encountered the survivors of the Joe Slovo fire disaster. She worked in collaboration with a co-researcher who conducted the respondent interviews in the presence of the researcher. The co-researcher is fully fluent in Xhosa, and has a Master's degree in Social Work.

3.3.2 The fire affected community

Phillips (2002) highlights the importance of a deep contextual foundation, which emphasises the time, place, and circumstances within which the disaster event, response

---

[16] The Trauma Centre is a non-governmental organisation, based in Cape Town, that offers counselling and training to survivors of violent trauma or political torture.

or process occurs. The present study was therefore narrowed to the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement in Cape Town; more specifically that part of the fire-affected community who were relocated to Tygerberg Hostel (hereafter referred to as Tygerberg), in an attempt to provide data that was context specific, in relation to a "common" disaster for South Africa, shack fires. See Table 2 for details on the time-frame of events.

Table 2

The timeline of events

DATE	EVENT
15 January 2005	Joe Slovo Informal Settlement Fire.
The N2 Gateway Project decision[17] A controversial political decision was made by the Mayor of Cape Town in the immediate aftermath of the fire that the fire survivors would not be allowed to be rebuild their dwellings but would, in the meantime, be relocated to tents, then temporary housing and finally they would be given formal housing. This was made possible by the fact that the fire survivors were given priority and placed at the top of the housing waiting list.	
15 &16 January 2005	Survivors are moved to emergency shelter, for example, tents, halls and other forms of temporary accommodation throughout Cape Town. The tents later became known as the "tent villages". This referred to a number of marquees that were erected in one area to accommodate thousands of fire survivors. The respondents were initially located at the Joe Slovo Tent Village where there were 13 tents, that each accommodated 200 people.

[17] The N2 Gateway project is a government initiative aimed at providing formal housing for all informal settlement residents who are located along the N2 national road. The Joe Slovo settlement is one of several such informal settlements.

March 2005	Respondents who have volunteered to take part in this study are relocated to Tygerberg Hostel. "Tygerberg Hostel" refers to the old nursing residence at Tygerberg Hospital[18]. This was seen by the City of Cape Town as a temporary housing solution for hundreds of fire survivors who were then guaranteed by government to receive formal N2 Gateway Project housing as soon as it was ready.
July- August 2005	Researchers interview two DiMP staff members and four key service providers (term explained below).
July-October 2005	Researchers interview twenty fire survivors.

3.3.4 Negotiating entry

Entry into this community was negotiated through developing a collaborative working relationship with the project manager for the Langa Fire Disaster Committee, City of Cape Town. He was able to guide the researchers in terms of the area to which the survivors had been relocated, and how to make contact with them. He allocated one of his staff members, who apparently had regular contact with the survivors, to be our contact person and liaison officer between the survivors and ourselves. There was one particular group of survivors who were staying at the Tygerberg Hostel, as they had already been moved out of the tents into the Hostel, which was regarded by the City of Cape Town as their temporary accommodation for the foreseeable future. We made the decision to target this cluster of survivors because we knew that they would remain within the hostel for the duration of the interview process and they would be easy to access as opposed to other groups who were moving to different locations.

3.3.5 The interviewees

Sample size has been an issue of much debate within the field of qualitative research but there is a general consensus that small sample sizes are acceptable. Patton in (Kuzel in Crabtree & Miller, p. 33) says, "qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively

---

[18] Large provincial state hospital.

small sample sizes, even single cases (n=1), selected purposefully." Patton in (Kuzel in Crabtree & Miller, 1992) continues by stating that qualitative sampling is concerned with information richness, which is dependent on the quality and intensity of the data gathered and not the quantity of subjects. Hilliard in (Appelt, 2006) describes different types of case study research, one of which is qualitative or narrative case study. McLeod in (Appelt, 2006, p. 73) explains that a narrative case study is one that "relies on the use of qualitative techniques to elicit and analyse descriptive accounts" and is "concerned with making sense of the stories people tell about aspects of their experience". In order to get an holistic picture of pre-event, peri-event and post-event issues in relation to this particular disaster it was seen as imperative to interview not only those individuals who were affected through the loss of their homes, but also those involved in some way professionally. Killian (2002) makes the point that bias in selection of informants can lead to a distorted sense of the disaster event, and so in order to maximise accuracy she recommends interviewing a number of informants who represent different populations who may have viewed the disaster from different perspectives. "The accounts of many differently-placed informants serve to complete the gestalt" (Killian, 2002, p. 69). There were therefore two categories of interviewees:

1. Service providers who had different working experiences or professional briefs with regard to the Langa community within the context of disaster.
2. Fire survivors who volunteered to participate in the study.

1. <u>The service providers</u>

   Two staff members from the Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, from the University of Cape Town, were interviewed, as well as four officials who worked directly with survivors in the aftermath of the 15 January Joe Slovo fire. The co-researcher and I conducted these interviews; they were recorded, and later transcribed.

2. <u>The respondents</u>

   In a general meeting that was conducted between the City of Cape Town and the Tygerberg Hostel residents, the residents were informed of the study by means of a briefing document that was read to the residents in isiXhosa (see Addendum B) and the need for volunteers. Twenty individual fire survivors (10 women and 10 men) then volunteered to be interviewed.

The criteria for <u>inclusion</u> were:

i. Individuals who had been temporarily relocated to the tent villages as a result of the January 2005 fire, but who later had agreed to be moved to Tygerberg Hostel.

ii. Individuals who were over the age of 18.

After conducting the first twelve interviews we had a considerable amount of difficulty contacting the remaining eight respondents. We left messages on their cellular phones but did not hear from them; or we would speak to them and set up the interview but they would not arrive. As a result we made the decision to walk around the Hostel, explaining the study to the residents we met, and recruiting an additional eight respondents. This approach was successful.

Demographic details of respondents

Table 3

Demographics of respondents

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
AGE		
0-20 yrs	0	0
21-30 yrs	4	20
31-40 yrs	8	40
41-50 yrs	5	25
51-60 yrs	2	10
61+	1	5
TOTAL	**20**	**100**
RESIDENTIAL AREA		
"The Zone"	11	55
Joe Slovo	9	45
TOTAL	**20**	**100**

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
EDUCATION LEVEL		
No school qualification	14	70
School certificate pass	6	30
Matriculation exemption	0	0
TOTAL	**20**	**100**
GENDER		
Female	10	50
Male	10	50
TOTAL	**20**	**100**
HOME LANGUAGE		
Xhosa	20	100
TOTAL	**20**	**100**

Twenty fire survivors were interviewed in their home language, isiXhosa (see Table 3 for demographic details of respondents), by the co-researcher, whose first language is also isiXhosa. It was anticipated that the interview process would provide the co-researcher with the opportunity to immerse herself in the worldview, the reality, the resources and challenges of the Joe Slovo community in relation to their experience of disaster. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 251) highlight that "the root source of all significant theorizing is the sensitive insights of the observer himself (sic)." I was also present at all interviews. I sat close to where the interview was being conducted and wrote down any observations I had about the respondent during the interview process. After each session the co-researcher and I shared our experiences of the interview, mine as an observer and hers as the interviewer. These discussions enabled us to reflect on the content and subtleties of the session itself so that valuable information was not lost. These discussions were also recorded and used by the co-researcher as a reference when she was translating and transcribing the interviews. These discussions also functioned as a form of supervision because the co-researcher reflected on any difficulties she had had in terms of the previous interview and I was able to give suggestions on how to manage that situation should it occur again. These sessions were also supportive in nature because at times the

content of interview had been distressing for the co-researcher. This issue was highlighted by Killian (2002, p. 77):

> The need for supervision and quality control seems particularly great in disaster because the dramatic nature of the material and the ease of becoming emotionally involved with it can cause even well-trained interviewers to develop stereotypes and biases in the course of early interviews which they then introduce systematically into all their future interviews.

Later the interview recordings were simultaneously translated and transcribed in English by the co-researcher herself. This was seen as extremely important as she could make sure the actual meaning, as portrayed in the interview, came through in the text. As a result of this the transcripts were not purely verbatim but were 'cleaned up' to provide the reader with an accurate understanding of what the interviewee had been speaking about. This was seen to be crucial to the data analysis process as isiXhosa has a number of meanings for one word, and in addition to this it also meant that the subtle nuances of the interview could be captured.

> Good advice that is often given to those engaging in grounded theorizing for the first time is to look out for 'insider' terms – words and abbreviations that are distinctive to the world that the informant inhabits, and which may appear strange to outsiders. Often these can tell us something about the distinctive ways in which the people we are studying view the world (Open University, 1993, p. 15).

This was of particular relevance to the current study where, as will be seen, particular words provided great insight into how the survivors viewed themselves and their place in society

3.3.6 Data gathering instruments

3.3.6.1 Service providers interviews

The interviews with the service providers were unstructured and open-ended because of their diverse job profiles and experience. We began each interview by explaining our role and the aims of the study and asking them to describe their experiences of Joe Slovo community in general and more specifically any involvement with the 15 January 2005 fire. The remainder of the interview was interviewee-led. We asked primarily for clarity and further exploration of their thoughts.

3.3.6.2 Fire survivor interviews

Raphael, Lundin & Weisaeth (1989) highlight a number of issues relating to the methodology of exploring psychological aspects of human response to disaster. They recommend a number of relevant measuring instruments. They suggest that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful in disaster research, as they can be used to explore issues of relevance to disaster survivors - this approach is similarly endorsed by the World Health Organisation (2000) for qualitative disaster research. The method which has been used most extensively in the field of disaster research is the personal interview, and the success of using the method has been shown to be related to three factors (Killian, 2002):

1. Effectiveness of interview schedule.
2. Training and skill of the interviewer/s.
3. Recording of the data.

It has been argued that extensive use of open-ended questions is preferable to a structured interviewed schedule (Killian, 2002), because often a disaster survivor's recollections are disorganised. As a result, he/she may naturally flow between issues and/or events, and so the rich, personal narrative may be lost through the use of a more structured schedule (Killian, 2002). The research design included twenty respondents being interviewed according to an unstructured format conducted face-to-face by the same interviewer, in this case the co-researcher. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall (1994, p. 50) highlight four benefits of an interview: 1) interviews provide access to subjective meaning; 2) they permit investigation of complex phenomena; 3) they allow for reflexivity on the part of the researcher; and 4) they can address power relations in research. Eagle (1998) notes that such an interviewing structure is directed towards studying a specific phenomenon or phenomena, but allows for flexible exploration of the subject matter in that the interviewee may introduce new or unexpected information. Patton (1980, p. 200) highlights that:

> The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style – but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined.

Demographic details were then ascertained, such as age, gender, marital status, home language, education, and geographical position of dwelling i.e. whether they identified themselves as from Joe Slovo or "The Zone". We then asked permission to tape record the interview and highlighted issues of confidentiality. The main body of the interview began with a broad question relating to the fire event, for example:

Can you tell us a little about how the 15th January fire affected you and your family?

The remainder of the interview was dependent on what content was presented by the respondent. If, for example, the respondent spontaneously explored issues and thoughts around the acute event itself then the interviewer would respond by asking clarifying questions and probing as required. At the end of the interview the interviewer would directly ask about any issue/theme not yet raised by the respondent. For respondents who were more reserved and hesitant in providing content the interviewer was more directive throughout the interview process. The interview process therefore allowed for spontaneous information to emerge within the context of eliciting specific information. An outline of the interview format guide is provided in Addendum C.

3.4 Data analysis

Qualitative analysis focuses on identifying the perspectives of a number of people or groups, documenting the challenges they face, and describing the strategies they used to deal with those challenges (Open University, 1993). Given the researchers' clinical experience the method of data analysis was based on a clinical interpretive framework.

From the range of text-based analysis techniques I made the decision to use a template approach to the analysis of the data. Template analysis refers to the development of a template in the form of codes that have been constructed specifically for the data base being worked with (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). This template is then used as a way of organising data for subsequent interpretation (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). "A code is a label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data which the researcher has identified as important to his or her interpretation" (King, 1998, p. 119). The codes are defined before the in-depth analysis takes place and are usually based on

the researchers' pre-identified categories.   After conducing a thorough literature review I spent a significant amount of time initially reading through the transcripts in order assess where, if any, there were links to the current literature and to be able identify significant categories from the interviews. In order to assist with the categorisation process the QSR NVivo (Version 7) computer programme for text interpretation and theory building was used. Phillips (2002) makes the valid point that such programmes are extremely useful in managing and coding data but ultimately it is the researcher who has to interpret the meaning. Miles and Huberman in (Crabtree & Miller, 1992) state that the codes become expanded and modified as the researcher analyses more transcripts, after which a "codebook" is then used for all interview analysis. The codes are useful in that each code category can then be printed out and a deeper level of analysis can be conducted. In the current study I developed a template of codes in relation to COR theory (see Literature Review), and these codes were then modified for sections of the data that required a sub-code, or that did not fit exactly into this framework, or that seemed to be speaking to another conceptual model entirely. Template analysis can therefore be seen to occupy a position between content analysis (Weber, 1985), where codes are predetermined, and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where there is no pre-determination of codes (King, 1998).

The next step in the analysis was to "compare and contrast" all the codes similarly categorised, an approach referred to as the "constant comparison method" (Glaser & Strauss in Open Universtiy, 1993, p. 17). This is the process whereby some parts of the data are reassigned (Open University, 1993). The data was then re-analysed and interpretations were made about the data based on the identified categories and sub-categories, and the possible relationship between them. The frequencies of coding were also taken into account in that categories that were identified more frequently in the data were given greater weight in the analysis. King (1998, p. 132) emphasises that writing up should not be seen as a separate stage from analysis and interpretation but as a continuation of it. With the current study the codes were then structured into a cohesive story with direct quotes from the respondents used to clarify or illustrate particular issues.

3.5 Involvement versus detachment in disaster research

Stallings (2002) highlighted issues of concern for the field of disaster research. One of these issues related to the internal and external pressures put on researchers by survivors, practitioners and policy-makers, each with their own expectations and agendas. Disaster researchers often find themselves in the unenviable position of needing to 'to take sides', to be involved rather than to be detached (Stallings, 2002). Hewitt in (Stallings, 2002) argued that historically disaster researchers have adopted the perspective of government officials and that the time has now come for taking the side of survivors. Stallings (2002) reflects on these debates and makes the point that the issue is not between involvement and detachment, but between two different kinds of involvement. The first kind of involvement encompasses aligning oneself with sources of power; the second involves advocating on the side of the powerless. It is the third side that can be referred to as detachment, this requires separating the role of participant from that of inquirer (Stallings, 2002). Stallings (2002) argues that it is through the methods of research that the researcher can prevent personal values and biases from clouding the data. Killian (2002) similarly makes the point that the validity of the conclusions drawn from any study rests primarily on the scientific adequacy of the methods by which the data are collected and analysed. The issue of involvement was a challenge to the researchers who felt a moral and ethical responsibility to become involved and advocate for the rights of the survivors while, at the same time, feeling that they should try to remain as impartial as possible. As a result of our relationship with the project leader of the Langa Fire Disaster Committee, we were able to provide him with some preliminary feedback from the survivor interviews and make some tentative recommendations about the way forward.

3.6 Reflexivity and validity

Eagle (1998:187) makes the point that:

> Many qualitative methodologists argue that the research process is always to some extent subjective, particularly when the domain of study encompasses human experience and the researchers themselves are human, and that rigorous and ethical research practice should attempt to embrace rather than circumvent this aspect of research. Thus the notion of reflexivity, encompassing the conscious

acknowledgement of the role of the researcher in the research process, becomes central in most forms of qualitative research.

Researchers must be cognisant of the importance of being reflective in their practice and continually question the process of their research, and the potential for sources of errors to inadvertently occur (Open University, 1993). Disaster field studies in general have one major limitation and that is the difficulty in establishing controls over variables (Killian, 2002). It is therefore essential that 'controls' are built into the basic research design if "valid and convincing inferences are to be made about significant relationships among variables" (Killian, 2002, p. 58). One potential confounding variable could have been the fact the respondents, either consciously or unconsciously, selected information to support the outcome of being removed from the Hostel itself. We tried to control for this possibility by explaining at the beginning of the interview that we were not representatives or employees of the City of Cape Town and so unable to influence such decisions.

Qualitative researchers face the challenge of 'anecdotalism'; the temptation to convince themselves and their audience that their findings are based on the rigorous investigation of data and not on a few well-chosen examples:

> There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews…are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments are rarely addressed (Bryman in (Silverman, 2007, p. 211)).

Silverman (2007) proposes triangulation as one possible way forward in controlling for such bias. Multiple 'points of observation' or informants can provide checks on each other (Killian, 2002) and can provide the researcher with different ways of looking at the findings. Phillips (2002) similarly made the point that triangulated studies enhance the researchers' trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity and dependability.

It was interesting to note that in the current study we quickly reached saturation point in terms of hearing similar issues and concerns across all interviews. The possibility of error was also controlled for by collecting data from a number of service provider sources, such as DiMP, who offered an academic understanding of fire risk in this community; and those who provided hands-on examples of their work experiences in terms of this fire, and of

course the survivors themselves who spoke to their experience. Merging data in this way created a triangulation of alternative data sources, which results in enriched insights during the data analysis process (Rocco, Spangler, & Boggs, 1998).

Another form of control can be found in the manner in which data and findings are produced so that the reader can make his or her own assessment of the findings (Open University, 1993). This has been done in the results chapters where large sections of verbatim text have been included for this reason. Phillips (2002) argues that in addition to this, the inclusion of interview quotations enables those who read the study to make connections with their own situations in the field.

A contentious issue within the quantitative/positivistic versus qualitative/naturalistic debate concerns generalizability (Phillips, 2002). Phillips (2002) argues that the solution lies not so much in the issue of generalizability but in contextualising the study in detail so that the reader can have a holistic understanding of all the circumstances surrounding the disaster event. This will enable the reader to understand the analysis process and any theoretical explanations that may be put forward by the researcher and in this way relate the relevant aspects to his/her situation.

An issue of great concern for disaster research in the developing world is the condition of normalcy (Khondker, 2002). For communities living under continued conditions of poverty and malnutrition it may be difficult to tease out a disaster situation from a normal condition. It can be argued however that a distinction can be made between the routine crisis and the sudden escalation in the crisis (Khondker, 2002). Khondker (2002) posits that disaster events become triggers for a number of people who have coped up until that point in time but whose coping strategies then fail because there is a change in the scale and magnitude of the crisis. A key limitation of the current study is the fact that there was no pre-event measurement to ascertain the issues and dynamics at play prior to the fire event. We did however have access to service provider documents (DiMP's evaluation report) that comprehensively evaluated multiple pre-event factors. In general however we had to rely on retrospective accounts of how the present situation was different to how it had been in the past. As highlighted earlier though this was controlled for in some way by interviewing service providers and respondents who offered different perspectives and levels of experience.

3.7 Ethical considerations

It is essential, especially in field studies of disaster, to establish an acceptable identity at the beginning of the study by providing an extensive explanation of the purpose of the study and who the sponsors are (Killian, 2002). Over and above following the ethical requirements set by the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University, we felt it ethically responsible to begin all respondent interviews by clarifying the expectations of the respondent in terms of why they were participating in the study and what outcomes, if any, they were hoping for. We outlined our role as researchers and explained that we were independent researchers working for The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture, not the City of Cape Town. This was seen as imperative because we had not been directly involved in the recruitment process and so wanted to be certain that the respondents did not have an unrealistic expectation that we could change or influence their present circumstances that were clearly far from satisfactory. In addition to this it was highlighted that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. We explained that anonymity was guaranteed and asked permission to tape-record the session. Following that the respondents were asked to sign the consent form (Addendum D) if the above was agreeable to them.   The tape recordings were transcribed shortly after the interview, and the recordings were then destroyed. The transcripts were rendered anonymous by removing respondents' names from them, and substituting other descriptors for their names. Transcripts were then stored on password-controlled computers accessible only by researchers (see Addendum E for an example of a transcribed interview).

An ethical consideration when embarking on such a data collection process level is that the interview itself may evoke traumatic memories for the respondents. The researchers were sensitive to this possibility and provided respondents with explicit information about the potential risks of being interviewed and the resources that they could access should they experience any such difficulties. The co-researcher was a qualified Social Worker with experience in clinical work with those suffering the effects of trauma, and so the possibility of the respondents being further traumatised was minimised as the interview

was conducted within a therapeutic framework. The risk to the respondents was therefore minimised.

The invasion of privacy was an issue that was of concern in terms of the writing up process as we had assured participants of their anonymity. This was, at times, difficult to manage because identity became visible within the context of some of the quotes. I therefore made the decision to exclude these quotes from this thesis.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the methodological positioning of the current study as well as its objectives, design and ethical concerns of the study. In the next chapter I will provide some background information to the current study by highlighting a number of events that took place within the target community before the 15 January fire. These issues will provide an important framework for understanding the multi-layered nature of the 2005 fire disaster.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRE-EVENT ISSUES

It is with the awareness of the continuum of disaster that I have made the decision to present this section as a separate chapter. As described in the Literature Review, disaster events are not seen as single incidents but as a chain of events that often have a pre-event history. It is therefore my intention, before presenting the results of the current study, to reflect on some of the socio-political dynamics within the Joe Slovo community that pre-dated the fire in question.

Following years of multiple fires within the Joe Slovo area, one of the most significant processes that took place was the development and implementation of the "Joe Slovo Fire Mitigation Plan"[19] in February 2001. This followed a major shack fire in November 2000, which resulted in the destruction of 950 informal dwellings (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). In April 2002 'Ukuvuka: Operation Fire-Stop[20]' appointed the Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002), University of Cape Town, to evaluate the programme's impact and efficacy.

This chapter will be divided into two components:

- A description of the evaluation report which provides a foundation to understanding fire risk in the Joe Slovo community.
- An exploration of an interview that was conducted with two DiMP staff members; the interview will be used as a resource to unpack and tease out pertinent issues, some of which were raised within the context of the report and others that were not. In addition

---

[19] "The label 'Joe Slovo Fire Mitigation Plan' is slightly misleading, as Joe Slovo comprised (July 2002) Zones 30, 31 and 32 of the Langa Township. The initial plan focused primarily on relocation and site development for fire-affected residents of Zone 30, and NOT the non-fire-affected Zone 31 and 32. Subsequently, in 2001, the remaining Zones (31 and 32) were reconfigured" (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002).

[20] "Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop aims to significantly reduce the risk of damage and danger from wildfires in the Cape Peninsula. The public sector members of the *Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop Campaign* are the National Government (represented by the Working for Water programme), the Western Cape Government, SA National Parks, the South Peninsula Municipality, the City of Cape Town and the Cape Metropolitan Council, which has committed 30 million Rand (R) to the campaign" (Ukuvuka Operation Fire Stop, 2007).

to this, any related pre-event issue raised by the other service providers has also been included in this section.

These two components provided a deep contextual foundation to the present study, emphasising salient pre-event issues that later proved to have significance not only in terms of the 15 January 2005 Joe Slovo Informal Settlement fire, but for its longer term ramifications. Before detailing the evaluation report I will briefly explain DiMP and its role within disaster mitigation.

4.1 Disaster Mitigation For Sustainable Livelihoods Programme

DiMP is situated at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and falls within the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences. The aim of the programme is to promote disaster mitigation as a strategy for sustainable development (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2007). The unit prioritises the integration of disaster mitigation strategies with development programmes, especially those focusing on economically vulnerable communities. DiMP's mission is accomplished through its three focal areas: collaborative research, policy advocacy, education and training (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2007).

4.2 The evaluation of the fire mitigation programme in Joe Slovo informal settlement, Cape Town

4.2.1 The Joe Slovo informal settlement and fire risk

The Joe Slovo informal settlement in Cape Town has a well-documented history of fire risk over the past decade. It was particularly prone to fires because the vast majority of dwellings were built from untreated wood (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). This was further aggravated by the widespread use of paraffin for cooking and candles for lighting. In addition, the haphazard development of the settlement increased the risk because of the limited access for fire tenders in the event of a fire. It was as a result of these fire risks that the Disaster Management Centre, City of Cape Town, launched their first fire

awareness campaign in June 2000.   The strategy was to profile a young African girl, Dora, who had been severely burnt in an informal settlement fire, as a means of illustrating the devastating impact of fires on the lives of individuals and families.

In October 2000 a second campaign was launched, the "Fire Behaviour, Response and Prevention Campaign". This was initiated by the Disaster Management Centre (City of Cape Town) and funded by Ukuvuka Operation Fire-stop (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The campaign included the distribution of roughly 5 000 fire education and awareness kits. The kits consisted of a bucket, a whistle and a colourful educational poster available in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Demonstrations took place at strategic points in Joe Slovo where a mock fire was created, and by making use of the bucket chain system it was extinguished. The bucket was filled with sand to put the fire out and the whistle was to alert neighbours to the presence of the fire itself. The aim was to enable and equip the community to extinguish and contain small-scale fires. The posters also included general safety tips such as "Keep matches, gas, paraffin and petrol in a safe place and away from children".

The campaign was well received by the community but it was acknowledged by Disaster Management that a more extensive structural mitigation initiative was required if the fire risk was to be reduced (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). Unfortunately, however, budgetary constraints limited the implementation of the structural mitigation plan as envisaged and designed by Disaster Management and the City of Cape Town Fire Services.

4.2.2 The turning point – a national disaster

On 26 November 2000 a large-scale fire destroyed 950 dwellings in the settlement.   It was of particular significance because it was declared a "National Disaster"[21]. It was regarded as more serious than other similar fires due to the location of the informal dwellings, which were beneath a power line. The fire's severity was attributed to inadequate access roads and tracks within Joe Slovo, which had made it problematic for fire trucks to gain access to the site

---

[21] Declaration of a disaster as defined by the Fund Raising Act of 1978

and made fire containment difficult (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002).

In direct response to this fire The City of Cape Town's Disaster Management Centre began working with Ukuvuka and other City departments, such as Water and Housing, to collaborate in risk reduction strategies for the area. These strategies formed part of the development and implementation of the Fire Mitigation Plan for Joe Slovo. This comprised three essential elements that were coordinated by Development Support, City of Cape Town:

1. The immediate relocation of the fire-affected community to a resettlement site.
2. The configuration and reconfiguration of Joe Slovo through the installation of tracks (unpaved service roads) and water supplies. It was envisaged that the 5m-wide tracks would increase the access of fire trucks as well as provide firebreaks at 8m intervals, creating "fire-proof cells". Roughly 60 -150 dwellings were planned for each cell. As a result of budgetary constraints however it was realised that the cells would need to range in size from 100 - 200 dwellings.
3. The proposed development of a greenbelt below the power line.

4.2.3 The findings of the evaluation report

This section summarises the findings of DiMP's report, as the report so clearly describes the pre-event context of the Joe Slovo informal settlement (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002).

The time-frame of the evaluation spanned a two-year period, one year before and one year after the introduction of the Fire Mitigation Plan i.e. 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2001(Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The report documents a decrease in fire frequency over the two year period from 2000 (23) to 2001 (11). Over this period, a number of structural and non-structural mitigation measures were instituted. This included the electrification of the area that reduced the use of candles and paraffin (two of the major causes of fire in Joe Slovo). In addition, analysis of prevailing climatic conditions data showed that the annual rainfall had increased by 15% in 2001. Whilst this clearly resulted in declines in fire frequency, as had occurred in other informal settlements, the rate of decline in Joe Slovo was twice as fast as elsewhere (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The increased awareness generated following

the November 2000 fire and the subsequent Fire Prevention Awareness Campaign were seen to be key contributors to this decline.

When assessing "severity" (the number of dwellings destroyed in a specific event), research findings indicated that in 2001 there had been no fire events that had exceeded the size of a fireproof cell (maximum size 200 dwellings) (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The report suggests that the reconfiguration had been successful in averting a large-scale event. It is interesting to note however that the number of medium fires (destroying between 30-99 dwellings) to large-scale fires (destroying over 100 dwellings) had increased. In 2000, when excluding the November 2000 fire, 22 fires destroyed 296 dwellings (average number of 13.45 dwellings per fire event), whilst in 2001, 11 fires destroyed 185 dwellings (average number of 16.82 dwellings per fire event) (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). This phenomenon was attributed to an increase in overall dwelling density as a result of the massive influx into Joe Slovo between 1998 and 2000.

4.2.4 The challenges as identified in the evaluation report

The Joe Slovo Fire Mitigation Programme illustrated challenging issues associated with risk management in marginalised urban communities (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). The report makes the point that in the initial plans for Joe Slovo, there were no plans for formal upgrading because it was not regarded by The City of Cape Town as being of a permanent nature. The upgrading was done on the premise that the settlement would be there for a maximum of another three years. The report highlighted that the upgrading was sending conflicting messages to the community as they could have perceived the upgrading to mean that the City of Cape Town saw it as a permanent settlement (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002). Further the report documents some of the challenges that were generated by this tension that were reflected in (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002):

- Separate initiatives for Joe Slovo and Langa and de-linking of Joe Slovo plans from the Langa Integrated Development Framework.
- Unsustainable funding for maintaining access tracks/fire-breaks due to conflicting government policies.

- The perception of the Joe Slovo residents that they were permanent residents despite consultation with the community.

- Increasing in-migration, which raised cell densities and hence fire and flood loss potential.

4.2.5 Recommendations made by DiMP

The report makes a number of recommendations that can be divided into three main categories (Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, 2002, p. 62):

- To achieve sustained reductions in both the frequency and severity of fires in Joe Slovo:
  - Build community ownership of fire risk
  - Improve fire forecasting and planning in times of high risk
  - Explore measures that monitor in-migration, especially settlement density
  - Strengthen emergency and relief response services to monitor changing fire trends and risk patterns
  - Increase the competitiveness of electricity with paraffin

- To achieve strategies that ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme:
  - Locate further mitigation efforts in a long-term strategic planning framework
  - Locate fire mitigation efforts in a broader disaster risk reduction framework
  - Encourage community responsibility for managing the greenbelt
  - Consolidate relevant information on ongoing mitigation measures in one organisation/office

- To achieve strategies related to implementing the fire mitigation programme in other areas, efforts should be taken to:
  - Carry out baseline risk and community research before implementing the programme
  - Establish processes for monitoring progress
  - Establish a business plan prior to the commencement of the intervention
  - Ensure recurrent infrastructure maintenance costs do not exceed available budget.

4.3 Pertinent pre-event issues raised in the DiMP and service provider interviews

4.3.1 Issues related to the evaluation report

The DiMP staff members made reference to the de-densification programme within Joe Slovo. This had necessitated the City of Cape Town working closely with community leaders and councillors to ensure that no new dwellings were erected within each fireproof cell. The service providers believed that the unintended consequence of this process was changes in land tenure that rendered the de-densification process handicapped. As one DiMP service provider put it:

> I mean there's an obvious concern about this de-densification process, because although there are not any new dwellings being re-erected, existing dwellings are expanding. There's an increasing number of backyarders. They are not necessary backyarders, but they become tenants to existing dwellings. So whereas your previous house sort of had say, two rooms - now, because you can't erect a new dwelling over there, all you simply do is you just add on – and then you sublet. So you see a lot of leasing taking place now.

One of the service providers from a government department made this point clear when reflecting on the changing pattern of fire events in Cape Town over the past few years:

> But with disaster… particularly referring to disaster, we've had incidents of fires mostly in Langa. We've had repeated fires in Langa. In other areas there are very few incidents. And to my surprise, when we were sort of recapping what's been happening and like reviewing the previous years' incidents, we found that there were fires in brick houses. Brick houses were affected because… the thing is that when we think about fires in the office, there are always informal settlements… you know, it's always in the informal settlements, but now we've had incidents where fire occurred in brick houses and in blocks of flats. So blocks of flats, the houses, and even the backyards. With backyards, you'd always think that backyards are in townships, but now people's lifestyles in more areas are similar, even in coloured areas now you get the backyards … structures that can catch fire because of the incorrect electrifying of the shacks and stuff like that. It was mostly electrical faults that triggered fires in the backyard shacks.

An additional complicating factor that was referred to by the DiMP staff members was the fact that the access tracks and firebreaks were often used for storing belongings in the event of a fire. They explained that this behaviour had fuelled the fires in 2003, 2004 and again in the January 2005 large-scale fire as it had enabled the fire to jump the tracks and continue to rage in other cells:

> Although these are intended as firebreaks people are just using them as evacuation sites really. And the people their primary focus obviously was securing their livelihood. Which means securing your house and possessions and everything else that goes with

that, whether it's your ID-book or it's your TV or your fridge that's going to store all your beers in your shebeen[22].

They went on to highlight the difficult issue of accountability and the complexity of the situation:

> And before they knew it, it had jumped the track, and before they knew it, it had burnt down like six to nine cells – it was a lot and the city just went woo! And that is actually when we came in to do the evaluation. And everybody was standing back and saying, 'ja, but this is not a problem with the tracks, you know, the City has been successful'. And we sort of came in and were kind of caught between a rock and a hard place, trying to prove that actually, come guys… So I mean, there were obvious problems there around how they had actually managed the implementation of these tracks. They hadn't really understood the local, social dynamics; they hadn't understood how people would have actually responded in a fire situation. So it indicated that there hadn't been sufficient, enough research done in … And furthermore, there hadn't been enough participation of local people in the decision… around putting them in place and making sure that they were used for what they were intended.

The importance of balancing service delivery and community consultation was an issue picked up in a later interview with an official from the City of Cape Town. He provided a powerful case in point of a sanitation system that was envisaged for Joe Slovo after the November 2000 fire:

> It's what we call the container sanitation system that we have, which is one toilet with a 100-litre container, and according to our basic level of service we say four households share one toilet. So in a block of about a hundred families or a hundred structures, in that particular block we had to provide 25 toilets. Now, at first it was all supply-driven. You know, top-down without that much consultation. Coming to the end of a financial year, so I was just delivering while marking out the plots and setting some plots aside for the placing of toilets. And the people didn't like that; they were too close to their houses, and they just demolished them. They just broke them literally. So at R1, 500 a unit, you can imagine how much money we lost. So those are the lessons we learnt: if you don't really consult and involve the people in the planning, that is what you will be landed with.

---

[22] An informal, usually unlicensed, alcohol bar, which is generally located in a residential area.

4.3.2 Additional issues raised within the context of the interviews

4.3.2.1 Cost versus benefit

The DiMP staff members highlighted the fact that the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement is one of the best geographically located sites in Cape Town and as a result of a number of interlocking variables is highly attractive to disadvantaged people:

> It's the closest to jobs. The cheapest taxi ride to the city, close to train stations, etc. You've also provided a high level of service, which is free, effectively. I mean the City is unable to get people to pay for those services, so you've created a sort of magnet for densification. And you've also created a market opportunity for informal property transactions. You've created a vibrant, informal rental market.

He continued by making the point that, in his opinion, the residents of Joe Slovo are accommodating the high level of risk in order to get the livelihood benefits of a good location. They linked this to an international trend where people will live in high-risk environments where they know that annually their dwellings may get washed away or burnt down. He said that it would be extremely hard on people to be relocated from Joe Slovo after a fire or flood to an area such as Delft,[23] because of its poor location. People relocated from Joe Slovo are severed from their economic opportunities, and thus return again and again to Joe Slovo, despite the known risks and despite every effort by the City of Cape Town to relocate them.

The DiMP staff members felt strongly that the City of Cape Town needs to sharpen its understanding of how informal settlements work and not apply the same approaches to them as they would a more settled community in formal housing.

4.3.2.2 Formalisation of the "informal"

The DiMP staff members explored the issue of the N2 Gateway Project, which is a government initiative aimed at providing formal housing for all informal settlement residents who are located along the N2[24]. The question was raised about whether or not the formalising of the informal offers a solution to poverty. They made the point that unless South Africa

---

[23] A formerly classified "Coloured" area that is located on the outskirts of Cape Town.

[24] A national road heading in and out of Cape Town

deals with the issue of poverty itself then it will continue to have people desperately looking to live in places that are cheap, well located, and from which they can move easily should a job opportunity present itself in another area. They linked this to the issue of informality and poverty:

> And if you look at the research that's been done in informal settlements around the country, they are highly mobile. Mobility is the key issue. If a new set of job opportunities develops in Muizenberg[25] or wherever, a poor person who's doing casual work, he may relocate to another settlement. You don't want to have the formal sort of accoutrements there. You actually want to be able to up-sticks and sell your dwelling to somebody else.

They postulated that, as there was an increase in formal housing, so too would there be an increase in "backyarders". This, they believed, would occur because people would not be able to afford the rentals. They were of the opinion that providing formal housing to poverty-stricken communities would simply mean transferring the fire risk because density levels then remain high. In addition to this "backyarders" would be rendered even more vulnerable to risk and face more problems because they would essentially be invisible: they would not be registered with the City of Cape Town and would therefore receive no social relief should a fire or flood take place.

4.3.2.3 The conceptualisation of "The Community"

The DiMP interviewees spent a considerable amount of time exploring the concept of "the community" which they felt was based on a flawed assumption that Joe Slovo is made up of a group of homogenous residents. They made the point that what is lacking is a clear understanding of the social dynamics, the fabric of informal settlements and the fluidity of the movement within them.

They spoke about the fact that during planning or intervention processes the City of Cape Town engages only with fixed community structures, such as street committees[26], and as a result these become the key decision makers. However, as they described, Joe Slovo has the youngest population of any informal settlement in Cape Town. It has a high

---

[25] A suburb on Cape Town's coastline.

[26] Informal leadership structures within South African communities, having historical roots in informal political structures during the apartheid era.

predominance or high prevalence of single young men or young men in couples that occupy a single dwelling. They made the point, however, that it is often the middle-aged women who appear to be the main actors, the people who at a street or zone level "hold the place together". At a structural level there are the designated community leaders, who more often that not, are older men. The service providers compared the decision-making structures to rural processes, which privilege men and age, and those are the people who are appointed by the community to engage with authority. The question was raised about how the young population are accommodated within these processes - do they have a voice in local structures? They wondered if they are a third entity and invisible in terms of decision-making, consultation and participation.

Another potential "fault line" in Joe Slovo, according to DiMP, is the relationship between those people who are entrenched or born in the city, who have effectively become urbanised, and those who have rural homes or come from rural areas. The service providers stated that it is only when you overlay gender, age, and some of the other social dynamics raised above into the discussion, that the complexities of Joe Slovo become visible and one can begin to interrogate the idea of " the community". When asked what term would be more suitable the interviewee said:

> It would be banned, and would be replaced with the concept of locality – because there are multiple communities in Joe Slovo.

He linked this issue with the consultation processes between the City of Cape Town and Joe Slovo:

> And if the discourse is about community and the assumption is that you engage with the community by engaging with a few men who represent the community, then I think you will automatically miss the boat.

4.3.2.4 Political agendas and pressure

One of the difficulties raised about conducting such an evaluation was that the key service providers who had commissioned the evaluation obviously wanted to try to and prove that they had been successful in their efforts to reduce fire risk. DiMP explained that in addition to this the service providers were under tremendous pressure as there was a spotlight on Cape Town particularly around informal settlement fires and what was being done about them. DiMP however belonged to an academic, learning institution where research was conducted

in order to learn and advance. These two opposing frameworks meant that the findings had the potential to be a political minefield.

4.3.2.5 Monitoring fire risk in informal settlements

The DiMP interviewees reflected on the value of monitoring processes such as the mapping of disaster incidents so that fires can be tracked to see if they are increasing or decreasing in frequency. These maps become indicators of fire risk so that if an increase is detected then DiMP will mobilise an immediate assessment on the ground to establish what is going on, what is changing and what seems to be driving up the fire risk. They explained that in areas such as Joe Slovo or Imizamo Yethu[27] one would initially detect a rapid increase in small- and medium - scale fires, which would then often lead to a massive event. The monitoring of these indicators is therefore of paramount importance.

In relation to the 15 January 2005 fire in Joe Slovo which was a massive event which left roughly 13 000 people homeless, a DiMP staff member said:

> … The incidence is rising, and there were very clear warning signs that were in black and white, that a major fire was at risk. And then there were not one, but two and three major fires that subsequently broke out in that area… and like all of that investment, people's lives, people's possessions, people's livelihoods, etc. I mean, it's easy to be wise after the event, but I think the irony in this thing is that it wasn't a case of being wise after the event. It was actually about saying, you've commissioned research. The research indicates x. Now do something. And I think it was about paralysis in a way of actually… or perhaps even the failure to engage adequately with the research findings.

After the Jan 2005 fire the City of Cape Town commissioned DiMP to provide them with quarterly updates for at-risk informal settlements that would track fire risk in these areas. The service providers commented that this was a result of certain people within the City of Cape Town ultimately embracing the evaluation report:

> …They've got good people in the right places who understood it. But I think… I mean these are kind of long-term, collaborative relationships that we build. But I think this is the only way.

---

[27] An informal settlement in Hout Bay, approximately 10km from Cape Town.

4.4 Conclusion

It is undeniable that the complexities within and around the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement were well entrenched and clearly in operation before the January 2005 shack fire. These issues needed to be acknowledged and emphasised in order for the next chapter, and those following, to be contextualised and understood. With this contextual foundation in place I will now present some the results of the current study. I have made the decision to focus initially on the role-player results as these provide further context and depth of understanding from those involved in managing the fire event. This is then followed by the survivor narratives that tell a story that begins with an acute fire event and then continues by revealing the meaning and significance that this event had for their lives in the long term.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS – SERVICE PROVIDERS

The pre-events chapter reflected on issues raised in an interview with two DiMP staff members with specific reference to the evaluation of the Fire Mitigation Programme in Joe Slovo. Issues that fell outside of this ambit will be included in this section of my thesis. Aside from the interviews with DiMP staff members, an additional four interviews were conducted with individuals who were involved in an official capacity with managing the 15 January 2005 fire. These included staff members of the City of Cape Town's Disaster Management Centre, and the City's social services department, among others. The intention was to explore the wider context of communal and socio-political variables surrounding the fire. The narratives fell within two time frames, the acute event, i.e., the day of the fire; and post-event, i.e. issues that arose thereafter. I have therefore decided that in order best to represent the findings and to present a coherent and collective narrative, I will present the data in chronological order by first reflecting on the acute event and then moving on in time to post-event issues.

5.1 The acute event

These narratives relating to the acute event fell into three main thematic areas:
- Eyewitness accounts of the acute event itself
- Powerlessness
- Group dynamics

5.1.1 Eyewitness accounts

The individual service provider narratives spoke to a common, collective perception of the actual fire event itself. One narrative in particular gave a vivid sense of the scene:

> There were police everywhere. It was so confused… there were police everywhere – and the sirens and the noise! And as I was walking through, I met some of the people I know. They were already on my fire disaster list. People I know because I assisted them with social relief and all that. So people had their cases and belongings on their heads, and the children were just running around and crying. And some people were drunk and some people were fighting. Others were swearing at each other. You know, the tensions were running so high…

People were running, going into Joe Slovo. They were crying, and they were adults, they wanted to know what was happening because people were sort of shocked. Some were shopping and some were at work when this thing happened. And I don't know how they got to know, but some were phoned at work and so they rushed back home. And as they were coming out of the train at the station, they could see the smoke. And now, not knowing, could it be my house or what. And so they started running. You know, that feeling and that sense that you don't know. You want to see. Now, you're thinking your kids… or whoever you left in the house. No one was talking to each other because they were all in a group, running towards Joe Slovo.

This quote also makes the point that many fire survivors had experienced multiple fire incidents while living in the Joe Slovo area. Despite this, it is clear that this particular fire had caught people off-guard and the realisation that it was actually happening was shocking and frightening for them.

It was evident from the emotionally laden narratives that the January 2005 fire had impacted at a very personal level with all the service providers who, at this point in time, could empathise with the survivors:

But it's an experience I will never forget. Seeing those people's faces and looking at them… you know, it's like all their lives have just… It was quite traumatic for the people. And that is when you see yourself as a very lucky person. I always see myself … You know, seeing that, I have had a good chance in life. You know, at least I managed to get a little bit of education. I'm working and I don't live in a shack. You know, for them to have had those experiences, and then you see yourself as very lucky.

An issue that was reflected in many of the stories that were relayed was the immediate response of the community to this event. In general the sense was that "the community", in the widest sense of the word, did what they could to help in the spirit of ubuntu[28]. Within this context 'the community' referred to multiple groups, such as, the survivors themselves, those who lived in close vicinity to the fire-affected area, the surrounding geographical areas and functional communities, for example, employers:

On Sunday, the very next morning, there was a Pick 'n Pay[29] Venture[30] – the manager and two staff members came in looking for their staff. They couldn't find them, but they left their names with disaster management. … And some… was it a security company… but you will see employers coming in and wanting to help and… you know.

---

[28] This refers to social support provided by community members with no expectation of reciprocity.

[29] Pick 'n Pay is a large retail food store in South Africa.

[30] Vehicle which has seating for 8 people.

> And also, people from other communities like the coloured communities from Delft and Bonteheuwel[31]… people coming in and bringing in stuff like clothing and things for the children. And you know, companies… you could sense that people wanted to help. They really offered themselves.

The less palatable side of disaster, the opportunists and "scavengers", was visible to some of the service providers but these incidents were seen to be the exception rather than the rule:

> As we were watching this fire just going and people just watching their houses go up in flames and losing everything that they had, we've got these two coming across and trying to steal. I think it was a sofa and a radio that they were trying to steal. And the community got so angry that they started chasing these two guys and they managed to… they were half-drunk in any case… and then they got them in the park and then they started to beat these two up. And of course, now we've got City Police involved and the SAPS[32] involved, trying to save these two now. They made an arrest and took them out of the area. Because for me, it was strange sort of thing: people can see these people are losing everything, why must they still come and take from them. It was very… I don't know, sad for me to see it.

5.1.2 Powerlessness

For all of the service providers this was the largest fire event to which they had responded in their careers. All of the service providers who were on the scene on the day of the fire reflected on their sense of powerlessness:

> But then I realised, wow, this is something that I've never seen before – it's huge, the blaze was just coming. And then I spoke to one of the (fire) officers there, and he told me, this fire is out of our hands. We are going to let it burn. There is nothing we can do. They said, we are going to save the school, but we're just going to let this go. There is nothing we can do about this fire. But we are going to manage to contain it by the school. They were actually waiting for it to happen – for the fire to come and then take it from there. They weren't going to waste water… So that was the feedback that I got from them. Then we went to Vanguard Drive[33], we stood and we watched how this fire just came and how this wind just took it.

An issue that was raised numerous times was the number of emergency service personnel, such as disaster risk management, the fire department and the department of social services, on the scene who were caught up in the enormity of this fire. They were desperately trying to deal with the crises at hand, the ensuing chaos and the mitigation of

---

[31] A former 'coloured' area, 8km from Cape Town.

[32] South African Police Service

[33] Vanguard Drive is one of the main streets in the Langa area.

potential ongoing hazards, all while attempting some form of coordination. Some of the narratives reflected a sense of panic, confusion and fear as the fire destroyed all in its path, leaving rescue services helpless to stop it and desperate to evacuate those affected. One service provider brought this situation to life:

> Okay, I couldn't actually see what was happening because the smoke was too much. It was really thick smoke and that. But I went in. I parked my vehicle in one of the side streets and I went in. I took a walk with my radio and my Day-Glo jacket. I just saw the blazes… these big blazes. And I could see that the fire department was battling. There wasn't enough water. They couldn't find hydrants. They had to wait for water to arrive. There were about six to eight vehicles on the scene. I managed to talk to one of the officers but he couldn't make an assessment – he couldn't even talk because his job was now to put out this fire and there's no time to talk now. Then already I could see that this was big and I radioed the control room. I said, 'the fire is not out, it's still burning and the fire department is trying to control the fire – but there's no water. They can't find hydrants.' And in my opinion at the moment, I would say 200 shacks burning.

> And I stuck around in that area, and myself and City Police were trying to evacuate people. Because people are now just trying to get the bare necessities… They were trying to get out because of the fire and because of their lives, so doing that as well, but still trying to get furniture and all of that. Because I mean, they've got very few things, so whatever they've got, they still have to get. So myself and commander X, we were trying to evacuate the people; trying to tell them they must move. They must get out and leave their possessions. They must just get away because the wind was howling.

> And then the fire jumped the road. So now you must remember, the wind took it across and fire (department) couldn't control it. It was big. They couldn't get a grip on it. And the people were just running… I can just picture it now. They were running with their stuff and screaming and shouting. You know, when you live in a shack, the majority of the people use paraffin and some use gas bottles, and you could actually hear these gas bottles exploding.

This overwhelming sense of disempowerment and uncertainty continued for the service providers after the fire itself had been extinguished. One service provider reflected on how overwhelming the task at hand was to manage and coordinate an emergency response of this magnitude when devastation surrounded him:

> R: It was late in the evening, roundabout 9 or 10 o'clock, the fire went out. Now you've got this mass of people standing around. Everything is destroyed. Everything is black. Everything is… I can just picture these people standing around. And it's getting cold… where do they go? It was 3050 shacks that burnt out, so if you do a ratio of four per household, you are looking at about 16 000 people.

> I: Hmm, it's an incredible amount of people.

R: Now you've got press. You've got people that are destitute. You've got management. You've got other service providers – people who want to give input. You have people who want to help. You have people who just want to lend a hand; they just want to get involved because everybody knows there was this big fire, bla-bla-bla. And how do you coordinate? How do you manage this whole… get everything together and just coordinate it. Cause that's our role, we need to play a coordinating role. In the beginning it was really tough for myself and X because everybody was looking at us for answers. What now? Tell us what to do – because that's what happens. And now you are standing there… you are like in a daze! What do I actually do?

I: Where to start.

R: Ja. You've got babies, you've got old people, you've got sick people, you've got people with HIV/AIDS – the list just carries on. And now you are faced with this. Myself and [X], we did manage to move the JOC[34] vehicle into the school area because that was a more centralised place. I looked at her and she looked at me, and she said, 'now, this is what we are going to do' – and we just started to strategise: Okay, it's happened. It's here. We've got to deal with it now. How are we going to deal with it? We took ourselves out of the mess – out of the noise, people wanting this and people wanting that. We just took ourselves out of it and we just stood sideways. People didn't even know… people were looking for us, but we just stepped aside and we just spoke to each other just to get a grip on the thing.

This quote also demonstrates the difficult and multi-faceted job that faced the emergency team. Not only do they have survivors looking to them for answers but management, other officials, and the media that seemed to cause an enormous amount of strain for the service providers concerned. It seemed as if the above service provider felt dazed and shocked by the enormity of the event that it, initially, immobilised his ability to respond.

5.1.3 Group dynamics

When exploring issues and dynamics in the immediate aftermath of the fire the service providers made reference to three significant groupings:

- Management and politicians
- The service providers
- The survivors

---

[34] Joint Operations Centre where all emergency service departments must be represented in order to provide information that would enable a coordinated response.

I will make use of these groupings to structure the emerging themes and dynamics that unfolded in the service provider narratives.

5.1.3.1 Management and politicians

When referring to how they had managed this incident on the ground one of the service providers explored his high levels of stress, frustration and anger in the immediate aftermath of the fire. This was exacerbated, for him, by the lack of appreciation and criticism that he felt he and his partner had received from their superiors:

> So ja, and then of course, I was criticised for doing quite a shit job there. You know, you don't get thanked for the job that you do. It's a thankless bloody task. I mean, you just get told it's a shit job. You know, it really gets to me. I know I did what I could do under those circumstances. But I think I did a bloody good job, so quite frankly, I don't give a hoot about what others are saying. It's the biggest fire; they've never had anything that big before!

Many of the service providers spoke about the political landscape that permeated many aspects of the response to the January 2005 fire. They reflected on numerous stakeholders, each of whom entered the community with their own agendas, goals and messages that they wanted relayed to the fire victims. Often these conflicted with the messages being sent by officials on the ground:

> I mean, you get these parliamentarians and the political people coming on site, creating endless problems – endless problems! They don't realise what problems they are creating. Because they come on site and they make promises. They promise this… and they promise the bloody earth, which they can't give, and it falls back on you!

Another service provider from another department voiced similar sentiments that reflected a high level of anger:

> And then ja, all the top government officials arrived on the scene and started flexing their political muscles: who is in charge? Who must take orders from whom? And they (government officials) were making all sorts of promises; and one public official was just shooting everyone's suggestions or inputs down. So what did we do – myself and the disaster management personnel? We just looked at the situation that occurred: nothing constructive was going to come out of this meeting; we went out on site and we did what we do best. But then came the decision not to allow the people to rebuild.

One of the service providers reflected on the decision made by the Mayor of Cape Town not to allow fire victims to rebuild their dwellings but to prioritise them in terms of the N2 Gateway Project – that is, that they would receive priority for new housing being constructed as part of

the N2 Gateway Project. He compared it with what had happened in the past when there was an informal settlement fire:

> Big decision to say, we are not going to allow you to go back and rebuild. Because in previous fires, like the one in March 2004, we would clear that whole area and remove all the rubble. Bring in some clean sand filling and level it nicely. You know, give them some guidance as to where they can build – and they would go back. Then we would give them just some little assistance with a couple of poles and zinc sheeting and plastic sheeting and some nails, so they can start putting up their structures again. Ja, we've done that in the past, but this time, because of the N2 Gateway Project having begun, the Mayor said that she'd use this opportunity to kind of fast-track things.

This of course meant that the fire-affected community were relocated first to the tents and then into temporary housing while awaiting formal housing. One of the service providers who was central in operationalising this plan reflected on the issue of accountability by pointing out that, as a result of the restructuring process within the City of Cape Town at the time, he was unclear about to whom he was supposed to be reporting. He felt very strongly that with a disaster of this magnitude and scope it was an intolerable and unacceptable situation. In addition to this he commented that the tents had cost the City of Cape Town R12 million[35], whereas allowing residents to rebuild would have cost less. He explained that it was because of such poor management decisions that the City was left with limited funds to manage the ongoing disaster.

5.1.3.2 The service providers

It was clear from the narratives provided that the scene of the fire was one of chaos, terror and destruction. Added to this mix were numerous service providers, each with their own specific brief and role in bringing this disaster to a close. It seemed that instead of the fire uniting the service providers in working towards a common goal it served to divide and fragment services:

> We also tried to establish a JOC[36] at the time. We radioed into our control room to say, no, this is more than enough. It's 200 shacks now – this is big. From the Vanguard side we can actually see the fire is spreading. The wind is lifting it and it's taking out a few shacks. And it is this big, so we need management here. We need to have a JOC on site now – our forward command post. We need to get all the service providers around one table because this is big. But we couldn't. We couldn't manage it because people were just doing… Traffic was trying to control

---

[35] $1 = R7.50 at the time of going to print.

[36] Joint Operations Centre where all emergency service departments must be represented in order to provide information that would enable a coordinated response.

the traffic on Vanguard Drive[37]. You must remember, people are now seeing this big blaze and they want to come and see what's happening.

Then tried to get top officials to come out. The majority of them were on leave. It was the wrong time of the year. It was festive season and people had gone on holiday – that type of thing. The fire department… I had to get feedback from them. Are you getting the water? Do you need more manpower? Are you going to call up people from other areas to come and help? What is happening and how many fire engines have you got? It was difficult to get that as well because they were busy doing their job to try and contain this fire. They initially had their own JOC vehicle. They brought up their own JOC vehicle and they decided that they were going to set it up right there where the fire was with all the smoke and all that. It was terrible. Anyway, that is the decision they made. We couldn't get them into our JOC vehicle; we had the metro bus, we had metro SAPS, city police, traffic department – all the service providers except for fire (department) – which played a major role. You see, so we couldn't get feedback and that was very frustrating for us.

The narratives reflected a sense of territoriality where each department felt happier working in isolation from each other and struggled to work as a collective. This is demonstrated in the above quote with the fire department refusing to link up with the Joint Operations Centre, an action that could only hamper efficient and effective disaster intervention.

5.1.3.3 The survivors

A number of incidents created and aggravated a split between the service providers and the fire affected community. The sense of disempowerment and lack of control felt by the service providers seemed to be replicated in decisions made for the fire survivors by the role players themselves. One particularly powerful example can be found in the feeding of the survivors. The City of Cape Town's protocol was that the feeding of all survivors would be outsourced to a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Interestingly, the Mayor herself had given the instruction that the community should be encouraged to work collaboratively with the identified NGO in terms of determining what the meals should be and being of assistance in the cooking of the meal itself. One of the service providers made reference to the Mannenberg Tornado in 1999 where a similar strategy had been successfully used. Unfortunately this never happened in Joe Slovo, as one of the service providers tried to explain:

---

[37] Vanguard Drive is one of the main streets in the Langa area.

In fact, that is one of the first things that the Mayor recommended, that the community cook. I don't know… the procedure was that the City and the NGOs would provide feeding. So that is how it worked all along. And then the Mayor came and she said that the NGOs can involve the community with the cooking. The Mayor felt very strongly about that… But still it didn't happen even though the Mayor said that she wanted this. I don't know what happened there. It got lost…

Beyond this having implications for ownership of processes and empowerment of the survivors, it also created a clash of cultures that had ramifications at an inter-group level. This situation unfolded when the City of Cape Town outsourced the feeding of fire survivors to a Muslim NGO. The NGO decided to distribute one of their traditional meals that was seen to be a delicacy in the Muslim community, that is, breyani[38]. One of the service providers highlighted how and why this meal was problematic:

And the fact that people are sort of provided with food they don't eat, and they will complain that there are some leaves and sticks in their food! You know, and this yellow rice with meat in it! They don't eat that.

This specific service provider used this as a case in point to demonstrate how people from different cultures and religious backgrounds can misunderstand each other. This misunderstanding was, however, not limited to the NGO and fire survivors, it was felt strongly and personally by many of the service providers who were coordinating the relief effort. It resulted in extreme frustration on the part of these service providers who felt demotivated and angry with the survivors who they perceived to be unappreciative of the food. This seemed to feed into an "us" and "them" dynamic between "service providers" and "the fire survivors". This can be clearly seen by the following extract:

…but people were just eating the food, and if they didn't like it, throw it on the ground. And not just one bowl of food lying on the ground – hundreds, which brings flies and rats. What does that tell you? These people don't care about themselves! And this is what you're looking at.

This quote also serves to illustrate some of the complex dynamics that were emerging between the service providers and survivors. It is possible that these were dynamics that pre-dated the fire and had to do with hostility levelled at informal settlement residents in general. This seemed to hold true when one of the service providers referred to the numerous opportunists, within the wider Joe Slovo community, who deliberately took advantage of situation and the services being offered. For some of the role players this

---

[38] Spicy dish containing, among other ingredients, cinnamon sticks and bay leaves.

type of incident was generalised to the whole survivor group from which they distanced themselves by referring to "these people", by which they meant the Joe Slovo community as a whole. An example that was provided was the feeding queues that got longer and longer as more residents of Langa "joined the bandwagon":

> So it was almost like a hotel. I mean, I was eventually saying, Hotel Langa. No, I felt very frustrated out there. We definitely had no control.

5.2 Post- event/the ongoing disaster

An undeniable fact about the 15 January 2005 fire is that the problems did not end when the fire was extinguished; the disaster simply moved from being an acute to being a chronic event. It became evident to one of the service providers that the basic needs of the survivors were changing as they slowly emerged from what had been an acute crisis. Disaster intervention had been thorough in providing shelter, food, water, showers, toilets and transport amongst a whole range of other services. The challenge however lay in the fact that this was an ongoing crisis or disaster; it was by no means over. Shifts were taking place in terms of needs and expectations, on a longer-term basis, as these survivors were not being allowed to return to their site to rebuild their homes. This was a shift that was observed by one of the DiMP staff members:

> So now they are thinking, okay, I don't want to stand in the long queue for feeding. I can make my own food. I've got food here. My husband still works so we have a small income. We can still buy food – but we need to cook now. We need to… they wanted to take ownership of doing their things on their own.

This created many difficulties for the officials trying to manage the tents, as they couldn't allow stoves or gas bottles (which are fire hazards) into the tents. The implications and complexities of the chronic nature of this disaster were starting to become apparent. Commenting on the multi-layered ramifications of the 15 January fire one of the service providers said:

> … this Langa disaster has given rise to so many other disasters: social disaster, health and environmental disaster, gross mismanagement, financial… you name it!

Many of these layers will now be explored in terms of the ongoing nature of this fire disaster. I have divided this section into two main areas; firstly, shifts in behaviour within the survivor group, and secondly, group dynamics.

5.2.1 Shifts in survivor behaviour as incident moves from an acute to an ongoing disaster

Many of the service providers commented on a changing dynamic within the survivor group after they had been in the tents for a week or two. One service provider described in detail how the situation deteriorated further over time and escalated to a point where the City of Cape Town staff members looked on in horror:

> …drinking Saturday afternoon, Sunday, Friday. A lot of lost children, but we had a police caravan there for that purpose. Lots of lost children. Then after a few hours you see the drunken mother come: oh, that's my baby! We had a rape case. We had lots of domestic violence where people were beaten up. There's a wife who is now tired of her drunken husband. Or the drunken husband just comes along and says, ah, I'm going to take it out on you – and right there in the tent he gives her a bashing.

In the next chapter, "Results–survivors", the issue of shifts in behaviour, will be dealt with in a lot more detail from the perspective of the survivors themselves. The service providers in general reflected that there was little of the community spirit or sense of ubuntu that had been present up until that point. All the service providers voiced an opinion about what they had observed and what they thought was causing it. One of the service providers posited that this was possibly because of the fact that there were 200 people living in one space, with no privacy, high levels of stress and frustration and no end in sight. Another of the service providers made the point that the kind of behaviour being observed was nothing new, only that the lack of privacy in the tents had the unintended consequence of making visible issues, such as domestic violence and rape, that have the tendency in South Africa to be generally hidden:

> And after a while, nothing was hidden away. What's happening in the shacks is now happening in the tents. Nothing is hidden away.

One such issue was teenage pregnancy, which was highlighted by another service provider:

> So ja, when A was busy showing me around as part of my reorientation coming back onto the project, he said: Z, I want you to take particular note of the pregnancies that you're going to see – especially amongst the young girls. I just want you to observe this and have a look. They have been in the tents about five months. So ja, it was beginning to show.

Two issues of fundamental importance in understanding these shifts were raised by one of the DiMP staff members who voiced concerns about the ongoing nature of this disaster and its implications for the survivors' well being:

> But what that long-term process does for people's self-respect, their self-reliance, their independence and their agency. And I think it's progressively eroded, and when you finally find yourself in a sort of refugee camp type of scenario where the norms are being set externally without you controlling that - I don't know what the long-term consequences of that are.

It is of course possible that the consequence was the very shifts that were taking place in terms of a breakdown in social cohesion and harmony. Again, these are issues that will be dealt with in more detail in the survivor's chapter and discussion that follows.

Another issue that was raised by DiMP was the possible implications of the pre-event dynamics (see pre-events chapter) within this community. The point was made that the random allocation of survivors to specific tents could have had negative ramifications because the social landscape had been tampered with:

> And whether they are replicated in terms of how people are accommodated in those tents. In other words, who sleeps next to who. What are the social fault lines inside those tented areas? You know, it may not relate to geography; it may relate to… I mean, the geography of the settlements may relate to other spaces – places that people have lived in before they came to the area. Home-born networks…

This quote implies that this community had carefully negotiated space within their community for many years. It also highlights the obvious, but often over-looked, fact that the survivors were not a homogenous group that could be picked up and moved at random without serious consequences. It speaks to space, race, economics, and politics, all of which together may explain the gradual shifts in behaviour that every day, spiralled exponentially out of control. These are again issues that will be dealt with in more detail in the survivor and discussion chapters.

5.2.2 Group dynamics

Again, when reflecting on the longer-term implications and issues that arose after the fire, the service providers tended to identify three significant groupings:

- Management and politicians
- The service providers
- The survivors

Similarly I will structure this section to reflect the interface between the issues and these group dynamics.

5.2.2.1 Management and politicians

The political nature of this disaster did not go unnoticed by the service providers who, at times, felt that politicians were further aggravating the situation or using it for political mileage at the expense of the survivors. A case in point was a politician who timed deadlines to coincide with his political agenda. One of the service providers described an incident where he was told that all fire survivors must be moved out of the tents by, at the latest, 16 June, which is a national holiday that commemorates the Soweto uprising in South Africa[39]. Another example was the anniversary of the death of Joe Slovo[40] where the Minister of Housing was due to visit the settlement. The service provider was given instructions to take the people out of tents in the area and move them to tents in Delft. He commented on his reaction to this suggestion:

> And I thought are these people for real? We are dealing with human beings here who have been messed around for so long. So ja, I just told them, with all due respect sir, I'm not going to carry out that instruction. It's not feasible. It's not possible. It's not ethical. The press would have ripped us apart. But anyway, I'm glad things didn't go that way.

---

[39] In 1976 protests started in African schools after a directive from the then Bantu Education Department that Afrikaans had to be used on an equal basis with English as a language of instruction in secondary schools. The issue however, was not so much the Afrikaans as the whole system of Bantu education, which was characterised by separate schools and universities, poor facilities, overcrowded classrooms and inadequately trained teachers. On 16 June 1976 more than 20 000 pupils from Soweto began a protest march. In the wake of clashes with the police, and the violence that ensued during the next few weeks, approximately 700 hundred people, many of them youths, were killed and property destroyed (South African Government, 2007).

[40] Joe Slovo was a South African Communist politician and leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP) for a many years; he was also a leading member of the African National Congress.

5.2.2.2 The service providers

<u>Communication</u>

The issue of consultation and negotiation between the officials and "the community" seemed fraught. One example of a service provider who felt negatively about the consultation process can be found in the following extract:

> You see, everything had to be passed through the community leaders, and I feel that that's also wrong. I feel, that as an official, you need to make a decision and they must fall in line with your decision. If they say no, it has to be negotiated. Negotiation… there is times to negotiate and there are times not to negotiate.

This service provider clearly felt that service delivery was being compromised by the laborious task of consultation. It seemed that he felt that he would be more efficient and his job would be more effective if he was left alone to make decisions and then to have those decisions implemented.

One of the other service providers, however, reflected more of an acceptance and understanding of why consultation with the community was important as well as why it was often an unsuccessful strategy. He explored the issue of trust that he felt provided the foundation to the consultation process:

> Okay, the first thing: we as the City of Cape Town, although we are going through a process of transformation trying to be more sensitive and accommodating to all citizens in the city, we found that the interaction that we've had with communities right up until now has been flawed with a whole lot of mistrust, broken promises and disappointments. So in Joe Slovo, because of our extended involvement there, we have tried to build up some level of trust between ourselves and the community.

Interestingly however he later went on to voice his distrust of the street committees by saying:
> "So ja, we relied heavily on the community leaders – and you know, their credibility is greatly suspect!"

<u>Privacy</u>

It was certainly evident to all the service providers integrally involved in the relocation of the thousands of survivors that the tent villages would not be a short-term but rather a medium-term solution. This of course raised the complex issue of the tension between the

community's long-term needs and the service providers' need to ensure safety and security:

> You see, I know where it comes from - that the people want a partition, but there are two sides to a coin, and this is which makes those kind of big tents or even a mass hall a problem. Because, first of all, what are you going to use to partition – what material. Is it freely available? First of all, where are you going to get it – to resource it? Secondly, is it going to be fire-proof. Because a lot of the people in the tents were just doing their own thing. They were cooking in the tents when they were not supposed to cook in the tents; open flames in the tent. And that is why, for safety reasons, you have to have it open because things can happen behind partitioning. Social ills could take place behind partitioning. So we had to have… and we had patrols – policemen patrolling up and down inside those tents right throughout the night to make sure that there weren't any social ills taking place. And also, for safety aspects and checking that there weren't fires and flames and smoking in the tents – and that type of thing. Because you know, it's highly inflammable stuff, and can you imagine if you had another disaster on top of that! I'd be looking for another job. You know, and these are the problems you have to deal with. So yes, people need their privacy, but it is not practical.

Dependency

It was clear that the situation that had unfolded was one that the City of Cape Town was desperately trying to control, with strict guidelines and protocols that needed to be followed in order for them to feel confident that they were minimising or mitigating risk factors. This inadvertently created a high level of dependency. One service provider had this insight into the problems that were being created:

> And the fact that there are things that you don't believe in doing. Because I believe that if I'm helping some people, those people must take responsibility of some sort. Get them together. Talk to them. Plan around, and then get them, organize them in such a way that they will take responsibility for cooking food, dishing up, cleaning – for all those things. Make them responsible. There is just this tendency that we treat people like babies; we want to do everything. But that dependency now gets translated to people: okay, I'm just sitting here and I am going to receive.

Interestingly it was this 'victim' behaviour that fed further into the split between service providers and survivors on an ongoing basis. The narratives of all the service providers who were involved at the coalface of the disaster response interventions spoke of tremendously high levels of stress, frustration and sometimes anger at what seemed to be a never-ending pool of demands and requests from the survivors. The electricity supply was a case in point of an ongoing, unmanageable and stressful situation for all, where officials and survivors found themselves at loggerheads. One of the service providers

involved in the management of the Tygerberg Hostel openly acknowledged that difficulties and hardships that the residents were experiencing in terms of the living conditions, but he attributed those conditions to the fact that the residents needed education regarding group living and basic health and hygiene:

> But now the kitchen facilities aren't working very well. We've got big industrial stoves… I don't know whose idea was it to put those in… so the current power supply is not sufficient to have all of those stoves working at the same time. And then what do they do? They also use their own little two-plate stoves; find a plug in one of the passages or wherever they can find a plug. That is besides the heaters, radios and TVs all over the place. So from time to time the circuit breaker trips. One section was prone to that. They were calling out an electrician almost every night. They need to be educated: don't plug in all your appliances at the same time! So now the plumber has also been called out because the drains are always blocked. They are washing the food and pots and everything… throw it down the sinks. So it's all behaviour and some education but it's common sense! They wouldn't do that at home… well, that's where we need to start because they don't know that. So ja, we have to come up with some education programme to address that issue.

This quote serves to demonstrate not only an 'us' and 'them' dynamic but the underlying anger towards, and possible infantilising of, survivors.

5.2.2.3 The survivors

Communication

Given that the fire itself was no longer the issue, but rather that the continued nature of this disaster and the implications this would have for the survivors' lives had become central, it would have been imperative for channels of communication to be efficient and effective. One of the DiMP staff members made the interesting point that the lack of communication between the City of Cape Town and the community was possibly because the consultation process was conducted with the street committees and not directly with the fire survivors. She suggested that there was a bottleneck of information that sat at a political level, which didn't flow down to a local level:

> What interested me when I was there actually… because I met with some… you know, in some of my visits… and my last visits especially I found quite concerning when I began speaking to some young men, probably in their early thirties, about what type of communication there had been about the housing process that would follow … living in these tents, and I said to them: when do you expect to move? If not, where are you going? How long are you going to be in this emergency house

for? Are you going to pay anything? Where are you going after that? Etc. And they said: you know, we don't know anything. There had been absolutely no communication, and I think what has happened is that the City communicated directly to the community leaders[41] in the assumption that these community leaders are representative of the whole community. This whole community is living in ... all these tents. So of course... you know, there was the people from the course[42] and they said, oh, I think you guys should start mobilising and start forming tent committees. And you need to be asking the community leaders to be explaining very clearly what your next process is. Of course, we weren't allowed back in Joe Slovo after that!

She continued by highlighting that the majority of the men that they had spoken to at that time had made the point that if they had realised how long the housing process was going to be, they would have rather opted for being financially compensated by the City, given that the City was spending R 60, 000 a week on renting the tents. In the service providers' opinion not enough options were explored in a participatory manner with the affected residents.

Later when the survivors moved to Tygerberg Hostel it was clear that these political processes were still very much at play but this time at a community level. One of the service providers reflected on how he worked around such sensitivities:

But one of the first things I noticed is that they didn't have a leadership structure when I got there. The leaders in Langa didn't allow them to organise themselves into a leadership structure. They said, we tried it and it didn't work, blah-blah-blah. And then I said, okay, I hear you but I need to have some form of order. You know, lines of reporting and communication. I said, okay, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to appoint some reps – that is what I wanted to do, but before I could do that, those people called me and said, this is what we have done. We have come together; we have identified a couple of people that we would like to be our... Because I didn't want to use the words committee leaders. I didn't want to use those – to refer to them as committee members. I said, okay, let's change that and let's call them reps because if the Langa leadership finds out that there is a committee here... it's going to cause a lot of problems!

---

[41] Informal leaders, often referred to as street committees

[42] The disaster management course is run by DiMP at the University of Cape Town

<u>Privacy</u>

The majority of the service providers demonstrated great empathy for the survivors and their plight; they felt that their ability to cope under such challenging circumstance was testimony to their resilience and strength:

> The amazing thing for me… if I look at myself, I really admire them because for me to have been in that environment… I don't think I would have survived really. Because now you must remember, when the fire initially happened, it was a Saturday, and only a week-and-a-half or two weeks later did the city provide washing facilities. So what people were doing… I mean, you need to bath. Can you imagine not being able to bath for a week! You know, you're smelling and you're miserable and frustrated, and you take it out on the people who are around you.

This particular service provider was cognisant of the personal realities of a lack of privacy:

> So people would try to get to a tap, and what they do, they take the bucket into the tent and there you have a bath right there. There was no privacy. So you take a 16-year-old, a 12-year-old and a 13-year-old, they now have to bath in front of their neighbours. It's something that never happens. So that to me also was… it was hectic. We had a few pregnant women and we had a few deliveries – not in the tent but nearby. Ja, so nothing was personal. Everything was open. You just saw everything. There was nothing, nothing personal about it.

The lack of privacy fed into a much larger problem of adult intimate relationships and the consequent vulnerability of children who were exposed to such events:

> But it was too many families in one tent, and people never had their privacy. You know, we as humans, we've got our needs – and we never looked at that. Ja, we never took that into account. And I mean, it became very frustrating; they came to complain at the bus on a daily basis about… because you've got a family of say four, a mother and a husband, and maybe a daughter of 14 and a son of maybe 10, and this daughter of 14 is seeing everything that is happening in the tent. People are sleeping together and they do what they do. It's not cordoned off. And they come and tell you, please do something about it. It's like a hunger – it's a need, please do something about it.

> Okay, in the beginning we didn't know how to deal with it because it means that we had to reshuffle the tents – and now you're talking about 13 tents full of people, and you're talking about 200 people in a tent. So to reshuffle them… We tried to cordon off… made partitioning, but it got seriously out of hand really. It was uncontrollable and people just did what they wanted. Children saw everything… it was a bad thing the tents. But what do you do?

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into the thoughts and concerns of some of the service providers directly involved in the management of this disaster. There was general agreement that the fire disaster was complex politically, racially and culturally, and few would have relished the task of trying to resolve in a sustainable way:

> And then if you add the racial dimensions of coloured and black and locality tensions on top of that, you have a very, very volatile mixture. So it's a very unenviable position to be in – to be trying to actually think of what the right thing to do is in Joe Slovo.

The next chapter moves away from the service providers to the survivors themselves and explores, in their own words, how their lives were affected by this disaster.

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS - SURVIVORS

In a similar manner to the previous chapter I shall present the survivor results in two main sections. Firstly, I shall describe issues related to the acute event, and secondly, issues relating to the ongoing nature of this disaster. I have decided not to distinguish between narratives reflecting on issues in the tent villages and those within Tygerberg as there is a great amount of over-lap and dividing the narrative would have detracted from the emerging themes.

6.1 The acute event

Interestingly the majority of respondents did not focus significantly on the acute event, the 15 January shack fire, and had to be probed to talk in more detail about that. There were, however, a number of consistent issues that were highlighted in the stories that were relayed, namely, individual and collective responses to the acute event, the issue of loss, attributions relating to the fire itself, and an "us" and "them" dynamic.

6.1.1 Individual responses to the acute event

The majority of the respondents reflected on a high level of denial, with its consequent delayed response in reacting to this real and visible threat. Despite numerous warnings and multiple hazards, such as a very strong wind and a lack of water, most of the respondents seemed to be under the misguided impression that the fire wouldn't spread to their specific location. One survivor was a case in point:

> …Then one of the shacks caught fire near where I was staying – not too near - where I was staying in Joe Slovo. So I was still looking at this shack burning up but I thought it was not going to spread because it was in broad daylight you know and there were people all around you know – I would have been worried perhaps if the fire started in the late (in the afternoon) you know and I would have quickly taken my things out because if the fire starts late I know that it's more difficult to stop it because everyone is sleeping. So I didn't really take the fire seriously when I saw that first shack going up in smoke because there were people around. So I continued with my plans to go to town. But as I was still preparing I noticed that the fire was spreading to the shacks near mine but I still didn't take it seriously especially when I heard the firemen coming because I thought they would manage the spreading of the fire. But then when they got there they were not able to stop it

because they didn't have water, a second group of firemen came and they also didn't have water, but I still thought no they'd manage it. I thought maybe they would use the water from the taps, the taps around there so I thought they would get some water from there.

So I left for town, and then as I was – mos I had a case that I had filed with the police since my things were stolen from my house during a house break-in where they took my tape (radio), and my lawnmower. So I went to find out what was happening to that case first before going to town. So when I got to the Police Station I found it closed and I was told that they had all left to attend to the fire. So I thought wow this fire must be really serious now. And I could see from where I was standing that it was really strong and spreading. So I decided to go back to my place and when I got there I could see that the fire was getting very close to where I am staying and I could see quite a few shacks already burnt down. So I thought wow, what am I going to do? So I thought no maybe I should watch it maybe it's going to stop, I thought maybe it wouldn't reach our road and get to our shacks. And then as I was watching it I noticed that it was very windy as well and the cables were also catching fire and this is making the fire spread even quicker into the other shacks. And then I saw it coming very close to my own shack so I finally gave in and saw that I needed to try to get some of my valuables out of the shack, I tried to rescue the items that I could rescue.

This relates to a key issue in the Joe Slovo fire: the actions and reactions of those affected in order to protect and secure their belongings. The majority of survivors had frantically tried to save some of their possessions in a desperate attempt to curtail losses and for a brief period of time it seemed that they had been successful. Tragically the fire later destroyed all of these 'saved' possessions anyway. This seemed to aggravate the survivors' huge sense of loss. One respondent used the access road[43] as a safe haven:

I lost everything, everything material – I couldn't really take anything out as the fire reached my place very quickly and the things that I managed to take out were later burnt up as well because they were on the road – everyone put their things on the road and the fire got there as well.

Another survivor spoke about having taken her belongings to a friend's house, which appeared to be outside of the affected area:

---

[43] This was meant to serve as both a fire-break and an access point for fire trucks to enter the area.

So what I didn't count on was the fire spreading to the Zone[44], but it did so all my belongings that I had taken to No 18 were caught in the fire as it spread to the Zone. I felt very discouraged and lost hope when that happened.

The 15 January shack fire had spread at a tremendous pace, which meant that it had impacted incredibly quickly on an extremely large group of people. This had two implications: firstly, people were taken off-guard, with limited time to respond to the impending disaster, and secondly, an entire community was struck simultaneously, leaving its support structures compromised. One respondent highlighted the latter:

What made things worse was that there was no one to run to because everyone was in the same situation including the people that you knew who would have been able to keep your valuables things – this led to me having to store my things at strangers' houses and that is how I lost some of my stuff.

6.1.2 Community responses to the acute event

There was a consistent, collective narrative that spoke to the chaos and terror as the fire raged through this community and the residents eventually realised that they were going to lose their homes and possessions. What was clearly evident was a tremendous sense of community spirit, a definite pulling together of resources as neighbours and friends attempted to help each other in the spirit of *ubuntu*. It was interesting to note that the support sought and offered during the acute incident was often related to support networks that could either be traced back to family clusters in the Eastern Cape or to "Christian communities":

After a while we could hear a lot of noise so when we went outside, we saw that there was fire and it was approaching fast. So we started helping the people we had visited to move their things out of the house – the husband was at work so this lady really needed our help. We were happy to help her and saw this as part of our service to the Lord so we didn't mind it at all. It wasn't the first time for the fire to take place there (Joe Slovo) – it had happened before and each time people would take their things and place them on the road – that's what we used to do whenever there was a fire. So that day was no different. We moved the things to the road and

---

[44] The Zones refers to the old migrant hostels, which were single-storeyed brick buildings built in long rows. The Zones were said to be the worst accommodation amongst the hostels built in Langa (Ramphele, 1993). They are very dark inside due to the fact that there are few windows. The units are made up of three bedrooms (Ramphele, 1993). It is important to note that with the abolition of apartheid these hostels remained the property of the City of Cape Town and were then rented out to families. At present these hostels are being upgraded as part of the Hostel Re-Development Project of the Provincial Government.

by this time the fire was really spreading and we were beginning to worry about our own valuables back at our home. But we continued to help.

> It was getting chaotic, there was smoke …Anyway we continued helping her until we couldn't help her anymore because we needed to go and see what was happening at our own place, so we told her that we needed to go to our own place. She gave us a R2 and asked us to go and phone her husband so we went and phoned but the husband's phone was on voicemail. So we went from there and decided to go to check on our relatives – my brother and my aunts who live around there as well. We found that they were ok, they were sitting watching the fire, my aunt was also fine. We helped them to move out their stuff…Anyway we finally reached our house, on the way helped others to disassemble their shacks and to move out their things, so that they could also help us move our own things and disassemble our own place. So when we got to our place we tried to get our things out, we threw most of the stuff over the broken wall of the school – people had already broken down the school wall. It was a sad situation. I was mainly concerned about the lady we had first tried to help and left her because we needed to get to our own place. Since there were many people helping us and I could see that most of our valuables were outside I decided to go back and see how she was doing. When I was still a long way off I saw that the fire had spread to the houses – actual brick structures! I found the lady still on her own trying to get her stuff out so I helped her but my mind was not fully focused on what I was doing as I was worrying about my own family back at my place. So after a while I left her again but with a sore heart.

Even the most vulnerable members of the community were remembered and protected by their neighbours, despite the chaos and confusion. An elderly blind man reflected on his vulnerability during the fire:

> And you can imagine, I am blind so I am dependent on people telling me what is happening. Whilst one person was still saying the fire was too far to reach us at (Zone) 26, I started smelling smoke right inside the house where I was sitting, so I was frantic trying to take some things with me, but as I would be trying to decide on what to take people would reassure me that the fire was too far to reach my place…In any case as smoke began to fill my house and I knew the fire had reached us, the police suddenly arrived at my place, they called for me and assisted me out of the house – they said that one of my neighbours had called them and told them that a blind man was in one of the shacks so that was how the police were able to come and get me.

6.1.3 Resource loss

Some of the survivors commented on the fact that they had wanted for little before the fire; they were well resourced and self-sufficient:

> …We had everything in our home - we had our own bed, the children had beds, each person had his/her own suitcase, we had wardrobes, the kitchen was fitted out, we had a sitting room - we had everything we needed.

While this powerful fire raged through the community the residents grappled with many emotional decisions:

> Everything else we left behind, it was very difficult to know what to take and what to leave behind – you would pick up a heavy item, realize that it's too heavy, drop it and go for the other thing.

The impact of the fire and the consequent extent of the loss was overwhelming and devastating as reflected in this quote:

> When I got to Joe Slovo the only way I could recognize the spot where my house had been standing on was my fridge which was burnt but I could still see that it was my fridge, everything else had burnt to ashes.

This related to the issue most frequently spoken about which was an all-consuming sense of loss, at this stage, in terms of tangible material possessions, such as clothing, fridges, homes, furniture, television sets, money, identity documents, bank cards, beds, school and work uniforms. These losses rendered the survivors handicapped not only in terms of daily functioning, with for example the loss of reading glasses, but also on a much longer-term basis:

> So everything of mine was burnt in the fire, all of it, even my certificates – that was the most, eh, hurtful thing that I found most difficult to take – because my business certificate got burnt, and my certificate for leather that I had received from a place where I had learnt to make items out of leather, things like belts, so I actually had a small business making things out of leather. So even that (leather) material was burnt. And so it was really bad for me to see those certificates burnt because I was planning to go and borrow money to start a formal business and the only way I would get money would be through those certificates. And I found out that even those companies that had given me training had closed down.

6.1.4 Attributions relating to the fire

There was great speculation, as may be expected, within the community, as to the cause of the fire itself. Two of the most common causes spoken about by the respondents were negligence resulting from drinking and issues relating to the densification of the area. All of the respondents had either directly experienced fires before or had witnessed them in the surrounding community. One of the respondents explored her thoughts and anger around causation. This quote also serves to highlight the fact that this community lived with the constant threat of fire and loss:

> We were involved in the 2000 fire as well. We were living in the lower part of Joe Slovo, so after that fire we were moved to the upper side, they thought moving us would prevent another fire, but look now it happened again because we were still congested,

the shacks are built too closely together. If we each had our own yard I am sure we would not have had the fire.

It was interesting that when many of the respondents spoke about the fire they did so in a way that personified it, almost attaching to it a personality and character, that for most of them, was perceived to be evil and demonic:

> To be quite honest my sister, I think there was an evil spirit accompanying it, where have you ever heard of a fire that jumps streets and comes from behind?

Another survivor voiced sentiments:

> Hey sister I don't know, if I was superstitious, I would say it was accompanied by some evil spirit because there was no wind. Last year when there was a fire – in my brother-in-law's area – there was lots of wind so it was explainable. But this one happened in a very strange way, because the fire jumped and spread in a very strange way – other houses were not burnt and yet they were close enough to the fire. And where have you ever seen fire trucks being unable to stop a fire – the very firemen got burnt themselves.

It was almost as if the fire had become a legend as facts were changed, for example that there was no wind, that fed into the narrative of fear. In a similar vein it seemed that some people believed that the fire was "retribution" or punishment by God:

> It was as though it was Judgment Day; even halls (hostels) got burnt, which has hardly ever happened before.

Another survivor pointed out the irony of a conversation he was having with his children when getting news of the fire:

> It was a Saturday. I was preparing to go to church. I had just been chatting with the children – the rest of the family had gone to town – as I was just chatting to the children – I had actually been telling them that the Day of Judgment is near and that when it comes there will be fire, and I told them that if they are naughty they will be burnt in hell's fire. They laughed at this. I told them that this comes from the Bible. Whilst we were still laughing about this we heard people saying 'Fire' and the children ran out of the house to see.

One respondent linked his religious beliefs with the frequency and intensity with which disasters are occurring around the world:

> And its not as if we are the only people who are having this happen to them – look at what happened with the tsunami, and we have heard recently about what happened in America (Katrina) so everywhere these things are happening, it's not just us here, and I mean fire incidents are occurring in other places. It's all a fulfilment of the prophecies of the Bible.

6.1.5 Group dynamics

6.1.5.1 "Joe Slovo" and "The Zone"

When reflecting on the fire itself the individual narratives all spoke to a collective perception of group identity that fell into one of two categories, namely: "Joe Slovo" or "The Zone". One respondent, when asked if "The Zone" was part of "Joe Slovo" explained:

> Well I suppose it is but we differentiate the area where there are only shacks from the area where there are real houses and blocks (hostels) as well. I come from the area where there are blocks so we call that 'the Zone'.

One respondent made reference to this differentiation in terms of the naming of the fire disaster, which he felt had been exclusionary:

> And the other thing is that this fire is known as the 'Joe Slovo fire', meantime it spread to us at 'the Zone' – Zone 20, 23, 24, 26 were all affected.

"Joe Slovo" itself seemed to be synonymous with shack fires whereas "The Zone" was seen as a safe haven from such experiences. One respondent reflected this view:

> No one expected it to reach our area; everyone kept saying that it was too far to reach us – besides in the past 'Joe Slovo' fires have never spread to 'the Zone'.

Another survivor explained:

> We have seen many fires in 'Joe Slovo', so those of us who live at the Hostel we never really give it much thought when we hear that a fire has started in 'Joe Slovo'. We never thought it would reach 'the Zone'.

This sense of safety in "The Zone" seemed to contribute to lack of urgency felt by these residents, even though they were aware that there was a massive fire in "Joe Slovo". None of them predicted that it would reach their area, "The Zone", and consequently had a delayed response in trying to save their possessions:

> We heard people saying 'Fire!' and the children ran out of the house to see. So I went outside as well and I saw that that the fire was in 'Joe Slovo', so I thought to myself 'its too far, it won't reach us', so I decided to continue with my plans to go to church. And whilst in church, we had some people coming in interrupting the service saying 'hey the fire is raging out there' but I still didn't think much of it.

6.2 The ongoing nature of this disaster

When reflecting on their experiences of the 15 January fire, the respondents tended to focus on the longer-term implications of their losses rather than a descriptive narrative of what happened on that particular day. The majority of respondents made the point that they had the capacity to deal with an acute fire event but not with the longer-term implications of essentially being homeless. The fire was clearly seen as the starting point, or precipitator of a series of events that led to ongoing losses, as this quotation illustrates,

> All of this is because of the fire; we are experiencing all these difficulties because of the fire!

An example of this was the mother of a teenage boy, who, despite the fact that his behaviour was of concern before the fire, adamantly believed that it was the fire had been the trigger to greater problems:

> And I have suffered too many losses as a result of that fire, it has messed up my family life, I have lost my son through it. I am carrying a lot of pain and hurt because of it (crying). I don't even know myself; the conditions I am living under are terrible. Right this moment I can tell you we are sitting in sewage here, it's (Tygerberg) so filthy and no one cares about that. They (City Council) have turned their backs on us. Where my child is right at this moment, he has dropped out of school and there is nothing I can do about it, he is roaming the streets since the incident (the fire).

Unlike the losses associated with the acute event these losses were not material; they referred to, amongst other things a breakdown of family relationships, discipline, respect, masculinity, independence and social support. Many of these issues manifested themselves within the dynamics of the various groups involved.

6.2.1 Group dynamics

When exploring concerns and dynamics in the aftermath of the fire the survivors made reference to two key groupings:

- Leadership structures
- The participants as survivors.

I have decided to structure the survivor results in this way as it best represents the story that emerged.

6.2.1.1 Leadership Structures

6.2.1.1.1 Government/City of Cape Town

<u>N2 Gateway Project</u>

Many of the survivors made reference to the decision, made by the city government, that the fire survivors were not to rebuild their dwellings but would instead be temporarily relocated while formal housing was being built for them. They were talking about the N2 Gateway Project, which had a long housing waiting list. Survivors were told that their names would be added to the waiting list and priority status given. One respondent referred to the community's natural resilience to deal with acute fire incidents and his opinion, and that of the majority of respondents, that they should have been allowed to rebuild:

> One easily comes to the conclusion that it would have been better if they had just left us there to build on the same sites – that's what we have always done in any case – we have always found a way to build for ourselves no matter what the quality of those shacks were.

Another survivor similarly felt that they should have been allowed to rebuild because the magnitude of the event had meant that the Government had become incapacitated by it:

> I mean there have been many fires in Joe Slovo before this one and things would go back to normal soon after each fire, the government was able to assist people. Now it's a different case, even the government does not know where to start because there are so many people who have been affected. Never has any fire affected so many people before. And I think the only solution would have been for the government to have given people new building material and allowed them to go back and build on the same sites they had before.

<u>Communication channels</u>

It was evident that none of the survivors felt that there was a link or connection to the City of Cape Town. They reflected on being disappointed by project leaders in the past who had either failed to deliver on promises or who never answered their phone. An example was given of an issue raised with the City of Cape Town regarding crèche facilities for the children, who could no longer attend the crèche in Langa:

R: …my grandchildren don't go to crèche since we came here because its not safe[45], and yet I can see how in need they are of a crèche, a child who is not attending crèche is easy to spot because they are not able to play as freely in this environment. They can't learn anything so you can see that they are restricted, and once again it's not for lack of asking for a crèche from the side of parents. We have asked for a crèche to be opened nearby because there are many children here who are not able to attend crèche since we moved.

I: So what happened?

R: Well as with all our other requests it was just noted down and never followed through.

This seemed to contribute significantly to a sense of abandonment and the feeling of being "castaways", to use a term used by a few of the participants themselves. The issue of abandonment was raised on a number of occasions in relation to the City of Cape Town. The majority of survivors felt, especially while in the tents, that they were a forgotten community, a community that had been discarded by government:

> I must say that even though things are not good here (Tygerberg) but at least it is not like the tents – we were true castaways there! I have never seen anything like it; we were thrown away like rubbish!

One survivor eloquently described the concrete implications of the poor communication channels between the Tygerberg residents and the City of Cape Town:

R: But life is really difficult here. The worst thing is not knowing, you know even if they had told us that we would only be out in 2008 it might not have mattered so much, at least we would know.

I: Yes.

R: The thing about not knowing is that you are not able to plan your life properly – if we were told, if we knew for sure that we would be here for the next year or so, we would make our plans accordingly, even if that meant we would still be here for a long time but at least we would know. Not knowing is worse.

As a result of this poor flow of communication a number of rumours were circulating, for example, about how long the transport service would be provided for, when they would be moved, where they would be moved to, what form of housing it might be and whether they would own the houses or would need to rent:

---

[45] This was because in order to walk to the crèche they needed to cross an extremely dangerous and busy main road, Vanguard Drive.

Now we just hear speculations and rumours about what is going to happen to us and we call them, it's not as if we don't call them, we call them and say, 'hey we are hearing such and such, can you come and clarify?' and they always promise to come – they'll even give a specific date on which they'll come but then that date comes and passes without us hearing anything from them.

These rumours seemed to fuel the fire of uncertainty and lack of direction. A case in point was a rumour that was circulating at the time of the interviews about the continued use of Tygerberg as a housing alternative:

…I don't know what will happen to us because there are some rumours that City Council rents this place from somewhere else and that the lease is soon going to expire and we do not know what will happen to us. But even this is a rumour we have not confirmed it so we do not really know what is the truth in these rumours, if we at least knew…

The frustration and anger that had simmered for so long eventually manifested itself in the women toyi-toyiing[46] around Tygerberg Hospital itself to protest the conditions they were expected to live under. Very few men participated or even agreed with the strategy. It is however important to note that very few men remained on the property all day. The majority of men we interviewed were employed and as a result managed to escape the oppressive atmosphere for at least some part of the day. One respondent described her sense of Tygerberg:

So we are always living in constant tension, we are not free –you know, whenever I get out of these gates even if its just to go to Bellville, I always feel this enormous sense of relief, as if something has lifted from my shoulders, but once I come back, already at the gates I already feel that tension and burden descending down on my shoulders again.

The toyi-toyiing was linked directly to the deteriorating conditions at Tygerberg and the sense of powerlessness at having been abandoned by the City of Cape Town:

When you go in there – you see where the dishes are washed – you will find those sinks blocked because people throw in all their rubbish into the sinks instead of the bins – and when you see a person doing this you are aware that there is nothing you can do about it. Then there are the toilets – always blocked, the electricity is down most of the time. And it wasn't always like this. We were looked after at first, but they don't come here any more. So much so that a group of women here

---

[46] "Toyi-toyi refers to a protest dance that became infamous during the apartheid era.

organized themselves and decided to toyi-toyi. They called on us men to join them but we didn't think it was a good idea. But I understood that the women are fed up with this situation – and you know how fed up women can get.

The issue of the lack of continuity of the project leadership structure was one that was raised by a number of survivors as they had found that it had handicapped communication processes and the efficacy of the project:

> …We had someone here who was called X who was the 'managing director' of this place; he was with us from the beginning of this fire. He also had with him a man called Y who also assisted him in managing this place. Before long we heard that X had left and was not longer manager of this place. Soon after him Y left as well and someone else replaced them, he is called Z. Now what do you think of that? I am trying to give you an idea of what is happening around here. We were not even told why they removed those two people and replaced them with Z – we are not able to relate to Z the same way we related to X and Y. It's difficult to get hold of him and we can't pull him by the belt as we used to with the others because we don't know him and its easy for him to say he found things this way whenever we complain of anything to him, that way he does not take responsibility for anything.

Another survivor commented on the lack of consultation:

> You know if they had asked us about whether we want those people removed we would have been able to give our opinion on the matter, and I promise you we would have refused for them to be removed, we would have insisted that they finish the process they started instead of bringing someone different half way through the process.

6.2.1.1.2 Informal community leadership structures

The disappointment and disillusionment felt over political leadership was not limited to government structures but included local leadership committees:

> I was telling you that there are people there who have gotten houses through bribing the leaders. I can't point them out to you and say it's so and so but I know there are such people. The Sibondas[47] got them into the system for those houses. So I don't know how far that has gone. But now – they neglected us – but now they think they can just come back and tell people that they must not listen to anyone else but them.

There was therefore a great deal of hostility voiced at the street committees who, like the City of Cape Town, had been perceived to abandon them, as this example demonstrates:

---

[47] A term for community leaders.

There are committees in Langa as you know. So we were told by the people from 'the Zone' that there is going to be a meeting with the committee on Sunday, we were made to understand that the meeting would be about us bringing our grievances forward. So ok, we went to the meeting, only to find that the agenda was to dissolve the committee existing at that time and to elect a new one.

My question when this came to the light was why were they electing a new committee? How would the new committee be any more effective than the one that was already in existence? The committee that had existed up to that point had been completely useless, they had never bothered to find out how we were doing, they had not served us at all, and now when they needed help they were coming to us? So I got up in the meeting and the first comment I made was to thank them for suddenly finding us worthy to be spoken to after having completely neglected and ignored us all this time since the 15th of January, through the period in the tents right until we moved out of the tents into this place. I thanked them for suddenly remembering that we are members of this community, for suddenly remembering that they are our leaders, I told them that it's good to suddenly hear from them when they have a problem.

So one of the committee members got up and said that he had been worried that this would come up, so he tried to explain. But the thing is that we know that there is a lot of corruption that is going on in the committee, that is why there is no progress with our housing problem, we know that they accept bribes from people and then place them in the temporary houses that government has built in Langa, whilst we, who are deserving fire victims, for whom the government has built those temporary houses, are left to sit here in this overcrowded hole!

6.2.1.2 The experience of being a survivor

6.2.1.2.1 Protection of resources

Many of the survivors consciously tolerated the conditions, in the immediate aftermath of the fire, in the tent villages and at Tygerberg, because they wanted to protect or invest in an extremely valuable resource, i.e., formal housing, which they believed would be in jeopardy should they leave. One example of this was found in the story of a pregnant woman in the early stages of the disaster:

R: It was only on Monday that the first tents arrived but not all of us were able to fit in the tents so for instance my family and I sat out there until Tuesday, when they brought more tents and blankets from Red Cross (Society) as well, which we were able to use as something to sleep on the ground.

I: All this time you are pregnant?

R: I was pregnant, you can imagine?

I: How many months were you?

R: I was seven months.

I: Sjoe[48]! So you were sleeping outside for two days whilst 7 months pregnant?

R: Exactly, and I had nothing, I was just lucky to have the help of my friend, the one I had phoned at home to find out about the fire, she shared her blankets with me before our tent arrived so at least I had something to sleep on. The option to go home to my family in Phillipi[49] was not there because I couldn't take that risk at a time when I had lost my home, I wanted to make sure that I was there throughout so that if housing became available for people I would not lose out because I was not there.

Similarly in Tygerberg, seven months later, many residents still felt that they needed to remain there in order to stake their claim and guard their right to receive housing. This was done at great cost as this elderly survivor described:

You know what really worries me a lot is the fact that this fire took place just when I was planning to go back home in the Eastern Cape because my house there has no one looking after it. I often imagine that my house must be so vandalized by now because no one is there to look after it. So sometimes those thoughts come, and I think to myself this fire happened just as I was planning to go home, now here I am and I am unable to go home because its my name that is registered in the books for housing so if I leave I might just lose out. So I just sit here, I just try to hang in there.

This decision to stay meant that the survivors were placed in an extremely powerless and vulnerable position, as they tolerated what could be argued to be intolerable conditions on a long-term basis.   An issue that dominated the stress narratives in the aftermath of the fire was the conditions to which the survivors were exposed, initially, in the tent villages. It was evident that the conditions in the tents were a major causal factor in the high levels of stress that were being experienced at an individual and community level. A number of issues seemed to contribute to the rising levels of stress and tension, such as over-crowding, cold and damp conditions, lack of privacy, and poor flow of information from the City of Cape Town.   One survivor commented on these conditions:

We found that the food we were being given in the tents we couldn't eat it because of the living conditions there. I am sure that there are a lot of people who died as a result of the living conditions there. The very area where the food was being served you'd find that there was smoke and sand everywhere around the food. Your eyes

---

[48] South African term for "phew".

[49] A township located approximately 10kms from Cape Town.

would be red. When you go to get your food you'd find children relieving themselves and their backsides needing to be wiped so it would be smelly, other people can't bath with a smell like that, others would be vomiting, its hot in these sails (tents).

The key motivator, for all the respondents, to move to Tygerberg Hostel was the desperate need to escape these intolerable conditions in the tent villages. Even the few respondents who had lived either in community halls or with private individuals had found life after the fire extremely difficult and were looking for a viable alternative. One that they assumed, or were led to believe, would be found in the form of Tygerberg. A number of the fire survivors had serious doubts about Tygerberg and voiced their concerns to the survivors who were considering the move. These were concerns that were to later haunt many of the Tygerberg residents:

> You see all those people who didn't want to come to Tygerberg that's their song, that's how they make fun of us, they said, "Are you going to let yourselves be castaway like that?" Indeed we see the truth in their statements now. We are castaways.

Despite these warnings hundreds of survivors had great hopes and expectations of Tygerberg, many believing that over-crowding and privacy issues would be a thing of the past. One survivor explained:

> So we stayed there (in the tents), we were very unhappy. After a while we heard that there was an opportunity for people to move to temporary housing in Tygerberg. I was the first to register myself and my family for the move. Before moving here we had been told that each family would have a room of their own, that they would not share with anyone else, they said that if you have a wife and children you would be given your own space to stay in. When we got here it was a different story and when we brought this up we were told that it would be resolved later; but right until this very moment nothing has been done about it.

In the smaller rooms there were roughly three families sharing, whereas the dormitory style accommodation housed about 10 families. One respondent explored the realities of such living conditions; she was staying in one of the smaller rooms:

> So I am staying with 4 children here, and 3 grandchildren, and then my husband. The other woman I am sharing the room with has a husband and 3 children and then there is another woman who also stays with us. Now you can imagine the room we have is even smaller than this one (the interview room)!

The issue of space was to be raised frequently by the respondents as a major contributor to the tension and conflict that manifested itself between the residents. Although the

majority of the respondents had a lot to say about the "intolerable conditions" one man felt strongly that the problem lay purely within this context of space:

> No my sister I won't lie, this place we have been brought to was fine. It's just that they should have given each family a separate room, their own room. Otherwise everything else is fine because we have facilities like water, which we never run out of, we have transport that is always available. The only problem is lumping families together in the same space – people have a problem with that – now if each family had its own space there wouldn't be any of these problems, people would have been able to wait for the proper time to move out.

Another respondent had similar sentiments:

> The thing is people can never be okay here because this place is not designed for people to live in harmony – people were never meant to be crowded together in a small place, each is meant to have his or her own space.

The majority of respondents interviewed spoke about a desperate need to leave Tygerberg. One survivor reflected this feeling:

> There is just no way of tolerating the life here, none at all, it's so bad, so hurtful, so much so that I'm so tired of it, I'm always wishing I stayed somewhere else…

Given this need it was surprising to note that not one respondent had a clear sense of when this would be. This lack of knowledge weighed heavily on people's minds and seemed to further aggravate an already tense atmosphere.

6.2.1.2.2 Dependence and paternalism

Many of the issues spoken about above regarding the lack of clear direction and information about the future meant that little could be planned for or invested in, with the result that people continued to suffer losses in one form or another. One of the most frequently highlighted problems in this regard related to the issue of vending.[50] Prior to the fire the majority of the women had had some form of informal employment that provided either the only income within a household, or a valuable second income for many families. The City of Cape Town made the decision not to allow any vending on government property, meaning in the tent villages and at Tygerberg. This had serious implications for many families who were then further disempowered and in reality were worse off than they were before the fire, destined to remain victims who were reliant on government aid for relief:

---

[50] Informal trading

R: …and even here (Tygerberg), since government stopped giving us free meals, the unemployed are the most affected because they are not able to afford to buy their own food. Some of them are only dependent on the (child support[51]) grant. Before the fire many of them used to be able to provide for themselves through vending. Now all of that has been taken away from them. For instance my sister was a vendor, selling meat and cool drinks to people in our community, that is how she managed to feed herself and her children.

I: So what does she do now?

R: Nothing, there's nothing she can do because vendors are not allowed to operate here.

I: Sjoe! So how does she manage?

R: She struggles a lot, but she gets the grant for her children and then I also help her out as far as I am able to…but it's not enough. People are really struggling here. They are not able to live the life they used to live.

Another survivor spoke of her personal experience of being dependent and not able to supplement her husband's income:

> …There is something that breaks my heart, you know in the kitchen where we all cook, sometimes I see other women cooking meat and all I have is samp[52], and I have no way of selling now to supplement my husband's income as I used to. You know I never used to depend on my husband's (disability) grant money for our bare necessities around the house, I used to sell meat, liquor, drinks, and I would use that money to buy whatever we needed, like if one of the children needed a pair of new shoes.   I never used to wait for the grant money; no one can live on grant money. When we first got here, I tried to find out if I could start selling here but we were told that is not allowed here, we were told that we would be thrown out if we tried to do that here.

The survivors seemed to internalise this dependency to the extent that they believed that no problem could be resolved without Government intervention.   The level of disempowerment was visible in the narratives and manifested itself in many ways. It was evident that there was no sense of ownership about Tygerberg whatsoever, there was no sense of the collective, there were just groupings of individuals doing their best to survive

---

[51] R200 per child under the age of 14 years.

[52] "Samp is dried sweet corn where the kernel coating has been removed and the inside stamped and chapped roughly into small pieces.

events and circumstances that they found themselves in. One respondent reflected the paternalistic relationship between the Government and the survivors by linking the sense of abandonment by Government to a neglectful parent who leaves their children to run amok. He believed that this was the root cause of the unacceptable behaviour that was taking place:

> So people do not treat each other well at all and no one cares, the authorities have completely neglected us, they couldn't be bothered about us. So that means there is no law around here, people know that they can do whatever they like and they will get away with it.

Another survivor made a similar link when asked about his comment that people had, at first, treated each other well at Tygerberg:

> Well yes because there was order and people from City Council came to visit us regularly, now there is none of that. It is so difficult to sleep there because the noise levels are always very high because of the music and the drunkards, and there is no one to control it.

One resident describes how well-structured and organised things were in the beginning when the full support of the City of Cape Town was felt behind them:

> Well for example when we first got here there were rules that we had that kept this place in order – like sleeping time say at 11pm where people had to be asleep and switch off their radios and TVs. This happened only for a short while though. Also, there were internal structures set up by City Council, which were there to supervise everything, but then City Council stopped coming to see us so the people in those structures were not receiving support anymore from Council so they could not be effective. And then there were the people who were employed by Council to clean this place – to keep the toilets, corridors and such clean. The people who were doing this were initially doing this on a volunteer basis until City Council said that they would pay the people and would provide cleaning materials. They only paid them the first month and then they stopped. So people stopped bothering to clean, as a result this place is filthy. If you should see the corridors, even outside – it's filthy everywhere!

Following this it was interesting that the Tygerberg residents were never successful in terms of organising themselves and taking control of the situation at Tygerberg. One of the reasons given for this by the respondents was that the problems were too overwhelming to deal with. Another reason identified was the pressure exerted from the existing street committees within Langa not to elect a new committee as they themselves still represented the fire survivors. Another factor could be the ongoing dependency and disempowerment that, one could argue, were creating a pattern of learned helplessness.

6.2.1.2.3 Vulnerability and exposure

As highlighted earlier the survivors' decision to tolerate the ongoing difficulties in order to protect their right to formal housing meant that they were extremely vulnerable. One elderly survivor reflected on a number of inter-related difficulties and vulnerabilities:

> And then we moved into the tents. Yho! Life in the tent was something else altogether – life there was unbearable! For instance the sleeping arrangement meant that we slept side by side with all sorts of people – married, unmarried, children and the youth – all in one place. You would find that I had Ma so and so on my right and Ma so and so on my left and then a man from the other side of the tent would just come and pee right in front of us on the grass showing us his penis and then he would go back to his sleeping place! And then you would find a young man saying 'it's not my fault that we all have to be here so I am not going to suffer because of that' and he would then proceed to have sex with his girlfriend right in front of us and our children! It was unbearable!

This quote illustrates not only sub-groups but also a breakdown of social mores, such as respect for the elderly, the privacy of intimate relations and a general lack of consideration of others. These issues will be explored later in this chapter. In addition to this it magnifies the vulnerability, not only of the elderly, but also of the children who were staying in the tents. This was an issue that was identified by all parents that were interviewed who were left feeling powerless to protect their own children from harm. Another survivor reflected similar sentiments:

> People did as they wished in the tents and yet our children were there, exposed to all of that and there was nothing that one could do to protect them from that.

The risks to which the children were exposed ranged from environmental hazards, such as wet and windy conditions even inside the tents, to sexual abuse. One mother explored the concern that she, and all parents, had in relation to a lack of privacy given to adults, which had serious implications for children:

> It was just impossible; our children were exposed to all sorts of things at the tents. I mean at home my husband and I had always had our own private bedroom where we slept away from the kids, we always had our own space, yes our house had 2 bedrooms only but my husband and I never had to sleep in the same room as the kids, they had their own room… the living conditions (in the tents) were much worse (than at Tygerberg) – you would find a girl on this side, a boy on the other, men and women all in one place – what sort of environment is that! People discussed and did their private things out in the open, in front of everyone.

One particular survivor provided a startling example of vulnerability, abuse, and the ongoing nature of this disaster: it was to be found in the very security system set up to protect them. A family of eight were moved out of Tygerberg itself and relocated to a small room adjacent to the security guard room because they had been the victims of a physical assault by another family (this is described later in this chapter). The father explained that the situation worsened, as the family then became targets of sexual harassment by the security guards themselves. This had many implications for the father, who was enraged and emasculated by this experience, as he could not protect his family:

> R: … He would come here early in the morning, kick the door and ask my wife 'where is their father? I can be their father', things like that and he would wink at my wife sometimes with me there. I wouldn't even know what to do in a situation like that; all I could think of is that I can just stab him to death. But I decided to leave it because this is not my own place I have no say here, so I have to watch my wife being winked at and my daughters' buttocks being pinched by X who is a security (guard).

> I: Sjoe, that is completely unacceptable!

> R: You see that thing could have turned me into a killer, because if I'd taken hold of him I would never have let go until he breathed his last and I would end up in prison because of that. Because I wouldn't have let him live, I wouldn't have wanted to take him to court; I would have wound up in prison. So you see this is all because of that fire, now we have become prison potentials because of this fire. We are open to victimisation by other people because everyone can see that we are victims of the fire so they see that they can even have sex with our families because they think we won't be able to do anything about it because we are desperate for a place to stay so we will take anything.[53]

6.2.1.2.4 The dissolution of social fabric

In contrast to the community spirit and altruism that were synonymous with the acute fire event, came the long-term and ongoing conflict, hostility, selfishness and breakdown in social support and cohesion that was to become the daily norm for the fire survivors. Survivors who had formal employment had an extremely hard time trying to maintain their levels of performance at work when their living conditions created many obstacles that left them feeling depleted. Continuous disturbances, such as loud music playing, televisions

---

[53] The respondent did eventually report the situation to the security guard company; they transferred him to another site but never took any disciplinary action against him.

left on all night, and out of control parties and drinking meant that many residents left for work tired, frustrated and hopeless. It was even worse for those who worked night duty, as it was virtually impossible for them to sleep during the day, especially those living in the dormitory-style accommodation. One of the survivors reflected on these kinds of behaviours that had occurred in the tents as well as Tygerberg:

> Life in the tents was no easier, it was not safe at all there – people did whatever they liked – if a person wanted to pee right in front of everyone, if they wanted to drink, to sing, to put up the music – whatever people wanted to do, they did, with very little consideration for others.

Numerous examples were provided of the divisions and conflict that manifested themselves in many ways. One such example was to be found in conflict around food. For an already impoverished community that had been stripped of all basic needs it was imperative for the City of Cape Town to initially offer food. An unanticipated consequence of this however was the amount of conflict and tension that vying for such a valuable resource created, to the extent that many survivors felt relieved when the food distribution was stopped:

> R: Well you will find, people find, personally I find that some of the young people are cheeky so you will find them being cheeky and saying things that are hurtful. It was especially bad when we were still being given meals by the government.
>
> I: Oh, so it was especially bad before the meals were stopped?
>
> R: Especially bad, there were lots of harsh exchanges between people, lots of swearing and so on.
>
> I: Over the food?
>
> R: Yes, the people who were tasked with dishing out the food would often keep the food for themselves and store it in their rooms under their beds and other people would go hungry as a result. It was especially bad if the meal had meat in it, then the people dishing out would simply take out all the meat from the stew and dish out the gravy only.
>
> I: My goodness! So it had to be stopped?
>
> R: It had to be, we were relieved when it was stopped even if it meant we had to buy our own food afterwards.

Another respondent gave an example of survivor food supplies that were apparently sent to the Eastern Cape, by fellow survivors, to be sold. The respondent concluded this example by saying:

> So it was very good that they stopped dishing out the food, it was very good. Then we could all dig into our pockets and suffer together to make ends meet, rather than the pain of knowing your rights and being unable to exercise or benefit from them. Instead having to watch them being abused by other people!

One example of the level of interpersonal conflict and violence was to be found in a family of eight who were physically assaulted by fellow roommates. This quote also gives insight into life, for this family, before the fire and how the spiralling conflict left them bewildered, as conflict was something that was fairly foreign to them:

> Because when this thing started from March till July I would get reports (from his wife) about what was happening and I would respond by saying, 'no make sure that you don't fight, and don't answer back when they start saying these things, but the day they come and touch you then you must fight back'. So I found that people could actually kill each other through this, all because of the fire. I know that if we were still staying at our own place, if it hadn't burnt down, we wouldn't have the enemies we're having now. We are the sort of people who have never had enemies, everybody loved us in our community where we used to stay but the day we came to stay here… that day of the fight you should have seen, there were so many people who came out to fight us, as though they were coming to kill us, only the police could mediate. Even other people joined in because they feared the group that was fighting with my wife so they had to be seen to be on their side. But once the fight was over we saw them coming over to us commenting on how wrong it was for the other family to attack us so I told my wife to distance herself from all of them.

Another example of this overt hostility was a woman who had left her primus stove[54] in the kitchen without lighting it but when she came to cook on it she found that someone had lit it and pushed up the flame so that it was completely destroyed when she got back.

When reflecting on the breakdown of social support and cohesion some of the survivors explored how they understood what was happening and why. Many respondents linked the high levels of conflict to the loss of hope:

> …people can see that we are not going anywhere. They can see that it is no use trying to hold themselves back when there is no sign of us leaving.

Others felt that this was the way people had behaved in their own homes prior to the fire, the only difference being that now it was communal accommodation and so was more visible to the community at large. A young mother said:

---

[54] Gas stove often used in informal settlements

R: So we stayed in the tents and the conditions there were very bad – people went on with the lives they had had before the fire regardless of how their behaviour affected other people.

I: So what sort of behaviour was this?

R: Yho! People would walk up and down the tent throughout the night, others would drink and then make noise and sing through the night, others would be swearing…. people did whatever they liked and there was nothing we could say, we just had to be grateful for the fact that we had a shelter over our heads.

Some residents attempted to have "room meetings" where these issues could be discussed and worked out. This survivor similarly reflected the view that residents were behaving as they did, in their own homes, before the fire:

> Yes, we talk but we never reach an agreement, one person says this and another says that, its difficult, we don't listen to each other. People give different reasons for their behaviour which makes it hard to argue with them; the most common argument people put forward is that what they are doing here what they used to do even in their homes. When a person says that it is difficult to continue arguing with them because if a person says they are doing something they used to do at home, what can you say to that?

An interesting issue was raised by a number of the respondents and this related to pre-event dynamics within the community. Some of the survivors made reference to clustering and networks developed by people who originally came from the same regions nationally. The underlying sentiment was that such networks resulted in a careful but informal, and possibly unconscious, negotiation of space within Joe Slovo itself. It was clear that many families had moved down from the Eastern Cape into a particular sub-community where their extended families were living. As a result a support network was established and there was an implicit understanding about relationships and lifestyle. One of the reasons given for the high levels of conflict and generally uncontrollable and unacceptable behaviour within the tent villages and later at Tygerberg was the fact that these sub-communities had been fragmented in the relocation process:

> Its like what I was telling you about that issue of some people coming from Centani and other areas, so if you happen to be the only one here and you don't have a lot of people who come from the same place as you, if they are the majority, you will suffer. You will suffer a lot, a lot.

Another resident felt similarly:

> You see the biggest problem here (in Tygerberg) is tribalism – we come from different parts of the Eastern Cape so sometimes you are treated differently because you happen to come from a different area to that person.

It is important to remember that the service providers also raised this issue as a possible causal factor. In addition to these issues some survivors attributed much of the conflict to the fact that "Joe Slovo" residents had been housed with "The Zone" residents:

> And no one can expect people to get along here when there are people from 'the Zone' and others from 'Joe Slovo' – we are not all coming from the same area in Langa.

Another respondent felt that it is was due to a diffused sense of responsibility and lack of ownership that was causing the problems:

> People don't care; the talk around here is that 'this is not my house'. People don't respect each other, there is no such thing as respect for elders, young and old people are treated the same. The talk is that this is no one's house, that this is Tygerberg.

6.2.1.2.5 Diversity and difference

The theme that was most congruent and consistently explored without probing in all the interviews conducted was the issue of diversity and difference. Respondents tended to categorise themselves in terms of groups to which they belonged and groups that they could not identify with and even distanced themselves from. The issues that were raised in terms of diversity and difference within the context of the tent villages were to become intensified within the Tygerberg environment.

<u>Poverty</u>

The survivors consistently reflected on the issue of privacy and the resultant exposure of difference, poverty and vulnerability. One particular area of difference that was highlighted most frequently was "the haves" and "the have-nots". This manifested itself in the communal kitchens where residents were easily identified as belonging to one of these two groups. This exposure was hard to bear for many struggling families as this example demonstrates:

I wake up early; sometimes there is nothing to cook in the kitchen. Some eat meat, while others (who) don't have, cook in the same place. Oh life here is really painful, very painful because not all of us can afford (food).

When asked about how she coped, the respondent replied:

There's nothing that one can do to feel better here, even playing music, I would refer to this place as a jail. The securities are always on guard.   If the music is too loud they tell you to play it softer, and not talk too loud. Life here is similar to jail life, we are like prisoners!

Another survivor similarly described the visibility of poverty and resultant exposure:

When it comes to meal times, everyone has to see what you are eating – for instance in the middle of the month one doesn't always have nice things to cook – now you have to be exposed and you see people laugh and yet when we used to be in our own homes in Langa no one had to know what I was eating and what I was not eating.

The exposure and visibility of poverty was made harder for many families by the level of degradation and humiliation that they were made to feel by their fellow residents:

R: People are very jealous of each other, if a person sees me eating maize porridge as opposed to Jungle Oats, I become a laughing stock – people rejoice in seeing others suffer.

I: So people must feel very exposed, as though their lives are open to everyone to read.

R: Exposed, that's what it feels like – in fact it doesn't just feel like that, it is like that! Our private lives are exposed.

Despite all of these barriers the stories of resilience and strength were surprising and remarkable. One narrative in particular stood out:

So I had two blankets but no sheets, so I took some of the clothes from Red Cross (Society), the ones we couldn't use, and I sewed them together to make one sheet for me, and one for the children, and then somebody gave me a sheet so I put that one on the bed that sleeps my son…In my room, my roommates would be lying if they would say they ever mop the floor, sometimes they get embarrassed because they know that I don't wait for anyone to clean up after me and I will not live in a filthy place just because they refuse to clean.

I sometimes clean the toilet when it gets dirty, I clean it until it looks brand new, I clean it even though I know that because so many people use it, it will probably bring me bad luck to clean up the mess. I bought a broom so that I could sweep our room – I have children and a husband that I have to make sure are protected from germs…I wake up at 5am every morning, I make porridge when we have mealie-meal and I serve it to my husband in bed, I make lunch for my husband.

My husband is amazed to see me cooking these meals because he knows how little money we have, I am able to stretch a R10 to buy food for a good wholesome meal for my family – I don't need expensive food to cook a good meal. Even people who stay with me are amazed when they see the food I cook – I know how to cook, I have recipes in my mind, my grandmother taught me…I always try to make sure that whatever happens my children's most basic needs are met as far as our finances allow. I would rather have nothing, I would rather walk in rags than see my children suffer – look I have not had a single new item of clothing since the fire, all the clothes I wear, have been given to me by other people. If I see a person throwing away clothes I always ask them to give them to me and I simply wash and iron them and you can hardly tell that they are rags…what I tell myself all the time is that I should not give up without having tried, I need to try first before I give up. I do not want to give up without trying.

Marital relationships

A number of married couples reflected on their strained relationships that they felt could be attributed to the lack of privacy, not only from their children, but also from other families:

R: I find it difficult to openly talk to my wife about things – at home if I was not happy with something I would tell her straight out, I was free to fully express myself to her – I could shout if I wanted to. Now if we have a disagreement we can't talk about it in front of so many people. So many nights I have had to go to bed with a sore heart because I couldn't tell her how I was feeling, and only the day after am I able to go with her to a private corner and tell her how I feel. This frustrates me a lot, so recently after a disagreement and I had to wait for the following day to discuss it I told her that I would not be able to tolerate this for long. I told her that one of these days I will just shout at her in front of everyone because I am sick of having to keep things for the following day!

I: So the lack of privacy is a big issue?

R: It's a big issue. It's very difficult here. A few days ago I noticed that my wife was not herself, I could see that she was very hurt, only to find later on that she had found one of the comments by one of the women hurtful but she couldn't even talk to me about it because everyone was there.

Clearly for this respondent and his wife, their relationship, which usually provided a buffer from the external world, had been compromised at a time that they desperately needed that support the most. Another implication of the lack of privacy was the impact on their sexual relationship:

R: …we found it difficult to have intimate relations as husband and wife, for instance when it came to sleeping at night, you understand what I am saying?

121

I: Yes, yes…

R: So it was difficult, we resorted to hanging a big cloth over our bed – 'umdiyadiya' – sort of like a canopy curtain[55] – you know what I'm referring to, right?

I: Yes, I know what you're talking about.

R: Ja, so we used that to shut out the rest of the people in the hall so that they don't have to see everything we're doing especially husband and wife intimate relations.

Despite all of the difficulties however many of the married respondents spoke about the safety and support that they gained from their spouses, which gave them resilience and an ability to cope:

> Tata[56] (her husband) encourages me and strengthens me, that is the only way I get through all of this, he comforts me.

Children

Children were often mentioned as a sub-group that had particular needs and required a certain a level of understanding and tolerance that, mostly, only parents in general could provide. This was a sentiment that was voiced by single adults as well as parents. One parent reflected on these challenges:

> You find people who don't have children staying with people who have children. Now that never works, you can never put a childless person with someone who has a child, you are asking for trouble if you do that. For a example my child will go and sit on or touch your bed, if you don't have a child you won't understand that, you will get, you will get, upset because you don't understand that that's the way children behave.

This respondent went on to explain that sharing a room with non-married couples without children posed similar difficulties, as they would often argue in front of the children, a situation that would never be tolerated in his own home. Another respondent gave an example of domestic violence, which was often witnessed by children:

---

[55] The sort used in four poster beds.

[56] A direct translation is "grandfather": it is used in isiXhosa as a respectful form of address for an older man.

For example, the other day we (herself and her child) were in the bathroom with this other woman. As she came out of the bathroom her husband just started hitting and screaming insults at her. We were all wondering what was going on, and the wife herself didn't know why she was being beaten like this. Suddenly the couple's son appeared and came between the parents and owned up that he was the one who had stolen the father's money. So this man had been beating his wife, in front of everyone, because he thought she had stolen his money – it was humiliating for the woman!

As highlighted earlier children were one of the most vulnerable groups following relocation. This vulnerability continued in its intensity within the Tygerberg context as little had changed in terms of the conditions. One grandmother explored this is more detail:

> The way it is arranged is that one family sleeps at the top bunk above us where one of the members – the father – has TB (tuberculosis), he actually went into hospital because of it recently. So they sleep at the top and my daughter and grandchild sleep at the bottom. So when we were at Somerset Hospital it was clear that this was not an ideal living arrangement for my grandchild's health. We would take her to Somerset for a few days and she would come back recovered but on the very first day that she would be back here she would relapse quickly and we would have to rush her to the hospital again.

The majority of parents explored their feelings of disempowerment in not being able to protect their children from being exposed to intimate sexual relations. In addition many of the parents reflected on a general deterioration in their children's behaviour and well being, from a sudden drop in school performance to an inability to discipline them any longer:

> R: Well they are still exposed to all sorts of things. For instance when a couple is having sex on the other bed I can see how my children's focus starts to shift to that – I can see their curiosity – I see how they are listening to the sounds coming from the other bed – a child's ear is a thief as you know – it listens to anything.
>
> I: So you have noticed a change in your children because of this?
>
> R: Definitely, their minds are much more adult like now – I see how their perception has changed in a very negative way. There is a definite difference to the way they were before we came here, before the fire.
>
> I: Have you noticed any other changes perhaps?
>
> R: Well you know how a child changes, you can just see when a child has been influenced by something other than what you teach them. For instance you will find your child listening to music and dancing when they are supposed to be doing their homework and when you tell them to stop and do their work you will see the rebellion. Also our children love going outside our rooms to

other people's rooms/units and only God knows what they get exposed to in those other rooms.

Even among the parent sub-community, there were disagreements and difficulties regarding parenting styles and practices. One mother reflected on her experience:

Other people believe that it is good to hit children. The problem starts when they start exercising that on your child when she or he has done something wrong and yet you know that you don't hit your children and you don't like it when other people hit them either.

An issue that was raised by some of the respondents was the proximity of the hospital morgue, which they felt threatened the well being of their children:

R: You know even with things like the fact that there is a morgue near here, no one takes note, and yet for us African people it is difficult to live near a morgue, we believe that it brings evil spirits which can make children sick because of their frailness. So we don't feel easy living so near to a morgue. On Thursdays and Fridays we always smell and inhale the chemicals they use to clean dead bodies – so when we smell those chemicals we know that they are working on the dead and that the children are at risk. And we always see the cars passing by going to the morgue; we know fully well that they are carrying dead people.

I: So it must be deeply concerning for you.

R: It is. You know how we as African people respect the dead, in our culture as you know, one is not supposed to be familiar with the dead.

Religion

A number of the respondents described themselves as coming from a particular religious paradigm. For many survivors their faith provided them with a level of acceptance and understanding about what was happening to them:

Well you see I believe that is why I look so free, why I am so alive. I have learnt that all things come from God and when you find yourself in a situation you must know that God has allowed it to happen for a reason, you just need to trust him. And I mean life is not supposed to be about comfort and happiness all the time. Christ suffered a lot whilst He was on earth and so did His disciples – so why would we expect any less?

This level of faith seemed to enable many survivors not only to make sense of the fire disaster but gave many of them a purpose or framework for living their lives amongst such loss and hopelessness:

> I only found strength when I read in one of our church tracts that God sometimes allows us to be in certain situations because he wants to use us. So I was comforted by that, I realized that the harvest is right here, here I have an opportunity to testify about God, to comfort others who are feeling weak. But its so difficult to do that here, its difficult to comfort people when they have gone through something like this – they are not able to trust you or trust anything because of what has happened. The first question they ask is 'how can I trust a God who allowed this to happen to me, where was He when this happened?' so its very difficult to answer such questions, you can only show people the Word.

One parent in particular explored how hard it was for him to guide and protect his children within a Christian philosophy when their privacy as a family had been compromised at Tygerberg:

> The thing is that in our house we prayed – we are believers – so we prayed as a family and that helped a lot – here we are not able to pray as a family – so we only get to pray together as a family when we're in church. So that has been a big loss. The children don't listen at all now, and it's difficult to reprimand or instil some sort of discipline when you are staying with many other different families. If we had our own little room at least. I can see that the children are taking advantage of the situation – they do something and they know that I won't say anything about it because I'm not a person of many words, especially in front of other people. So I find this to be very difficult and it worries me a lot.

Many residents found sanctuary and strength from their faith and religious practices. The fundamental lack of privacy or "safe space" in which to pray was a barrier, which many sought to overcome in whatever way possible:

> R: Well let me say that what helps me a bit is my faith in God, I get a bit of relief when I pray. But even the time and space to do that is not easy to find here.

> I: Yes, because even that space is disrupted by everything going on around you.

> R: Yes, so I have to go into the toilet to pray. There is just no freedom to do anything.

6.3 Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored the key issues and themes as described by the survivors themselves. The central theme was the shift in the nature of the fire event from an acute to an ongoing disaster. The implications of this, for the survivors, were multi-facetted and complex. The losses spiralled over time to include intangible resources, self-reliance,

social cohesion and self-determination. In the next chapter I will explore these issues in greater depth, consider the interface between the narratives of the survivors and service providers, and reflect on all of this in relation to current disaster research and discourse. I will do this in an attempt to tease out the complexities of the 15 January shack fire and enable a deeper understanding of what happened and why.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION ONE

The service provider and survivor transcripts enabled a rich narrative to emerge that told a story that started long before the 15 January fire and continued long after the fire was extinguished. It was a story of ongoing difficulties, an ongoing disaster, that left in its wake individuals, families, and a city government, struggling to make sense of a series of events that seemed unpredictable and impossible to control. In deciding on a framework for data analysis I considered a number of theoretical frameworks, such as, the multivariant risk factor model, the social support deterioration deterrence model and social disorganisation theory but I decided, due to paucity of disaster research in South Africa and the subsequent exploratory nature of this study, that COR theory was well placed as a starting point because it provides a general theory of stress that, "helps delineate both why certain circumstances are stressful and the process of people's reactions to stressful circumstances" (Hobfoll, Dunahoo, & Monnier, 1995, p. 29) The aim of this analysis is not to test COR theory, it merely provides a useful lens through which to describe and analyse the data. I will now discuss and explore these events using Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) as a template for making sense of what happened and why. I will make reference to both the micro- and macro-level levels of understanding of disaster to analyse the data that emerged. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides an effective way of organising the data. It will consequently be used as the primary lens to analyse and discuss the findings.

7.1 General commentary

As an introduction to the discussion I shall to reflect on the two common themes that emerged within the literature survey, that is, the ongoing nature of disaster and the individual versus collective experiences of it.

7.1.1 The acute versus chronic nature of disaster

The current study certainly seems to support the idea that disasters are not only acute events but also have an ongoing and chronic edge to them. Survivors did speak about the fire event

itself (after probing), but the bulk of their narratives addressed the chronic and ongoing losses that impacted, on a daily basis, on individuals, couples, families and groups. It is important however not to minimise the gravity of the fire itself because it was the precipitant that led to large quantities of tangible loss that was felt very deeply by the survivors. In contrast to what is implied by many studies of disasters (for example, Norris, Perilla, & Murphy, 2001; Raphael, Lundin, & Weisaeth, 1989), survivors did not describe symptoms of PTSD. Rather, they dwelt on their tangible losses, and the intangibles, such as an ability to plan for the future, that had great significance for their lives after the fire.

The majority of survivors did not focus substantially on the acute event itself despite probing from the co-researcher. There are a number of possible reasons for this, which may include the following:

1) Data collection occurred seven or more months after the event itself, which might have meant that the survivors had already processed any difficult thoughts or feelings they may have had about the fire.

2) They were a community ravaged by shack fires on a continuous basis and may therefore be desensitised to such events.

3) It may have been such a traumatising event that not talking about it reflected resistance in re-visiting an emotive topic.

The most feasible and parsimonious explanation, however, that was supported by the data, was to be found in the work of Parker (1977), who pioneered the idea that levels of post-disaster distress are more associated with "relocation stressors" than with stressors related to the acute event. This hypothesis is supported by the volume and density of data that the survivors provided in relation to the complex and long-term implications of having been moved to the tent villages and later to Tygerberg. The continued uncertainty and state of limbo that the survivors found themselves in, meant that they had not achieved the reconstruction/recovery phase that much of the literature appears to assume follows a disaster and sits at end of the disaster continuum (Nomdo, 2002; World Health Organisation, 2000). The data explicitly spoke to the fact that the disaster event was not over for the survivors: they were still living with difficult experiences daily. It was also clear that despite the Mayor's decision not to declare it a disaster, this was a large disaster that did overwhelm the coping strategies of the City – if only because of the restructuring, and the problems associated with relocation and the lack of long-term planning. Interestingly it seems that this

fire incident had features consistent with international definitions of disaster in that it seemed to 'overwhelm local capacity' and had caused 'great damage, destruction and human suffering' (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2004).

7.1.2 The individual versus collective experience of disaster

Saturation was met very early in the interview process, as the individual narratives soon merged into one congruent and collective story. Contrary to the view of Erikson (1976), who posited that collective trauma is less visible than individual trauma, the narratives reflected an almost palpable level of extreme community stress. It is interesting to note that Erikson (1976) makes the link between collective trauma and the sense of communality. The individual narratives certainly suggested that the erosion of community cohesion and support greatly aggravated the individual survivors' high levels of stress. Not only did they feel unsupported by their fellow fire survivors but, at times, alienated and estranged from them. It certainly seemed true that the collective level of distress fed into individual distress levels as the individual survivors struggled to cope in the face of constant hostility from fellow survivors and conflict between groups.

7.2 The data and COR theory

In this section I will look at the interface between the data and COR theory, first in terms of some general thoughts around resource loss, secondly in relation to the principles and corollaries of COR theory and lastly in respect of some of the potential obstacles to effective intervention at a community level. I have made the decision, at times, to separate out issues that arose within the tents as opposed to Tygerberg and vice versa, as the effects on the survivors appeared to accumulate over time. Although COR theory is my primary focus I will also draw on other theorists where appropriate.

7.2.1 The definition of stress

The congruent narrative of post-disaster stress that was related to concerns around leadership structures, poor communication channels, vulnerability and exposure, and the breaking down of social codes, seemed to suggest that stress appraisal is an objective

process that leads to a group of people making what appear to be reasonable interpretations of their situation (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). The stress narratives all had a focal point of resource loss, physical, social and psychological. I would argue that the congruent narrative described a collective experience that seemed to be perceived, by all the respondents, as a stressful life event that was located in the external world and over which they had little control. I would argue that the survivors' perception of stress was based in an objective reality and was expected and 'normal'. COR theory's definition of stress therefore matched the data in that its source was to be found in the external world, in the form of a fire event, and was the result of two primary factors; firstly the net loss of resources because of the fire and secondly, the lack of resource gain (i.e. a house or even the ability to re-build a house) following an investment in an alternative resource. By this I mean that the survivors had invested in the idea of receiving formal housing by tolerating extremely difficult conditions but it seemed, at the time the data were collected, that the investment might take a long time to come to fruition, if ever[57].

7.2.2 Resource loss

It is interesting to note that the two DiMP staff referred to the idea that residents of "Joe Slovo" accommodated, prior to the event, a high level of fire risk in order to benefit from the settlement's good location. As a result of this, most of the respondents had accumulated a number of resources that were highly valued by them, for example many of the men were employed in nearby areas and the women had set up informal businesses, such as selling fruit to surrounding schools. This again links to COR theory, which posits that, in the absence of stress, individuals will attempt to acquire a resource pool or reservoir. A resource reservoir refers to number of resources that one has acquired over a period of time that could protect one from future loss. Some of the Joe Slovo residents managed to develop resource reservoirs as described by Monnier & Hobfoll (2000). One example of a reservoir given by a survivor was a large roll of leather and leather-making tools that he had used to make leather items, which he then sold. The same man had also kept the certificates that showed his qualification as a leather tradesman. It was the loss of these certificates that was most distressing for him as he had wanted to apply for a small business loan from the bank, which would not be given without the certificates, and

---

[57] At the point of writing up the thesis in September 2007 the survivors were still staying at Tygerberg.

he was unable to get copies as the college where he had trained had closed down.   In January 2005 the investment and accumulation of resources by the survivors resulted in a spiral of loss where the fire destroyed numerous resources that put an already marginalised and vulnerable community under enormous levels of stress. This is again consistent with COR theory that emphasises the vulnerability of marginalised communities who can quickly spiral into loss cycles as they had so little to start with and have few protective buffers around them (Hobfoll, 1998).

When exploring the acute event the respondents primarily reflected on the fire in terms of the magnitude of loss that they had incurred. This speaks to the COR theory idea that stress is the result of environmental circumstances that threaten or cause a depletion of resources. The majority of survivors reflected on material loss, such as clothes, beds, and fridges. The fire burnt tangible objects - resources of instrumental value – and also those of symbolic value. An example of this can be found in the powerlessness spoken about by some of the male respondents who felt that this fire had taken away their sense of power as head of the house and consequently their ability to control or manage their children. These symbolic losses were echoed in narratives where people spoke about themselves as "castaways", a "forgotten" community. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), resources (in the shape of possessions) play a central role in helping people define who they are. One wonders the extent to which this loss of identity played into the processes of in-group, out-group behaviour that was startlingly evident in the interviews (see "communities within communities" for more details).

This may however also point towards the socio-political nature of disasters in that disasters have a tendency to illuminate issues of powerlessness and vulnerability that may have existed prior to the event (Hutton, 2001). It is an acknowledged fact that South Africa remains a highly divided and inequitable society where poverty and disaster risk are primarily held by 'previously' disadvantaged groups (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Foster, 2005; Nomdo, 2002). This was a marginalised and disempowered community before the fire, but this disempowerment appears to have become magnified and more visible for the survivors as their losses accumulated and no official source intervened to stop the losses or restore the resources. An issue of great frustration for the survivors was the perceived lack of assistance provided by government or the local street communities. This was a group of people who felt abandoned by both formal and informal social structures. According to COR theory, when

resources fall below a necessary threshold that is required for ongoing coping, then more severe forms of dysfunction will occur (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). On a community level, it is argued that this may manifest in alienation, breakdown of social codes, and an assault of the very cultural fabric that ties communities together. Wallace, Fullilove, and Wallace (1992) similarly proposed that ongoing community stressors break down personal, community, and domestic social networks that underlie a community's well-being. They demonstrate that rates of disease, violence and behavioural pathologies (e.g. substance abuse) consequently arise in such situations. These processes were marked both in the tent villages and at Tygerberg Hostel. The data certainly seemed to be consistent with the view of Hutton (2001): that the survivors' recovery processes had less to do with the individuals' capacity to overcome loss and more to do with social, economic and political relationships. In a similar way to Hurricane Katrina (Hartman & Squires, 2006), this fire raised issues of race, equity and justice because it was apparent that Joe Slovo, like many other "African" informal settlements, was familiar with fire risk and disaster, and the complexities of managing such incidents with few resources supporting them. It was no coincidence that the Joe Slovo fire was so large; it was among a poor, densely populated, community, with badly built, highly flammable structures. In the same way that the Hurricane Katrina victims were pre-morbidly marginalised so too were the Joe Slovo survivors who lived in high-risk areas and who were subsequently vulnerable to these types of disasters. These issues will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

I will now explore the key research findings with specific reference to the principles and corollaries of COR theory:

7.2.3 Principles and corollaries relating to COR theory

Primacy of loss, a key principle of COR theory (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) was evident in the fact that loss was the central theme of all interviews and was clearly linked to high levels of distress. It was interesting to note that the survivors' first response to the fire was to remove their possessions to places they perceived to be safe from the fire, such as roads and other houses. This behaviour speaks to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) in that, as theorised, individuals when confronted with stress will strive to minimise net loss of resources. Many of the residents did this by making sure that a family member always remained with their possessions in the room so that they would not be stolen. According to COR theory (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000), in order to offset resource loss, one needs a

pre-existing reservoir of resources. Given that pre-event this was a marginalised, poverty-stricken community it was not surprising that this event overwhelmed their ability to recover from it. However, this was a community ravaged by fires and floods in the past; it was a community that had built risk into their everyday lives. The narratives suggested that it was not the fire itself that left the survivors compromised but the consequent actions and responses of formal support structures, such as government and street committees. This was reflected in the fact that the survivors said that they would have been better off if they had been allowed to rebuild their dwellings as they had done in the past. If this had happened they would have once again rebuilt and re-invested in their dwellings and resources and the loss spiral would have been curtailed and a gain cycle initiated.

The individual and collective narratives however spoke to the January 2005 fire as being one loss event that subsequently resulted in a loss spiral of great speed and velocity that caused a depletion of resources. This links to Corollary 2 that states that initial loss begets future loss. This is especially true for resource deprived communities where loss spirals will begin at a higher velocity than resource endowed communities, and the loss cycle will progress quicker and have a more significant impact (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). The acute fire event led to further loss of resources and this ultimately propelled this community into a loss spiral. A case in point was a family that had acquired a pool of resources prior to the fire, including a fridge that they had recently paid off. They lost all these tangible goods in the fire and because of their desperate need for a house, had agreed to stay at Tygerberg. This meant that not only could they not buy a new fridge on credit because there was nowhere to store it but also they were subject to a range of other losses, such as privacy, independence and self-determination.

In the case of the Joe Slovo fire, because of the chronic and ongoing nature of this disaster, the loss spiral gained in momentum as time went by and as COR theory suggests one loss event lead to another. The losses incurred multiplied as the survivors were moved from the fire ravaged area to the tents and then again from the tents into Tygerberg Hostel. At each juncture there was the potential for gain. For example, the Mayor of Cape Town assured all fire victims that although they would not be allowed to rebuild they would be placed at the top of the N2 Gateway housing list and the tent villages were merely a temporary measure. The survivors however experienced yet more losses in the tent villages, but they again had to opportunity to experience a gain, as they were encouraged

to move to Tygerberg Hostel where they were told conditions would be much improved. Survivors accepted this assurance and decided that it would be a good investment, as it would mean that they would ultimately acquire their own home from the City of Cape Town. The loss spiral was however to gain momentum from that point on as losses became multiple and cumulative within the Tygerberg Hostel context (see Table). What was interesting to note was that despite the poor conditions and ongoing losses none of the Tygerberg residents had made the decision to pack up and leave. This links to the COR theory idea of guarding resources (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) that are highly valued by individuals and communities. In this case the resource they were guarding or investing in was the promise of a home they had received from the Mayor of Cape Town.

Table below reflects a longitudinal view of the losses that took place from the initial loss event (the fire), through the tent villages, to the present circumstances (Tygerberg Hostel). I have made use of some of the resource categories outlined in COR-Evaluation (CORE) (see Addendum F) (Hobfoll, Dunahoo, & Monnier, 1995). CORE was developed as a result of a series of group discussions that were conducted, across social and cultural lines, in order to develop a set of universal resources that were valued. The 74 items that were identified formed the basis of CORE and have been applied in a number of interventions to assist individuals and communities affected by disasters (Freedy, Shaw, Jarrell, & Masters, 1992; Green, 1995).

Table 4

Resource loss since the January 2005 fire until October 2006

	The Fire	**The Tent Villages**	**Tygerberg Hostel**
Object resources	Home, clothing, household items.	Home, housing that suits one's needs.	Home, housing that suits one's needs.
Conditions		Social structures. Latter half: good relationships, good marriage, family stability, and intimacy.	Social structures, roles, good health, good relationships, membership in organisations, good marriage, family stability, and intimacy.
Personal characteristics/Group attributes		Self-esteem, work strategies, feeling one's future success depends on oneself. Latter half: communal pride, sense of community.	Resilience, sense of mastery, work strategies, sense of optimism, communal pride, sense of community, sense of safety, companionship, sense of peacefulness, feeling one's future success depends on oneself, sense of invulnerability, feeling valuable to others, sense of pride, sense of hope.
Energies	Money.	Money, time for adequate sleep.	Money, government assistance, time for adequate sleep, savings, health support.

It is evident from Table 4 above that the losses experienced by the survivors grew substantially over time. During the initial loss event, the fire, the survivors lost tangible objects and possessions. Some of these had long-term implications and created problems in living for the survivors. One example of this was the survivor who lost all his course certificates and was unable to get copies from the training institutions as these had subsequently closed. He therefore also lost the opportunity to apply for a business loan that offered the promise of substantially expanding his business. The most significant loss was the loss of their homes. However, these survivors were consciously living with this threat and many of them had had to rebuild their homes previously after fires or floods. At the time of the acute event it seemed that losses were limited to object and energy resources. Over time, however, the disaster escalated, as was pointed out by one of the service providers who stated that the primary disaster, the fire, had led to secondary disasters, such as social-, health- and environmental disasters and concomitant losses in each of these domains. This is evidenced by the magnitude of loss depicted in Table .4

7.2.4 Resource loss in the tent villages

It was interesting to note that the individuals that seemed to be coping most effectively were the ones that had formal employment. COR theory (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993) highlights the relationship between individuals and larger social systems as they enable access to additional resources. Those who were employed not only had an income and a sense of self-esteem but also a sense of mastery, escape and ability to control some aspects of an otherwise hopeless situation.

One of the most significant losses for many of the survivors was the loss of their vending rights. Many families relied extensively on the income generated in this informal way. By taking this right away, the City of Cape Town unknowingly and unfortunately prevented what could have become the beginnings of a major gain cycle, as survivors could have begun rebuilding and re-investing in their own resource pools. Instead the chronic stress and lack of income generating opportunities meant that this led to further depletion of survivor reserves. The issue of vending also links to the notion of guarding of one's resources (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) that is particularly important for resource-deprived communities. No matter how much this issue was raised with officials in attempts to

protect and win back this resource, it was denied. This was a relocation issue, in part because vending was not allowed on state property, and also because - having been taken away from Joe Slovo - fire survivors had been removed from their client base. One example of how vending had been disrupted was that a woman who sold fruit to children at the local school by standing outside the playing fields could no longer access the children, and hence lost her source of income entirely.

When reflecting on conditions in the tents the survivors spoke primarily to a breakdown in relationships at both community and family level. These losses led to personal and group attribute losses in that they left the survivors feeling devalued, disempowered and disconnected with themselves and those around them. There was a strong sense of disillusionment in that the survivors realised that they were ultimately on their own in the face of great adversity. An extremely important issue raised by a number of survivors and service providers was that the "Joe Slovo community" was diverse and heterogeneous, and consequently relationships and space had been carefully negotiated within the community, which consisted of pockets of kin and support structures that maintained social controls. By randomly placing families and individuals into the tents, the City of Cape Town may have inadvertently violated spatial boundaries and propelled the survivors into consequent inter-group conflict. This issue will be explored in more detail in a later chapter.

An interesting issue raised by both the survivors and role players was that, because of safety concerns, survivors were not allowed to cook for themselves in the tents. This seemed to be agreeable to the survivors in the acute aftermath of the disaster as they were in a crisis and needed to rely heavily on government assistance, which was plentiful. After a few weeks, though, many survivors, especially those with resource pools and who were employed and able to instigate gain cycles, wanted to cook for themselves and in that way take control of their lives again. What could have been the start of a gain cycle for many of the survivors was converted into yet another disempowering loss as the food was often seen as not being culturally sensitive and, at times, was a source of conflict as opportunists sold it to other communities.

The breaking down of social relationships in the latter half of the survivors' stay in the tents meant that with it went valuable resources such as communal pride and a sense of community. The impression that we gained from the interviews was that the collective had

fragmented into a set of individuals with little pulling them together and lots pulling them apart. This is consistent with the COR theory idea that resource loss in one domain will lead to resource loss in other domains (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). COR theory (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995) also argues that if loss cycles are not curtailed they will lead to individuals perceiving themselves to be victims as opposed to survivors with a sense of mastery. In addition to this the community may become socially isolated from each other. The data seemed to suggest that the majority of respondents saw themselves as victims who were helpless to control their fate. This could be seen by their passivity in, for example, setting up a crèche themselves when it was clear that the City of Cape Town was not going to. They remained socially isolated from each other and the wider community where their natural support networks resided.

7.2.5 Resource loss in Tygerberg Hostel

With promises of improved conditions, less over-crowding and greater access to resources such as privacy, survivors committed wholeheartedly to the idea of Tygerberg. The survivors spoke of hope, change and possibilities of gain. Once again at this juncture a potential gain cycle collapsed and an opportunity to counteract loss cycles vanished. It was these secondary losses that dominated the interviews. This was a community that was no stranger to adversity and loss; survivors spoke of experiences in the past where they had rebuilt their homes and lives and had shown great resilience and strength. This links to a point made by Hobfoll (1998) that, in the event of a disaster, people's resource utilisation strategies that have been used in the past may be rendered useless. After the January 2005 fire, people's acquired skills of rebuilding and recovering from fire events were inadequate to face the continuous demands of relocation and an uncertain future.

The relocation to Tygerberg in itself meant the loss of the benefits of a good geographical location and its access to resources such as transport systems, local health facilities, schools and places of employment, all of which are of fundamental importance to a marginalised community. As suggested by COR theory, initial loss led to future loss, and the resource-deprived community was more vulnerable to the after-effects of disasters than a wealthier community may have been (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000).

One of the greatest concerns raised by the survivors was the visibility of poverty. Survivors spoke of their dignity and pride being protected when living within their own private space prior to the January 2005 fire. Communal living meant that this protective resource was no longer in place, which ultimately left individuals feeling exposed and disempowered.

At Tygerberg, all that the survivors knew for certain was that this was a temporary situation, but they did not know for how long this "temporary" situation would persist. This obviously caused numerous problems, one of which was the difficulty it created for residents to obtain new resources and again begin building their resource pools. Many of the survivors reflected on their high levels of frustration at the fact that they could not move forward and acquire new things as they were living in a public, over-crowded space. COR theory acknowledges the importance of obtaining new resources after a disaster, as investment in resources can help to offset current loss (Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000). The sense from the interviews was one of defeat and depletion. The ongoing loss spirals seemed to have gained momentum to the extent that the individual and the collective were both struggling to cope. The narratives told a story of collective and ongoing hopelessness, abandonment, vulnerability, hostility and unrelenting loss.

Issues Relating To The Four Obstacles To Community Intervention

I will now focus attention on a discussion around the four obstacles to community intervention as proposed by Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells (1995):

7.2.6 Identification of communities within communities

Manifestations of diversity and difference were themes that were re-told and re-emphasised in all survivor narratives. It was evident that this was a "community" that prior to the fire perceived itself to be heterogeneous and made up of numerous sub-groupings. It seemed as if the fire - and more importantly - the consequent relocation to the tents crystallised and illuminated complex social and communal dynamics that up until that point had been less visible. The first glimpse of these dynamics was highlighted in the seemingly innocuous naming of the event and therefore the affected community, which was referred to as "The Joe Slovo Fire" by government officials, social service practitioners and the media alike. It seemed that for many survivors however this name was alienating

and exclusionary in that the Langa Hostel area was not geographically part of what they knew as Joe Slovo. It was interesting to note that in the interview process individuals easily categorised themselves into one of these two groups.

When exploring life in the tents, survivors focussed primarily on themes of difference, exposure and vulnerability. Narratives consistently demonstrated examples of a vacillation between in- and out-groups. Examples were found in reference to those with children and those without, the youth versus the elderly, married versus unmarried, tribal clusters and the like. Clearly these were pre-existing identities and categories that were embedded in local knowledge and experience, but their importance and/or power was not necessarily recognised by themselves or government officials. The DiMP staff did however acknowledge this issue and questioned the notion of "the community", a term used to imply one united group, which they felt was a misnomer based on the flawed assumption of homogeneity. It was certainly evident when reviewing some of pre-event factors that "Joe Slovo" is a term that refers to a geographical area only: within that exist clusters or multiple communities, each with its own set of norms, values and socio-demographic profiles that define who it is and how it engages with other community clusters. It is noteworthy that one of the biggest stressors for many of survivors was the amount of inter-group conflict and hostility. The survivors linked this to tribal and family clustering that took place within the broader Joe Slovo "community". It appears that the relocation process disrupted this informal negotiation of space as there was no attempt to preserve the natural support structures or 'social fault lines' that were in existence in the community prior to the fire. The data seemed to speak to a concept of space that went way beyond a uni-dimensional resource of "a house" or "a place to stay". Within the current study space became, and possibly always was, political, economic and social in nature. This will be explored in more depth in Chapter 9.

What is clear from the service provider and survivor narratives is that disaster intervention in informal settlements is fraught with complexities and is an extremely difficult road to navigate because of the many factors at play, such as South Africa's complex history of inter-group relations, the heterogeneity of communities, the informal negotiation of settlements, and the need for people who intervene to be equipped with multiple skills that exceed the boundaries of traditional job profiles in disaster management.

This notion of "communities within communities" was not limited to the survivor group but extended to the service providers themselves. A number of service provider interviews spoke about territoriality, resistance and hostility between the different service providers especially during the acute event itself. Roles, responsibilities, and protocols seemed unclear and open to manipulation or misunderstanding. An example of inter-group conflict between the service providers could be found in the resistance from the fire department to collaborate in the setting up of the JOC during the fire incident. The situation was eventually 'resolved' when they parked their vehicle behind the JOC but would not second a staff member there hence defeating the object of the JOC as coordinating centre between all departments.

In the acute event it seemed that the service providers mirrored the powerlessness and confusion being experienced and felt by the survivors themselves, to the extent that some of the service providers referred to themselves as victims. It was interesting that the service providers perceived there to be three primary and ultimately opposing groups, management and politicians, themselves, and the survivors. They felt attacked by both groups and caught in a no-win situation. The survivors on the other hand generalised all negative feelings in terms of an "us" (survivors) and "them" (leadership) siege mentality, which even came to include their own informal leadership structures.

Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells (1995) make the point that, from a resource point of view, it is imperative to acknowledge sub-communities as they will vie for the same limited resources after a disaster. Given that all of these survivors were from resource-deprived circumstances it seems reasonable to assume that, having lost nearly everything, they would immediately engage in behaviour to protect what was left, limit further loss, and do what was necessary to bring about resource gain.

The majority of survivors reflected on examples of unacceptable behaviour by "other" groups and spoke of the desire to recreate homogeneity, i.e., clustering groups, such as families, together.

7.2.7 Pressure cooker effect

COR theory (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995) suggests the idea of stress contagion: that social interactions may exacerbate rather than mitigate the impact of stress. This usually

occurs through the circulation of rumours that are negative in nature. The data were entirely consistent with this notion in that rumours spread swiftly, especially in the Tygerberg context, and this created high levels of stress and anxiety for the survivors. One example was an employed man who was reliant on the transport provided by the City of Cape Town to get him to his place of employment. He was extremely distressed by rumours, that he could not get either confirmed or denied by official sources, that this transport was soon to be terminated as the City of Cape Town had run out of funds to supply this.

The majority of the rumours seemed to focus on the fundamental issue of when survivors would be moved into permanent, formal housing. One survivor went so far as to say that he would not mind staying at Tygerberg for a few years if only they would officially be told that, because it was the uncertainty that caused him the stress. This links to the stress theory idea that control and predictability are important factors in determining high levels of stress (Seligman, 1975). Contrary to COR theory it was interesting to note that some of the rumours which ultimately led to distress were actually positive in nature. One such rumour was that by the end of the month they would be in their own, new homes. This set up a false sense of euphoria and hopefulness that was soon to be extinguished when the date passed by.

These rumours were further fuelled by the lack of communication from the City of Cape Town and from the community's own street committees. Many survivors spoke of being abandoned on both these fronts, left to fend for themselves. Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells (1995) make the point that it is essential to have one authoritative source which gathers and disseminates information. This was an issue of great concern to the survivors, not so much that there was not one source but that there was a continuous string of sources as one project leader replaced another. When this happened it seemed that the new project leader was not accountable for the actions of the old project leader, and as a result questions went unanswered and actions went unchecked. The lack of communication resulted in high levels of anxiety. What it did communicate to the survivors was that they were "forgotten", "castaways" who were to remain in limbo, unseen and unheard.

Among the survivors who seemed very affected by this pressure cooker effect were the women who did not have the escape route of going to work. With nothing to do during the

day but wash clothes, cook food and chat with each other, the women's levels of stress and intolerance seemed to build. It was therefore not surprising that, during the period of data collection, the women organised themselves and toyi-toyied as a group around Tygerberg Hospital in protest over the living conditions at the Hostel. They had done this in a way that made a lot of noise and created chaos by setting rubbish alight. The women reflected in the interviews that they had done this consciously because the City of Cape Town had told them that it was imperative that their stay in the Hostel did not have negative implications for the hospital itself in terms of noise levels and other forms of disturbance. Feeling powerless, these women used the only resources they had left: their collective voices, their message and their strength of spirit. Interestingly none of the men would participate in this protest as their sense was that it would only cause animosity. Unfortunately it didn't even do that: two representatives from the City of Cape Town came out to take note of their concerns, reassured them that they would return with some solutions, but were never heard from again.

7.2.8 Political processes and agendas

One of the issues raised in the service provider interviews was the confusion and subsequent tension caused by local politicians visiting the site of the fire. They brought with them promises that later could not be fulfilled by the officials on the ground as no mandate had been given to them. The service providers had found this tremendously difficult, as it had aggravated an already tense situation.

COR theory highlights the political strain on leaders who are often rendered impotent by fear of failure (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). This was consistent with an issue raised by one of the service providers who had on one occasion not consulted properly with the community regarding the erection of toilets, and found that that the outraged community had demolished them. The sense from the service provider interviews in general was that it was extremely hard to ascertain what to do and not to do, to the point of feeling, perhaps, that their own actions were somewhat random. An uneasy tension seemed to exist for the service providers between service delivery and consultation. The perception was that consultation often stood in the way of service delivery and yet communities demanded both. There was definitely a sense of treading extremely carefully for fear of doing something that the community would find unacceptable.

COR theory highlights the amount of stress and tension felt by officials in the aftermath of disaster with all its complexities and chaos. This was consistent the data in that all the service providers who were involved directly with the affected community reflected on the personal toll that the job had taken. One can only speculate whether this may have been a contributing factor towards there being a constant stream of new project leaders, which further aggravated the situation.

7.2.9 Avoidance of long-term needs

Chronic loss was a significant feature of the January 2005 fire, loss that reached unprecedented proportions during the survivors' stay at Tygerberg Hostel. According to COR theory, in the face of such ongoing demands and losses it is extremely hard for communities and individuals to adopt a sense of mastery (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). Furthermore COR theory postulates that the magnitude of loss and the velocity of loss spirals will impact greatly on the levels of social cohesion. This seems of particular relevance to the present study and is therefore not surprising, given the enormity of loss, that the survivors interviewed uniformly voiced a sense of victimisation and social disharmony. The reality was that they were victims; they were the passive recipients of a series of actions that were to ultimately place them at greater risk for further loss. One example of this was the family which was moved out of the main section of Tygerberg for their own safety. This unfortunately created yet more problems for the family who were then preyed upon by a sexually harassing security guard. If one looks at the implications for the father, who relayed the story, he was left feeling victimised and emasculated by the fact that he had not been able to protect his family from this predator.

It is noteworthy that there seemed to be no individual or collective sense of ownership at Tygerberg. Given the run-down state of the facilities, the blocked drains, the filthy toilets, and general disarray, it was surprising that this group of people could not hold a communal meeting to develop a plan of action, a roster of responsibilities equally shared among all residents. Even if one acknowledges that this was a group of people who did not know one another prior to the fire, it still does not explain their lack of mobilisation. One startling example of this was the fact that many of the mothers complained that as they had been relocated to Tygerberg they could no longer take their children to crèche. Many of them

voiced concerns that the children were bored and often unsupervised for hours at a time. It would have seemed a logical step for the mothers to come together and organised a communal, safe space and draw up a roster where mothers took turns occupying and supervising the children. COR theory suggests that this may have been related to the notion of victim status and passivity: the mothers had lost their sense of agency and were waiting for someone else to come and sort out the problem for them.

We were told on a number of occasions that when residents had complained to fellow residents that no one else was helping to clean the toilets, or had requested that loud music be turned down, they were told that no one had asked to come here; it wasn't any specific person's house, so they could act and do as they please. It was interesting to note that some of the survivors linked this lack of regard for fellow residents to the withdrawal of the City of Cape Town involvement. They explained it in terms that echoed paternalism: it seemed that the residents "behaved" while the "father figure" was around, but as soon as his back was turned, the "children" behaved badly. It seems clear from many of these examples that the residents felt victimised, infantilised, powerless and abandoned by the father figure, the City of Cape Town. These issues are raised by Hutton (2001) who emphasised the importance of survivors democratically participating in their recovery processes in a way that is respectful of their diverse interests and values. He warns that if this is not done then it will fuel confusion, antagonism, suspicion and frustration. Hutton (2001) highlights a collaborative and participatory approach which puts the community centre stage.

It was clearly evident that within the Tygerberg context there was a consistent, narrative that spoke to high levels of conflict and alienation amongst groups, domestic violence, substance abuse, a breakdown in informal political structures, children witnessing adults engaging in sexual intercourse in public, little or no community cohesion, a lack of sensitivity or consideration for fellow residents, marital discord and a breakdown in family relationships. This is entirely consistent with COR theory that posits that once resources fall below a particular threshold, this will result in severe forms of dysfunction, such as conflict, alienation and a breakdown in behavioural norms and social codes (Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995). It is therefore possible that individuals, families and the Tygerberg Hostel community in general had reached the point where they had lost the capacity to absorb any more loss. As a result their ability to cope and support each other was

compromised and the community's well-being was adversely affected. It is however also possible that, as outlined by Hutton (2001), disaster illuminates pre-existing conditions and relationships. One can question the extent to which some of these problems were pre-event issues that, through the disaster, became magnified and visible at a community level. One possible example of this is domestic violence that was witnessed by many survivors in the tents and again at Tygerberg. This kind of incident is commonplace in South Africa (Hamper, 1997) but is typically not made public.

7.3 Conclusion

This disaster thus clearly appeared at least to have socio-political consequences, although these apparent consequences may have been the magnification (because of the disaster) of pre-existing social relationships (Hutton, 2001). Disaster-related literature, in particular COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995; Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993; Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000), provides a useful framework for understanding and exploring issues in the aftermath of disaster, and have certainly enabled a deeper understanding of what went right and what went wrong. It is important to acknowledge the extremely difficult and challenging position that the service providers and interventionists found themselves in. This was not only a large-scale fire of unparalleled magnitude in Cape Town but was an event embedded in a political and historical context that made it particularly difficult to navigate. The service provider interviews clearly showed a personal investment by so many individuals and institutions that tried to 'do the right thing' and certainly, at times, managed to mitigate the effects of this event. This was done particularly well in the acute stage of this disaster where survivors' needs were attended to with sensitivity and effectiveness. It was the ongoing nature of this disaster that seemed to be the undoing of so many interventionists, who, despite being motivated to assist the fire affected community, seemed to perpetuate loss cycles.

The data seemed to suggest that 'space' was a highly valuable resource that was multi-dimensional in nature and seemed to provide a possible point of departure that would facilitate an understanding of the most salient and ongoing feature of this disaster, the level of inter-group conflict and dissolution of social fabric. The concept of space is however not

foregrounded in the disaster literature. I therefore made the decision to re-visit literature in an attempt to unpack the concept of space within South Africa with the hope that it would enable a deeper understanding of relocation and disaster in this country. The issue of space will be discussed in the chapter, which follows.

CHAPTER EIGHT: A SECOND FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING THE DATA: THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SPACE IN INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

It is clear that space was a central feature in many aspects of life in the aftermath of the Joe Slovo fire. It had also inevitably played a role in the longer pre-event history, since throughout South Africa space had been one of the fundamental organising principles of apartheid and apartheid urban design. For example, communities were forcibly kept separate, and urban development was skewed by migration restrictions in the migrant labour system.

Much social psychological research on inter-group behaviour can be traced back to the theoretical framework of the "contact hypothesis" (Allport, 1954). The hypothesis is based on the premise that regular contact between members of different groups would effectively reduce inter-group prejudice if that interaction occurred under favourable circumstances. Optimal inter-group contact requires four conditions (Allport, 1954):

- Equal status
- Co-operation towards the achievement of a
- Common goal
- Institutional support

Where these conditions apply, the effectiveness of contact in reducing prejudice has usually been confirmed by research (Pettigrew, 1998). If these conditions are not met in full, however, levels of prejudice my increase rather than decrease (Pettigrew, 1998). According to Durrheim and Dixon (2005), numerous researchers have studied how, when, and why contact creates this kind of social psychological change. They state that the emerging consensus is that contact works by essentially decreasing inter-group anxiety, increasing perceptions of out-group variability, and building more positive emotional responses to others (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). They underscore the point that these are consequences that occur only if the contact takes place under positive conditions.

Inter-group contact in everyday life however rarely occurs under these ideal conditions; such contact exists "primarily in the form of laboratory approximations or as a phenomenon wistfully

imagined in the pages of social psychology journals" (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003, p. 2) Furthermore, naturally-occurring interaction between groups is more infrequent and superficial than the ideal type reflected on by contact researchers (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003). This is extremely problematic for inter-group research as the historical, ideological and material realities and complexities of relations between groups may be increasingly neglected as attention is focussed on relations that unfold under optimal conditions (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003).

Research within South Africa that has attempted to bridge this gap has focussed on spaces of naturally occurring inter-group contact, such as dining areas of university residences (Alexander, 2003) and beaches (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003). The research findings indicate high levels of informal segregation within a post-apartheid South Africa. Even in situations where different groups were brought together in one context, group members persistently reinstated racial boundaries (Alexander, 2003; Dixon & Durrheim, 2003).

Dixon and Durrheim (2003, p. 3) posit that informal segregation therefore merits closer attention because:

1. In order to effect successful contact, one must also understand processes that maintain separation.
2. Informal segregation is bound up in, and expressive of, common-sense understanding of inter-group processes. Individuals are voluntarily avoiding particular inter-group encounters. In so doing, they may be expressing their evaluation of that contact and be shaping future interactions.

Dixon and Durrheim (2003) emphasise the importance of acknowledging the historical and current realities of segregation as it is these realities that shape inter-group contact. They argue that within the South African context it would be misguided to ignore the past as it continues to define the present. In order to do justice to the ideas of space, inter-group contact and informal segregation within the South African context I will briefly explore the history of segregation in South Africa.

8.1 The history of segregation in South Africa

The legacy of apartheid still remains with all South Africans despite the transition and transformation processes that accompanied the country's embracing of democracy and reconciliation. The legacy of Apartheid has been an enduring and persistent factor in everyday relationships; it has lingered in the form of distance and division and in the estrangement of members of different communities from each other (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). The social psychology of contact and desegregation is therefore a fundamentally important topic of research in the "new" South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

Racial segregation in South Africa can be traced back to the European settlers who built a hedge around their early settlement in the Cape in order to separate themselves from the surrounding "natives" (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). At this time the "natives" were perceived to be "heathens" rather than "black". It was only later, with the expansion of the settlers into the interior, that the separation began to be grounded in racial rather than religious terms. Segregation as a legal concept was only conceived in the early twentieth century (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). It has been argued that segregation was essentially the product of modernization, the process that brought people together in cities and into a single economy (Cell in Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). It was essentially an ideology that was created by well-educated, moderate men as an attractive alternative to the more extreme forms of white supremacy (Cell in Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

By 1948, when the National Party came into power, segregation in employment, education and residence were already well established in South Africa. Durrheim and Dixon (2005) make the point that "as a form of governance and social regulation, segregation served numerous functions related to the production of privilege and inequality." One example can be found in the migrant labour system and segregated housing as this ensured a stable working population for mining (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). South Africa has many gold and other mineral resources and for many decades mining was the largest sector of the economy. From the 1950's to the 1970's hundreds of laws and policies of apartheid formalised and extended these existing forms of segregation. Key pieces of legislation included: (1) the Group Areas Act (No.41) of 1950, which racially segregated areas of residence; (2) the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (No.55) of 1949, which prohibited marriages between

people of different race groups; (3) the Bantu Education Act (No.47) of 1953, which established a black education department and a curriculum that suited the 'nature and requirements of black people'; (4) the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No.49) of 1953, which legislated segregation in all public places, public transport and public buildings with the goal of eliminating contact between race groups; and (5) the Industrial Conciliation Act (No.28) of 1956, which reserved categories of work for members of particular race groups (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

A distinction was made between grand apartheid and petty apartheid (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Grand apartheid referred to the macro policy, which aimed to create independent 'tribal homelands' (Bantustans), which made up 14% of the surface area of the country. These areas were to become the official countries of residence for all black people, leaving South Africa with a white majority and 'democracy'. Petty apartheid sought to regulate racial contact in public places, providing separate amenities for 'whites' and 'non-whites', for examples in toilets, trains, beaches, and even graveyards. It was no coincidence that the facilities for 'whites' were far more superior to the quality of their 'non-white' counterparts as formal segregation aimed to secure white privilege in every aspect of life.

The early 1990's saw great victories for the black liberation movements and civil rights movements as the government softened its state-sanctioned segregation policies in the transition to democracy. Even before 1994, when the African National Congress (ANC) came into power, the government had stopped enforcing its apartheid policies. After 1994, within the period of a few years, all apartheid laws were scrapped. One of the most significant, first acts that the ANC was to pass, was the Human Rights Commission Act (No.54) of 1994, which established a state institution to protect and support constitutional democracy and serve as an anti-racism watchdog (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Other significant acts that were to outlaw racial discrimination and segregation were the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No.4) of 2000, and the Employment Equity Act (No.55) of 1998. The government used these acts to redress the inequalities of the past by establishing affirmative action policies and enforcing desegregation and quotas in areas such as employment and professional sports. South Africa's future seemed bright, with racial equality and integration within its grasp, and it became a country held up to the international community as a perfect example of a 'rainbow nation' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Durrheim and Dixon (2005) however make the point that because apartheid was based on the

fundamentals of racial distance, division and fear it would prove to be a profound challenge, at personal, collective and institutional levels, for South Africans to embrace desegregation in its truest form.

Given the fact that the current study is located within the context of an "African" informal settlement, and that an understanding is sought of the intra-group conflict that emerged after the disaster, I felt that it was important also to reflect on South Africa's history of hostel dwellers. One of the divides that emerged was between those who lived in "The Zone" (the area of hostels), and those who lived in Joe Slovo "proper". In addition it will enable a contextualised understanding of the current post-apartheid patterns of migration. "Hostels are a euphemism in South Africa for single-sex labour compounds constructed to house Africans who were, until 1986 when pass laws were repealed, only permitted to reside in urban areas 'to minister to the needs of the white man and to depart there from as soon as they cease so to minister'" (Wilson & Ramphele in Ramphele, 1993, p. 1).

8.1.1 The migrant labour system

8.1.1.1 Contextualising hostels

The migrant labour system was set up in South Africa as a means of providing cheap African labour within white urban areas. The only approved form of 'housing' for migrants within urban areas was hostels, or labour compounds, which were to be used exclusively by men. The understanding was that the workers or migrants had to return to their rural 'homelands' after the completion of the task. Bundy in (Ramphele, 1993, p. 15) highlighted "the functionality of segregation to capital" in that the fact that African workers needed to return 'home' meant that it was not necessary to provide either housing or welfare benefits for migrant workers. This exploitative system resulted in extremely profitable businesses and industries, such as the gold mines, within South Africa. Migrant workers – men – streamed in from more rural areas in search of employment at the mines, but were not permitted to bring their families with them. They became the relatively cheap labour that kept South Africa's mines lucrative for the white mine owners. A number of apartheid laws ruthlessly enforced this segregation, for example, the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act 25 of 1945, and the Black (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952, and excluded Africans from urban areas (Ramphele, 1993). West in (Ramphele, 1993) highlighted the fact that in the Cape Town area

more women than men were being arrested for infringing these laws. He argued that a clear message was being sent from the Nationalist Government that they would do what was necessary to prevent African families from taking root in the area (West in Ramphele, 1993). Ratele (2005, p. 558) makes the point that, "this phantom life lived in public meant that a black person was likely to be found violently oscillating between hyper-visibility and invisibility."

The majority of people living in the Langa Hostels originated from the Eastern Cape, mostly the former Transkei and Ciskei[58], and would therefore oscillate between the rural and urban areas in order to seek work in the industrialised areas (Ramphele, 1993). There were a number of factors within the African community itself that further compounded this oscillating life style. As a way ensuring that the young men returned home after a period of employment the elders of the tribe expected the migrant workers to pay a levy of their wage (Smit, 2001). In addition to this because of the land tenure system set up in the African rural areas, the men were at risk of losing ownership of their ancestral land if the land was not cultivated (Smit, 2001). Men would therefore leave their wives and children to the task of tending the land and would return to assist when their contract was over.

8.1.1.2 Social relations

Ramphele (1993) provides a comprehensive exploration of the life of hostel dwellers living in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu. She focuses attention on some of the social norms and dynamics that governed behaviour and interactions amongst groups of people living in these hostels. Though her work is now dated as it dealt with the pre-1994 era, it remains the most comprehensive ethnography of space in the migrant labour hostels in Cape Town.   I will now reflect on some her findings as it is anticipated that they may have great significance for the current study. My overview will be necessarily schematic and will not do full justice to Ramphele's nuanced account. By way of context, it is important to note that though the hostels were formally for men only, from the 1960's women were allowed to enter the hostel environment although this was not always welcomed or even condoned by the male hostel dwellers (Ramphele, 1993).

---

[58] Under apartheid legislation these areas were regarded as the Bantustans and were regarded as the "homelands" of African people. Transkei and Ciskei were situated in the Eastern Cape (see map in Addendum A).

8.1.1.2.1 Relationships among men

Relationships among men were centred on traditional notions of respect based on age difference, in that younger men would defer to their elders. Kinship groups were paramount in acting as reference points for appropriate behaviour and sources of support. These networks were an essential resource for newly arrived work-seekers who would often be given a place to stay, food and assistance in finding jobs. People who originated from the same home village would similarly support one another, especially in times of sickness or celebration. When addressing one another residents would often make use of clan names, as opposed to first names and surnames. Ramphele (1993) argues that this was done as a sign of respect and as a way of invoking kin obligations.

8.1.1.2.2 Relationships among women

These relationships were fraught with high levels of competition, mostly between married and single women. Ramphele (1993) suggests that this is because the married women saw the single women as a potential or current threat to their husbands' family responsibilities. The single women in return felt disrespect by the married women whose hostility was often shown overtly. In some circumstances, however, the women would support each other, for example, in times of grief, illness or assault by male partners. Interestingly Ramphele (1993) makes the point that it is surprising that the women could not organise themselves effectively enough to demand greater respect and access to resources especially given the fact that they spent so much time together while their partners were at work. She argues that there were a number of dividing lines within the hostel setting, such as age, marital status, length of stay in Cape Town and degree of economic dependence on their partner (Ramphele, 1993). Older women were apparently seen as 'honorary men' and as a result played a role in implicit leadership hierarchies.

8.1.1.2.3 Relations with informal settlement residents

Following the abolition or relaxation of the strict application of apartheid segregation laws in the 1980s and 1990s, many hostel dwellers moved out into informal settlement areas, such as Joe Slovo, in order to find some physical space and privacy. There were some feelings of

animosity from those who remained as they felt the others were deserters. The relationship between the hostel dwellers and informal settlement residents was further weakened by competition for land, a scarce resource (Ramphele, 1993).

8.2 Post apartheid South Africa

8.2.1 The Legacy of The Migrant Labour System

Despite the abolition of these pass laws in 1986 their legacy remains in areas occupied by Africans (often referred to as informal settlements or townships) today, which are characterised by over-crowding, squalor, inadequate basic facilities (such as schools and clinics), and poverty (Ramphele, 1993). Ramphele (1993) emphasises the urgent need to address the infrastructural inadequacies in these areas, for example, the provision of electricity, telephones, rubbish disposal and basic social service facilities. The current national housing crisis must be seen within the context of the migrant labour system because it is reflected in acute shortages of 'non-white' and low-income housing in urban areas (Ramphele, 1993). The migratory practices themselves are still evident in present day South Africa:

> Double rootedness refers to the patterns of migration in South Africa as well as the practice of dual residence where individuals have a stake in dwellings both in rural and urban areas. It is a practice that has continued in many households, since the abolition of apartheid, as a strategy for keeping their options open, of sharing risk across several homesteads (May, 1998, p. 174).

Forced removals, high levels of migration, mobility and continuous violence have significantly contributed towards undermining social cohesion within South Africa (May, 1998). It has been argued that a complex set of power relations exist in South Africa through which people's relationships are mediated (May, 1998). These relationships are based on a number of social variables of which access to land is the most potent, the result being divisions within communities over resources and power (May, 1998). One of the most important factors cited to explain why African people are still involved in labour migration is said to be the housing shortage in urban areas (Smit, 2001, p. 536):

> Although informal settlements and squatter camps, housing the urban poor, are expanding by the day, many rural based Africans prefer to refrain from moving permanently to their urban places of employment, finding it repelling to call an environment characterized by overcrowding and slum conditions their home.

In addition to the housing shortage is the high unemployment rate in South Africa, which is estimated to be 28% (Nattrass, 2007). Furthermore given the high value attached to rural land ownership it seems likely that labour migration will continue for some to come (Smit, 2001).

8.2.2 Informal segregation

An important although disconcerting fact is that the formal abolition of segregation in many societies has not gone hand in hand with racial integration (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). International and national research concentrating on inter-group relations have found them to be primarily segregatory in nature (Tredoux, Dixon, Underwood, & Finchilescu, 2005). This has been illustrated in America where 'black' and 'white' Americans continue to live in different areas, attend different schools and circulate in different social networks (Darden & Kamel, 2000) in (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003). This was certainly one of the complicating factors in Hurricane Katrina, where the pre-Katrina levels of racial segregation in New Orleans were high (Hartman & Squires, 2006). Following this disaster in the United States, much attention was paid to the how and why space is racialised (Powell, Jeffries, Newhart, & Stiens, 2006). One proposition was that segregation helps to reinforce the social categories to which people ascribe meaning, for example, white space equates to privilege (Powell, Jeffries, Newhart, & Stiens, 2006). Dominant groups therefore use space as a separator whereby areas of racialised poverty re-affirm for society the non-dominant groups' subordinate position as if it is natural and incidental (Powell, Jeffries, Newhart, & Stiens, 2006).

Dixon and Durrheim (2005) similarly postulate that segregation is an informal mechanism for ordering and defining social relations:

> We believe that contact researchers have underestimated the resilience of segregation as a de facto system for regulating interaction between groups, a system based not on official policies of racial separation but on a panoply of 'unofficial' practices that collectively operate to reproduce racial boundaries.

They state that social psychologists have missed this fundamental point because of their tendency to investigate inter-group contact under 'optimal' conditions. In South Africa despite over ten years of democracy and the radical transformation of race relations, segregation levels remain high (Christopher, 2001). Following this line of thinking Dixon and Durrheim

(2003) presented their research which aimed to investigate the behavioural manifestations of informal segregation in a public, recreational context – the beach. The results of the Scottburgh study indicated that despite the legal abolition of beach apartheid, racial interaction remained restricted by three types of informal segregation (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003, p. 19):

1. One of the most notable features of informal segregation was to be found in the racial composition of what became known as 'umbrella spaces'. These were pairs or small groups that clustered together around the large sun umbrellas. Descriptive statistics indicated segregation levels at almost 100% so that inter-group contact was almost non-existent.

2. The second type of segregation was manifest within broader patterns of racial distribution on the beachfront itself. 'Black' and 'white' holiday-makers tended to cluster in different areas on the beach, which meant that the probability of encountering a 'white' person was significantly lower than one would have expected under conditions of random mixing.

3. The observational data was collected between the 23 December 1999 and 2 January 2000 over the Christmas and New Year holidays. This was chosen specifically because it coincides with South Africa's peak holiday season. Dixon and Durrheim (2003) argue that the most dramatic practices of segregation could be seen on Boxing Day and New Year's Day when traditionally many 'non-whites' go to the beach. They described a pattern of invasion-succession sequences where a large influx of 'black' holidaymakers was accompanied by a corresponding withdrawal of 'white' holidaymakers. This, they point out, reflects a common trend among 'white' holidaymakers to avoid beaches on those public holidays.

Dixon and Durrheim (2003) argue that segregation is not a disorderly process but an organised, collective one that plays an important role in terms of identity and a sense of belonging.

8.3 Space and inter-group contact

Dixon (2001) argues that contact researchers have failed to understand the processes that maintain racial divisions within integrated societies. It has been argued that spatial boundaries not only separate groups from one another, but also provide norms for

regulating and ordering interactions between those social groups (Newman & Paasi, 1998). Dixon & Durrheim (2003) similarly posit that informal practices of racial exclusion operate as a mechanism for regulating interaction between groups, furthermore that it is the basis of moral order. Inter-group contact can be seen to be inextricably linked to practices of boundary navigation whereby space informs people of what is expected of them and how other relate to their presence (Baldassare in Alexander, 2000). Cresswell (1996) similarly highlighted the meanings that may be associated with space: he made use of the phrase "normative landscape", which referred to a set of norms governing and regulating what is and is not appropriate in certain places. He argued that these values and meanings are created and maintained by the individuals and groups that occupy these spaces (Cresswell, 1996). Sibley (1992) highlighted the socio-spatial construction of the "outsider" where space is used to simultaneously create and sustain the marginal status of the outsider or minority group. Boundary processes are therefore directly implicated in ordering interaction between self and other. Similarly Newman and Paasi (1998, p. 195) state that "groups use boundaries as a means of securing socio-spatial and ethnic homogeneity". Sibley (1992) took this further in referring to the "purification" of space, which he argued, involves the rejection of that which is different and the need to secure boundaries in an attempt to maintain homogeneity. Sibley (1992) viewed this as a problematic practice only if purified spaces were used as mechanisms for maintaining dominance and control.

8.3.1 The multi-dimensional nature of space

Of great interest and relevance to the current study is Ramphele's (1993) multi-dimensional understanding of space and its application to the hostel environment. She makes reference to four dimensions of space:

- Physical
- Political-economic
- Ideological-intellectual
- Psychosocial

8.3.1.1 Physical space

Space clearly has a physical dimension to it whether it is geographical or architectural. It speaks to one's physical location in the world and indicates what parts of it can be legitimately used. Physical space can also be exclusionary in keeping people or groups out. As a result physical space can help define in- and out-groups or insiders and outsiders, for example, private versus public; family versus non-family, and urban versus rural (Ramphele, 1993).

8.3.1.2 Political-economic space

Political-economic space provides the structure within which social relationships are engaged in and legitimised. Political and economic policies can limit individual choice, as was the case in South Africa. Formal and informal mechanisms can be used to sanction and reward social interactions (Ramphele, 1993).

8.3.1.3 Ideological-intellectual space

This space determines the symbolic framework within which social relationships are conducted. Intellectual space can be defined as "the capacity for critical awareness of one's environment and the position one occupies in the power structure of one's society" (Ramphele, 1993, p. 5). Ideology is most effective when it has been internalised by people to the extent that it becomes a way of life, a habit that no one questions anymore (Ramphele, 1993). Language is a carrier of these messages that often holds racist and sexist assumptions.

8.3.1.4 Psychosocial space

This makes reference to the actual space that one occupies, and provides one with environmental cues that either encourage one to expand or narrow one's aspirations in life (Ramphele, 1993). Ramphele (1993) argues that when one lives in squalor, as the hostel dwellers did, this has severe consequences for self-worth and self-respect. Poor self-image and a lack of self-esteem, in turn, sabotage any capacity to challenge the status quo (Ramphele, 1993). "People with pride in neither their past nor present are limited in their capacity to believe in their own agency in history (Ramphele, 1993, p. 9). The Black

Consciousness Movement (BCM) of South Africa acknowledged this issue in its call for 'psychological liberation' as a necessary component of transformation (Biko in Raphele, 1993).

Of great significance to the current study are the assumptive links Ramphele (1993) makes between space, identity and social relationships. In an attempt to develop these links further, in relation to disaster and relocation, I will now explore the 'psychology of place' which refers to an emerging area of research that deals with the connection between people and their intimate environments (Fullilove, 1996).

8.3.2 The psychology of place

The loss of 'place' is said to have profound consequences for individuals and communities as a result of the rupture of person-place relationships (Fullilove, 1996). Fullilove (1996) proposes that a sense of belonging, which is essential for well-being, is dependent on strong, well-established relationships with nurturing places. 'Place' is said to have multiple meanings. In its simplest form place refers to physical location. Survival depends on a 'good enough' setting that provides people with their basic needs, such as food, shelter and water. These 'good enough' locations are also set up in a way that is meaningful to the residents and that promotes harmony, in contrast to 'toxic' environments that threaten the health and survival of those living there (Fullilove, 1996). Place can also refer to human interactions that occur within a given setting, i.e., the psychosocial milieu (Fullilove, 1996). The study of milieu has been particularly important for mental health professionals working in group care facilities, such as inpatient units (Fullilove, 1996). Research has indicated that people interacting in a particular milieu are highly sensitive to the spoken and unspoken dynamics of power (Fullilove, 1996). Fullilove (1996) argues that in the same way that a physical setting can be 'toxic', so too can a psychosocial milieu where group processes exclude people, leaving them feeling isolated and without a common purpose. The third way of conceptualising place is to be found in the notion of the life bibliography, a life story or personal perspective of which place is a crucial factor (Fullilove, 1996). Places have meaning attached to them which has been shaped over time by the person's past, as well as attitudes, beliefs, and actions in the present (Fullilove, 1996). One of the most concrete ways in which place presents itself to us is in the form of neighbourhood which is a set of places which store memories and meanings of place (Orum in White, 2005).

8.3.2.1 The psychology of place and displacement

The psychology of place is based on the assumption that individuals strive for a sense of belonging to a place (Fullilove, 1996). Integral to understanding the disruption caused by displacement is the operation of three psychological processes: familiarity, attachment and identity.

8.3.2.1.1 Familiarity and disorientation

The familiarity of an environment is the result of the accumulation of detailed, nuanced knowledge over a period of time and is essential to survival. These environments have become comfortable through experience with them over time, which has enabled people to develop resources to cope. The abrupt loss of a familiar environment can result in high levels of disorientation and a perceived loss of self (Fullilove, 1996).

8.3.2.1.2 Attachment and nostalgia

Each person is part of a unique personal environment that serves as an 'outer ring' of life-sustaining systems similar to the 'inner ring' of physiological systems that maintain homeostasis (Bowlby in Fullilove, 1996). This large personal environment or 'outer ring' provides safety and security for that person with the result that a threat to that environment would be perceived as a threat to the self (Fullilove, 1996). Attachment to place is similar to attachment to person as it is conceived as a series of emotions and behaviours that maintain contact with the object of the attachment (Fullilove, 1996). Loss of place through displacement will therefore present itself in sadness, longing and even grief for the lost object (Fullilove, 1996). Crowley (2006, p. 155) speaks to these issues of attachment in relation to the Hurricane Katrina survivors when she states that, "Katrina is about the sudden and complete loss of all that home means – safety, respite, privacy, comfort, and security."

8.3.2.1.3 Identity and alienation

The concept of 'place identity' refers to the fact that place is an integral part of the sense of self. 'Who we are' is fundamentally linked to 'where we are' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005):

161

> There is an important social and political dimension to this task, as one's place must be understood according to its symbolic construction by those within the place and by the larger society. The soundness of individual place identity rests on having a place and on knowing that one's place is held in esteem by others. When identity is betrayed in either of these ways, alienation may result (Fullilove, 1996, p. 1520) .

Because people identify with the places in which they live, if they perceive themselves to become marginalised and invisible through loss of that space this may result in 'a profound collapse of self-pride' (Fullilove, 1996). This has implications for survivors of disaster who are often the source of great media attention at the time of the event, but are soon to be forgotten.

The psychology of place seems to hold many potential leads to understanding inter-group relations in the context of disaster relocation, as place is put at the centre of the debate, not only in terms of changes in physical location but in terms of its multi-faceted implications - which are embedded in complex systems of meaning. Durrheim and Dixon (2005) make the point that place-identity processes are shaped, in large part, by the history of relations between groups. They argue that place-identity processes are primarily ideological and hence reflect and maintain systems of ethnic and racial classification:

> They normalize practices of division and exclusion; they preserve sectional interests and distributive inequalities; and they justify discriminatory ways of appropriating and regulating social space (Keith & Pile (1993) in (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, p. 186).

The sense of belonging usually referred to in place-identity literature has tended to focus on an individualistic perspective (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Belonging is however inextricably linked with the history of ethnic and social relations as can be seen in political struggles over space and place (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Belonging implies a distinction between insider and outsider and consequently divides groups into "us" and "them". What makes space comfortable is the knowledge of the absence of "other". Following this line of thinking, the sudden presence of "other" in a space becomes a 'boundary-transgressive event' (Sibley in Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Contact between groups within a newly occupied, desegregated space, can essentially became a struggle over belonging (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Durrheim and Dixon (2005) make the point that place-identification is a collectively produced and ideological process.

This chapter specifically explored the multi-dimensional concept of space within the historical and political landscape of South Africa. It is evident that informal segregation

remains a reality in present day South Africa and it seems important to acknowledge and understand its role and function between groups if we are to gain true insight into the dynamics surrounding the Joe Slovo fire. Chapter Nine will explore the interface between the space-related literature and the current study.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION TWO

It is evident from the literature that there is a dearth of studies analysing segregation and inter-group behaviour within naturally occurring settings (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). The current study is therefore in a good position to analyse naturally occurring inter-group relations within an African community in the aftermath of a disaster.

Durrheim and Dixon (2005, p. 5) maintain that context specificity must be central in the understanding of the ecology of social relations:

> We shall argue that there is a tendency to detach desegregation from its historically particular circumstances and to express ordinary peoples' experiences of, and attitudes towards, contact in terms of generically, contextually abstracted categories are central weaknesses of social psychological research.

Given the persistent legacy of apartheid and its consequent implications for inter-and intra-group behaviour it would not be surprising to find a consistent thread between estranged relationships of the past and the present. Of greatest significance to the present study is the fundamental issue of informal segregation within South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). I have therefore decided to review the Joe Slovo Informal Settlement Fire in 2005 from the perspective of space, conflict and identity in informal urban spaces in South Africa. In order to do that I will start the discussion by going back to the premise of inter-group behaviour, and that is the contact hypothesis.

9.1 The contact hypothesis

If one considers the post-disaster relocation process from the perspective of the service providers, and within the framework of the contact hypothesis, then one could make the assumption that the process might enable a breaking down of any form of prejudice that may have previously existed within the survivor group. I am saying this because the City of Cape Town appears to have acted without regard to the subtleties of the different groups to be found in the heterogeneous Joe Slovo community. Implicitly, they seemed to act as if members of the survivor group were of equal status, and as if the common goal (formal housing, a highly sought-after resource) would provide sufficient incentive for co-

operation. In the City's view, the group also had the backing of the City of Cape Town, which was providing free shelter, and, for a long time, food and transport.

In contrast, however, the survivor perspective was the polar opposite and revealed an understanding that, according to contact theory, would, if anything, increase rather than decrease inter-group contact.   This is because the survivors certainly did not conceive of themselves as being of equal status. There were clear economic divides not only between the "Joe Slovo" residents and "The Zone" hostel dwellers, but also between those who were employed and able to attend to the basic needs of their families, and those who struggled to provide food for their families. Other divides also became apparent: there had been small "neighbourhoods" within the Joe Slovo settlement that were based on kinship networks; and age and marital status also appeared to function as a divide at times. These inequalities and differences became exposed in the relocation process, because all privacy was lost and the pre-existing networks of the informal settlement had been disrupted. There were certainly no indicators of co-operation between the survivors as a group; rather, they were competing for formal housing, not viewing it as a common goal. The survivors spoke not only about the lack of institutional support, but referred to themselves as 'castaways', truly 'abandoned' by formal and informal leadership structures. Given this perspective, it seems that contact was to increase prejudice and conflict within the survivor group.

9.2 Informal segregation

COR theory provided a useful framework for teasing out the 'social fault lines' within Joe Slovo as described by the respondents. I will argue that a number of realities became evident through the data:

1. The respondents represented a heterogeneous community i.e. it was made up of a number of sub-groupings.
2. Prior to the fire, there were implicit boundaries between various groups that maintained a level of informal segregation.
3. The 'rules' that governed the relationships amongst these groups were embedded in local knowledge and practices.
4. This knowledge had its roots in a current and past social reality.

There is no disputing the fact that apartheid was 'successful' in its strategy to divide a nation. The majority of literature focussing on inter-group relations during and after the apartheid years seems to focus attention on this divide in terms of inter-group interactions (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Tredoux, Dixon, Underwood, & Finchilescu, 2005). Although this research has been central to the understanding of the pervasiveness of apartheid, the current study is most interested in a relatively neglected area of inter-group studies, the dynamics within informal urban spaces in South Africa. A number of theorists have explored the migrant labour system and its implications for African individuals and families (Ramphele, 1993; Smit, 2001). It has been argued that apartheid was responsible for sustaining relationships of advantage, discrimination and exclusion in ways that were often obscure, poorly understood and rarely analysed psychologically (Dixon & Tredoux, 2006). I will therefore attempt to analyse the findings of the current study in terms of ideas of difference and will propose that the distance and division that apartheid caused between members of different communities was mirrored in informal settlement communities, at least in part because of the effects of the migrant labour system.

9.2.1 The migrant labour system

The data seemed to support the idea of the persistence of some elements relating to the migrant labour system. This was found in some of the respondents' decision to put off their traditional trip home in the Eastern Cape – one made at least annually in order to protect land tenure in rural areas - in order to protect their rightful place on the Cape Town housing waiting list. This movement between informal urban spaces and their rural 'home' had clearly become a way of life. During the interview process the majority of respondents asked the Xhosa co-researcher which clan she belonged to in the Eastern Cape. This would usually begin a brief dialogue about the social connectedness of the interviewee to that clan, if any. It was evident that these familial clans or tribes to which people belonged were a source of social connectedness and a major point of social definition. Ramphele (1993) noted the importance of kinship groups who, in the apartheid years, were a reference point for newly-arriving migrants. Many of the respondents spoke about these networks, which had provided definition to their experience of the informal settlement prior to the fire. These ideas take us back to the heterogeneity of this community and the fact that all interviewees spoke to an indigenous knowledge that essentially related to the careful negotiation of space between groups prior to the fire. It seemed, from the interviews, that the collective understood such

processes: it was, in effect, a social code. In the aftermath of the fire, both with regard to the relocation to the tents and then again to Tygerberg, the social conflict appears to have been a manifestation of the shattering of group boundaries and social codes through the relocation.

Dixon and Durrheim (2003) suggest that when different groups are brought together in one context their natural inclination is to reinstate group boundaries. This process, they postulate, plays itself out because group boundaries not only separate groups but provide people with norms for regulating their behaviour (Newman & Paasi, 1998). I would argue that it is possible that with the fragmentation of the kinship networks, in the process of relocation, came a consequent dissolution of the social fabric that previously held this community together. This in turn led to a breaking down of moral codes of behaviour, which may explain the general lack of consideration and anti-social behaviour that ensued. Issues of diversity and difference may have been a reflection of the residents' need to establish in-and out-groups in an attempt to define who they were and where they belonged within this 'new' space. This may have magnified issues that enabled such boundary definition, for example: poverty enabled the identification of the "have's" and "have-nots", geographical clustering provided the opportunity to identify oneself and one's family as belonging to "Joe Slovo" or "The Zone", other demographics such as marriage, having children, belonging to a particular faith, all similarly offered refuge for people in belonging to an in-group. The flip side of these boundary processes, however, is that in order to sustain the idea of "insider" one similarly needs to identify and dissociate oneself from the "outsider". It is this process that could have resulted in the high levels of intolerance and inter-group conflict within the Tygerberg context.

9.2.2 The psychology of place

The survivors' loss of 'home', a safe haven, cannot be underscored enough. The fire, the political decision not to allow the survivors to rebuild their dwellings, and the consequent relocation process meant that there was no longer a private space, which they could call 'home'. Many of the survivors referred to the lack of ownership and sense of belonging with regards to Tygerberg. One particular quotation reflects the link between place and the resultant apathy and disregard for 'other':

> People don't care; the talk around here is that 'this is not my house'. People don't respect each other, there is no such thing as respect for elders, young and old

people are treated the same. The talk is that this is no one's house, that this is Tygerberg.

Fullilove's (1996) exploration of the meaning of place and its centrality to well-being seemed of great relevance to the study. The data seemed to support the idea of place as being more than a locality: it was the nerve centre of social connectedness. As a result many respondents spoke nostalgically of the need to return home, some on a daily basis, to Langa where these networks prevailed. The isolation and alienation felt by the respondents appeared to be a consequence of their displacement from their homes and their neighbourhoods, in being cut off from both their privacy in their own homes, and these networks or 'outer ring' of support and protection. It certainly seems feasible that the apathy towards cleaning and looking after the facilities that housed them could be related to the notion that people seem to identify with the places in which they live. If they perceived themselves to be marginalised or invisible within this space, and so unable to identify with it, it would have had a profound impact on their pride and consequently their ability and motivation to care for their environment. Interestingly the respondents seemed to view their environment as toxic, whether literally referring to unsanitary conditions or to the toxic nature of relationships that seemed to have contaminated and permeated all aspects of communal living.

I would argue that within the context of the present study one needs to look to the work of Durrheim and Dixon (2005), who make the point that the psychology of place is embedded in many complex systems of meaning that are historical and ideological in nature. Place-identity is an extremely useful concept as it is said to normalise and preserve practices of division and exclusion (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Place-identity links with the ideas of belonging and what makes a space comfortable and safe. The survivor narratives were consistent with these ideas in that they spoke to a history of relationships and dynamics between kinship groups that seemed to be implicitly understood and it seemed obvious and natural to many of the survivors that it would not be possible for these groups to live in harmony given the fact that the boundaries between them had been broken down. This points to the school of thought that says that group boundaries have a crucial role in regulating social space. The sub-groups could therefore have seen the relocation process as a highly threatening event that transgressed and violated inter-group boundaries. The data seems to support the proposition put forward by Durrheim and Dixon (2005) that

under such 'unnatural' and desegregated conditions space becomes a struggle over belonging. I would argue that the relocation process resulted in a blurring and breakdown of group boundaries. In order to restore 'social order' an inter-group struggle was inevitable and necessary. It was the collective's attempt to reconstruct and recover from the aftermath of this disaster.

9.3 Conclusion

It was evident from the data that apartheid has a persistent and enduring nature that coloured many inter-group processes after its demise. This chapter focussed attention on the contact hypothesis and informal segregation practices that seemed to have played themselves out within the context of disaster. Segregation and group boundaries play an important function in communities and it seems necessary that the interface between them and disaster be investigated further. Chapter 10 will explore some of the limitations of the current study, recommendations for disaster interventionists, and will look at the way forward in terms of disaster research.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

10.1 Summary of findings

The aim of the current study was to explore the personal narratives of a group of fire survivors within the context of the wider communal and socio-political variables. The study has provided insight into a complex web of pre- and post-event factors that were to impact on the respondents at both individual and collective levels. The individual narratives provided a lens that focused attention on issues ranging from fire risk in marginalised communities, to how South Africa's history of segregation affects group behaviour even in disaster situations. The survivors seemed greatly distressed by the levels of hostility felt from fellow survivors and the constant conflict between groups. The individual narratives were congruent with one another, and highlighted elevated levels of community stress. Though stress was not formally measured, it appeared that contributing to community distress was a general erosion of community cohesion and support. The study seemed to support the idea that disasters are much more than acute events: they also have an ongoing and chronic nature to them. Many of the identified problems were located in the aftermath of the Joe Slovo fire, and seemed to have been triggered by the relocation process and its long-term implications.

COR theory and social psychological theories of segregation were useful frameworks in which to analyse the data. Although this study did not set out to test or prove the value of these theoretical perspectives, they did however suggest avenues for further research.

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll, Briggs, & Wells, 1995; Monnier & Hobfoll, 2000) provided a valuable framework for understanding the Joe Slovo disaster from both individual and community perspectives, as well as enabling a deeper analysis of the acute versus chronic difficulties that were being experienced. Post-disaster stress seemed to be related to issues around leadership structures, poor communication channels, vulnerability and exposure, and the break down of social codes. Resource loss played a central role for survivors; the loss was precipitated by the fire event but became cumulative, over time, as the disaster unfolded and became chronic, rather than an acute event. COR theory's definition of stress was consistent with the data in that the source was to be found in the

external world, in the form of a fire, and was perpetuated due the lack of resource gain in the aftermath of that fire, and by the fact that the survivors had little in the way of resource reservoirs to start with, and so had little to buffer them from further loss.

The data also spoke to the idea of the continuum of disaster, in that there was fire risk in this marginalised and vulnerable community prior to this particular disaster. Some of these pre-event issues were explored in detail in Chapter Four. One noteworthy issue that was to have significance for the current study was the fact that Joe Slovo was a heterogeneous community, which was made up of numerous sub-groupings, many of which originated from kinship networks in the Eastern Cape. This linked to COR theory's notion of 'communities within communities'. These ideas were emphasised in the data where issues of diversity and difference were to dominate the narratives. This seemed to link significantly with high levels of inter-group conflict and hostility within the relocation settings, i.e., the tent villages and Tygerberg. In terms of COR theory it is reasonable to argue that the levels of loss experienced by this community had fallen far below the necessary threshold for individual and community well-being. As a result, the community experienced a breaking down of the social fabric and social codes that had been in place prior to the fire. The survivors linked the conflict to the breaking down of tribal and family clustering processes that were in existence within the broader Joe Slovo community prior to the fire. Space within Joe Slovo was organised according to these kinship networks. It seemed possible that the relocation processes disrupted this informal negotiation of space, perhaps because the City of Cape Town perceived the community as essentially homogenous and so made no attempt to preserve this natural support system. 'Space' seemed to be a multi-dimensional resource that had become, or possibility always was, political, economic and social in nature.

COR theory's emphasis on resources, and the emphasis of the survivors' narratives on spatial organisation, suggested that space and its organisation appeared to be key resources. The theory of space and COR theory have many intersections, especially since a loss of space and entitlement to space were major aspects of this disaster. The spatial organisation within the community, prior to the fire, seemed to be a legacy of apartheid and its effect on inter-group relations. The 'social fault lines' within Joe Slovo became apparent through the data in that this was a heterogeneous community that prior to the fire had a number of implicit group boundaries in place that maintained a level of

informal and functional segregation. This careful negotiation of space within an informal urban setting was linked to issues of identity and belonging. Post-event relocation and displacement processes seemed to have severely disrupted these group boundaries and kinship networks. The issues of difference and diversity, insider and outsider, and inter-group struggles in the relocated, post-disaster Tygerberg "community" were therefore argued to be the result of 'unnatural' and desegregated spaces where the collective was attempting to restore or recover boundaries.

The relocation process was considered within the framework of the contact hypothesis. It seemed reasonable, given the conditions for successful integration, that relocation had in fact increased levels of group conflict and segregation. This stemmed from the survivors' perception that they were not equal in status, that they were competing for a scarce and valuable resource (housing), with very little support from formal and informal leadership structures. It became evident through the data that prior to the fire there were implicit group boundaries in place that maintained a level of informal segregation in this 'community'. The 'rules' that governed these relationships were functional and were embedded in local knowledge and practices that had their roots in the past as well as the present. The levels of inter-group conflict could therefore be seen to be the survivors' need to re-establish in- and out-groups in an attempt to re-define who they were and where they belonged in this new space. This was seen in several ways: poverty being translating into the "have's" and "have-not's", identities solidifying around being from "Joe Slovo" or "The Zone", and other demographics, such as being married or having children as being defining features of similarity or difference.

The loss of a home meant the loss of a safe, private, space within a community network that was the nerve centre of social connectedness for these survivors. The psychology of place emphasises the systems of meaning that are attached to people and places (Fullilove, 1996). The narratives spoke to the historical nature of relationships and social dynamics that had been set up to survive apartheid, a system based on division and fear (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). It seemed clear to many survivors that it was not possible, or even natural, for these groups to live in harmony now that the boundaries had been broken down because boundaries regulate social space (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Rebuilding and recovering from the January 2005 fire, for these survivors, meant restoring group boundaries in an attempt to return to a pre-event level of functioning and being.

10.2 Limitations

The study had a number of limitations and these must be borne in mind when considering the results and their potential implications. The study was small; it focussed on a specific group of survivors, following a particular fire event. The results are therefore not generalisable, as the material is context-specific and deals with patterns of inter-group behaviour within a particular post-disaster hostel setting. This was however the first study of its kind in South Africa that I could identify. The lack of a corpus of information on disasters in poorer areas of South Africa necessitated a study that was exploratory in nature. A convenience sampling approach was used that may have been confounded with bad outcomes; it would have been preferable to use a different sampling strategy, for example, snowballing where respondents could have provided names of individuals who they knew who were staying at other relocation sites. Having said this, however, recent newspaper articles certainly suggest that the situation for survivors relocated to other areas was no better:

> Families spoke of how life had become worse since they were moved into pre-fabricated houses provided by the province. They said the area was remote, which meant that they could not find the 'piece' work they used to pick up in Epping[59] and Athlone. Others said they had lost permanent jobs as the cost of transport became too high. Many Delft residents also complained of widespread ill-health among children and adults, with coughs and tuberculosis a common problem (Makoba, 2007, p. 14).

Future research may fruitfully include a comparison groups based in different relocation settings as this would enable a more generalisable study and would allow us to look at this data in a more nuanced way.

Despite the clear limitations, therefore, the study has been an exciting journey of discovery. Though the scope is limited, the work represents a first step towards our beginning to develop a better understanding of the intertwining of acute issues of disaster with ongoing issues of space within informal urban areas in South Africa. A new research

---

[59] Epping, Athlone and Delft were all formerly 'coloured' areas and are situated on the outskirts of Cape Town.

agenda for exploring disasters in local spatial context now needs to be carried forward, and as new research develops the value of this agenda and its limitations will become clearer.

In the section which follows, some reflections are made on what can be learned from the Joe Slovo disaster and from the analytic approach used in this thesis. These are necessarily tentative and preliminary, given the limitations of the current study. There is value, however, in drawing together strands from the study as a whole and thinking about the potential implications of these for future action.

10.3 Tentative lessons learned and possible ways forward

The key principle of COR theory is to first act to prevent or limit loss. In the case of the Joe Slovo fire, this was done extremely well in the acute stage in that the survivors were treated with dignity and their basic needs were attended to efficiently and effectively. It was clear that the decision not to allow the survivors to rebuild their shacks changed the playing field for the service providers, who did not seem to be, or did not feel they were, adequately trained to deal with a long-term relocation process. I will consider first the intervention within the tent villages, and secondly what occurred at Tygerberg.

10.3.1 The tent villages

As emphasised earlier these are all hindsight insights from which lessons can be learnt. I would propose that the data collected about the survivors in terms of the geographical position of their dwellings should have been used as a mechanism for determining the groupings for the tents. This would have meant that the integrity of the social support networks would have been maintained and a potential loss cycle curtailed. At the very least clusters of similar groups should have been "housed" together, for example, families in one tent, married couples in another, etc. Tents should however not be used as a medium- to long-term housing solution as they are not conducive to harmonious living; a contingency plan is needed for large numbers of survivors who need housing over long periods. The survivors could have been used to prepare their own food; this would have been an empowering process and may have enabled them to move from role of victim to survivor. It could have been the beginnings

of a gain cycle for the survivors who could have taken ownership of this process, especially those who were unemployed. More consistent and regular communication from the City to a structure approved by the survivors would possibly have meant that the survivors would have felt heard and would possibly have prevented them from feeling invisible and neglected.

Given these lessons if a disaster of such magnitude should happen again it would be advisable to gather geographical and social data about kinship networks and support clusters. This could be done in a number of ways by, for example, using pre-event data, conducting research in high-risk areas around social dynamics, and consulting with the community in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Should relocation be necessary, this information could be used, after the initial crisis period, to think around clustering groups in a way that maintains their integrity. In addition to this, as soon as is possible, the survivors need to be engaged in a partnership around relief efforts, for example, using the affected community to make and serve the food. I would also suggest that representatives from the survivor group be appointed by the affected community to join in partnership with the City of Cape Town so that one had, for example, a City project leader and a community leader. All of these possible interventions would need to be tried and evaluated (see more details below for future research agenda).

10.3.2 Tygerberg Hostel

As stated above, it would have been extremely important to find a way of clustering groups that maintained their original structure and integrity. I would argue that this process in and of itself would have minimised inter-group conflict and would have resulted in the survivors having access to valuable support networks at a time that they greatly needed them. I would recommend that the affected community be empowered as much as possible by the City in, for example, engaging in discussions around vending as it played a central role in terms of income generation. By finding a way to make this possible the City of Cape Town would have enabled a gain cycle by empowering the survivors to take ownership of their lives and livelihoods again. Governance was another key issue in that community structures (pre-existing and ongoing for post-disaster liaison purposes) needed to have been consulted with or set up collaboratively so that a working relationship was possible between the City and the affected community. Communication between the City and the affected community needs to occupy a central role both in the acute and ongoing phases of a disaster. The ongoing nature

of this disaster raises many questions about long-term planning in the event of fire disasters in South Africa. The City needs to question whether fire survivors should be allowed to rebuild, but with better fire prevention in the structure of the new community, and better education programmes around fire prevention, or if they should be given priority on the housing waiting list. There are long-term implications to both which will necessitate long-term disaster planning. These strategies should be explored in future research.

10.4 Further recommendations for disaster management practice in South Africa

The insights provided by the analysis of space, conflict and identity in this thesis serves to underscore some fundamental points, based primarily on the work of Fullilove (1996):

It seems evident that in the event of a disaster, if the need to relocate communities is unavoidable, that as many social factors as possible need to be kept stable because "the greatest threat to people's well-being lies in the disintegration of their community'" (Fullilove, 1996, p. 1521). Social connectedness would then serve as a protective factor, a buffer against the adverse conditions that the survivors may face. This point reinforces the primary recommendation made above, which was to find a way of clustering social groups within each relocation setting in a way that would maintain their original integrity and structure.

In order to create an environment that would promote emotional well-being within the context of a displaced community a strategy called "empowered collaboration" (Fullilove, 1996, p. 1521) is recommended. This strategy seems applicable to the current study and would involve the following steps, which could have been implemented with the Joe Slovo fire survivors. When they first arrived at Tygerberg it would have been useful for the survivors to have been tasked with, collectively, conducting an assessment of the Hostel environment. On the basis of this assessment they could have created a list of priorities and/or concerns. These could have been discussed at an open forum meeting between the City of Cape Town and the residents. Expectations could have been clarified early on in terms of what matters the City of Cape Town took responsibility for and what the City of Cape Town's expectations were of the residents. Together a plan of action could have

been drawn up; this plan would have kept all parties explicitly accountable to one another other.

A final recommendation that may have helped the survivors cope and emotionally bond with their temporary 'home' is to have conducted community rituals to say goodbye to their old homes and possessions and allow processes of grief or loss to emerge. In addition rituals could be conducted within their new, temporary home to enable them to move forward and attach in some way to Tygerberg. This could have been in the form of a "meet and greet" session to facilitate the forming of new bonds and relationships. The City also need, in it's planning, to be realistic and explicit about how long survivors will have to live in a relocation setting.

The current study has provided some interesting insights into life after a disaster for this particular group of survivors. I would recommend that a participatory action research (PAR) approach is applied at disaster management centres in future where the exploration of social and communal phenomena takes place with the participation of researchers, service providers (inclusive of all disaster-related government departments) and community members in its planning, implementation, dissemination processes (McIntyre, Chatzopoulos, Politi, & Roz, 2007). There are a number of tenets that distinguish PAR from other research approaches (McIntyre, Chatzopoulos, Politi, & Roz, 2007, p. 748):

1. A collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem salient to a particular community;
2. a desire by people themselves to engage in self- and collective reflection in order to gain clarity and awareness about the issue under investigation;
3. a joint decision to engage in individual and or collective action that leads to a useful solution which benefits the people involved; and
4. a recognition that the term "researcher" applies to both local actors and those people who contribute specialized skills, knowledge, and/or resources to the PAR process

I would therefore suggest that psychosocial evaluation becomes integral to the functioning of disaster management centres in South Africa. In order for this to be feasible and consistent with the PAR approach it would be necessary for a researcher to be appointed internally at each centre. This would also enable immediate availability of a research team, which would be very helpful, given the spontaneous and unexpected nature of disasters.

This researcher could also enable the development of evidence-based standards of disaster intervention in South Africa, for instance in terms of the international Sphere standards (Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response) (The Sphere Project, 2007). One possible way forward would be for a disaster researcher to be based at a community surveillance site, such as Hlabisa or Bush Buck Ridge. Both of these surveillance sites are situated in impoverished communities; the sites cover roughly 11,000 households each (Choi & Gilson, 2002). The researcher team collects demographic characteristics and documents issues, such as migration and health indicators (Choi & Gilson, 2002). A number of pre- and post-disaster variables could be tracked longitudinally in order to evaluate outcomes, assess the best 'fit' with the community and as a result develop a best practice model (Wandersman, Imm, Chinman, & Kaftarian, 2000) for disaster intervention in marginalised areas in South Africa.

Phillips (2002) emphasises the importance of disaster researchers exploring a range of data-gathering techniques. I would therefore recommend that a larger sample size be used to enable the use of quantitative questionnaires; this data could then be used to create a more structured, quantitative questionnaire for future disaster research. In this study issues of resource loss had high salience and although we were not looking for PTSD it may have been there. A longitudinal, clinical post-disaster study would therefore be of great value. It could track PTSD symptoms over time to see if resource loss in any way maintains and/or aggravates PTSD symptomatology in the aftermath of a disaster. I would recommend that researchers in South Africa engage with issues of disaster so that we can collate a corpus of knowledge that would give us an indication of what the issues are. It was also be extremely interesting to compare fire incidents in high-income as well as low-income areas in order to analyse differences and similarities in terms of COR theory principles and corollaries. I am in agreement with Phillips (2002) who highlights the importance of community-based research. She argues that disaster researchers should:

> Seek out opportunities and ways to conduct studies at higher levels of analysis, especially at the organizational and community levels – these have the potential to foster comparative analysis or to become part of a comparative database (Phillips, 2002, p. 210).

The Joe Slovo fire was noteworthy because of the decision not to allow the community to rebuild which was made in light of the N2 Gateway Project. A further recommendation

would be to take another community, which has been allowed to rebuild and compare the outcomes for those survivors.

It is evident, given the paucity of psychosocial disaster in South Africa, that there are many research opportunities and challenges. Disaster research has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of many disadvantaged South Africans who suffer the repercussions of disaster on a daily basis and therefore must be prioritised.

10.5 Concluding remarks

Varieties of inter-group conflict around space played out in the relocation process after the fire. One of the survivors summed this up by saying:

> You can't put different families in one room and expect something different –we are different people, with different backgrounds and different ways of being.

It is clear that even natural disasters have a socio-political dimension, and that space issues map onto disaster issues. Recognition of the intertwining of disaster issues and issues of the question of space may have great significance and repercussions for those attempting to intervene. The above quotation links with the Chinese Fable cited at the beginning of this thesis. Good intentions, although admirable and essential, are not enough. To help individuals and communities affected by disaster, one must understand their history, where they have come from, who they are, what their social fault lines appear to be, and what they need from their own perspective (Marsella & Christopher, 2004). Given the paucity of research in this area it is hoped that this study will contribute to, and encourage, further advancements of research and theory into the interface between disaster, space, conflict and identity in informal urban spaces in South Africa.

REFERENCES

African National Congress. (2007). **http://www.anc.org.za/images/maps/samapo.gif** [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 7 October 2007.

Alexander, L. (2003). *Invading pure spaces. Disrupting segregated spaces amongst black and white students.* University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addision-Wesley Publications.

Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M., & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide.* Buckingham: Open University.

Bolin, R., & Bolton, P. (1986). Race, religion, and ethnicity in disaster recovery. *Program on environment and behaviour*(Monograph #2).

Breslau, N., Davis, G., Andreski, P., & Peterson, E. (1991). Traumatic events and posttraumatic stress disorder in an urban population of young adults. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 48*, 216-222.

Bromet, E. J., Parkinson, D. K., Schulberg, H. C., Dunn, L. O., & Gondek, P. C. (1982). Mental health of residents near the Three Mile Island reactor: A comparative study of selected groups. *Journal of Preventive Psychiatry, 1*(3), 225-276.

Cannon, W. B. (1932). *The wisdom of the body* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.

Choi, S., & Gilson, L. (2002). *Workshop on health inequalities.* Pretoria: University of Witwatersrand.

Christopher, A. J. (2001). Urban segregation in post-Apartheid South Africa. *Urban Studies, 38*, 449-466.

Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. F. (1992). A template approach to text analysis: Developing and using codebooks. In B. F. Crabtree & W. F. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 93-109). London: Sage Publishing Inc.

Crawford-Browne, S. (2000). *Early one Sunday morning...The psychological impact of the August 1999 tornado on the affected people of Guguletu, Manenberg, Tambo Village and Surrey Estate.* Cape Town: The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture.

Cresswell, T. (1996). *In place/out place: Geography, ideology, and transgression.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Crowley, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Where is home? Housing for low-income people after the 2005 hurricanes.* London: Routledge.

Desjarlais, R., Eisenberg, L., Good, B., & Kleinman, A. (1995). *World Mental Health*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme. (2002). *Evaluation of The Fire Mitigation Programme in Joe Slovo Informal Settlement, Cape Town: A Cape Argus/Santam Ukuvuka Operation Fire-Stop Funded Initiative*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Disaster Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme. (2007). **http://www.egs.uct.ac.za/dimp**. [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 3 August 2007.

Dixon, J. (2001). Contact and boundaries: "Locating" the social psychology of intergroup relations. *Theory and Psychology, 11*, 587-608.

Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2003). Contact and the ecology of racial division: Some varieties of informal segregation. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(1), 1-23.

Dixon, J., & Tredoux, C. (2006). Off-space and on the sidelines: A reply to Marx and Feltham-King. *South African Journal of Psychology, 36*(3), 458-462.

Drabek, T. E. (2002). Following Some Dreams: Recognising opportunities, posing interesting questions, and implementing alternative methods. In R. A. Stallings (Ed.), *Methods of Disaster Research* (pp. 127-156). California: International Research Committee on Disasters.

Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005). *Racial encounter. The social psychology of contact and desegregation.* East Sussex: Routledge.

Eagle, G. (1998). *Male crime victims: The social and personal construction of meaning in response to traumatogenic events.* Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Eisen, S., Goldberg, J., Heath, A. C., Lyons, M., Nowak, J., & Rise, J. (1993). A twin study of genetic and environmental contributions to liability for posttraumatic stress symptoms. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 50*, 257-264.

Elklit, A. (2007). Psychological consequences of a firework factory disaster in a local community. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology, 42*(8), 664-668.

Erikson, K. T. (1976). Loss of communality at Buffulo Creek. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 133*(3), 302-305.

Ewing, C. P. I. (1978). *Crisis intervention as psychotherapy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Foster, D. (2005). Racialisation and the micro-ecology of contact. *South African Journal of Psychology, 35*(3), 494-504.

Freedy, J. R., Resnick, H., & Kilpatrick, D. (1992). Conceptual framework for evaluating disaster impact: Implications for clinical intervention. In L. Austin (Ed.), *Responding to disaster: A guide for mental health professionals* (pp. 3-23). Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press Inc.

Freedy, J. R., Shaw, D. L., Jarrell, M. P., & Masters, C. R. (1992). Towards an understanding of the psychological impact of natural disasters: An application of the Conservation of Resources Stress Model. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 5*(3), 441-454.

Fullilove, M. T. (1996). Psychiatric implications of displacement: Contributions from the psychology of place. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 153*(12), 1516-1523.

Glazer, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Gleser, G. C., Green, B. L., & Winget, C. (1981). *Prolonged psychosocial effects of disaster: a study of Buffalo Creek.* New York: Academic Press.

Green, B. L. (1982). Assessing levels of psychological impairment following disaster: Consideration of actual and methodological dimensions. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 170*, 544-522.

Green, B. L. (1995). Long-term consequences of disasters. In S. E. Hobfoll & M. W. De Vries (Eds.), *Extreme stress and communities: Impact and intervention* (pp. 307-324). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Hamper, B., & Lewis, S. (1997). *An overview of consequences of violence and trauma in South Africa*: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconcilation.

Hartman, C., & Squires, G. D. (2006). There is no such thing as a natural disaster. Race, class, and Hurricane Katrina. In C. Hartman & G. D. Squires (Eds.), *Pre-Katrina, Post-Katrina* (pp. 1-11). London: Routledge.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of Resources: A new attempt at conceptualising stress. *American Psychologist, 44*(3), 513-524.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1998). *Stress, culture and community: The psychology and philosophy of stress.* New York: Plenum Press.

Hobfoll, S. E., Briggs, S., & Wells, J. (1995). *Community stress and resources: Actions and reactions.* Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Hobfoll, S. E., Dunahoo, C. A., & Monnier, J. (1995). *Conservation of resources and traumatic stress.* New York: Plenum Press.

Hobfoll, S. E., & Lilly, R. S. (1993). Resource conservation as a strategy for community psychology. *Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 128-148.

Hodgkinson, P. E., & Stewart, M. (1989). *Coping with catastrophe*. New York: Routledge.

Hutton, D. (2001). *Psychosocial aspects of disaster recovery: Integrating communities into disaster planning and policy making.*Unpublished manuscript.

Ibanez, G. E., Buck, C. A., Khatchikian, N., & Norris, F. H. (2004). Qualitative analysis of coping strategies among Mexican disaster survivors. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 17*(1), 69-85.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2004). *World Disasters Report. Focus on community resilience.* Geneva: ATAR Roto Presse.

Kaniasty, K., & Norris, F. H. (1993). A test of social support deterioration models in the context of natural disaster. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64*, 395-408.

Khondker, H. H. (2002). Problems And Prospects Of Disaster Research In The Developing World: A case study of Bangladesh. In R. A. Stallings (Ed.), *Methods Of Disaster Research* (pp. 334-348). California: International Research Committee on Disasters.

Killian, L. M. (2002). An Introduction To Methodological Problems Of Field Studies In Disasters. In R. A. Stallings (Ed.), *Methods Of Disaster Research* (pp. 49-93). California: International Research Committee on Disasters.

King, N. (1998). Template analysis. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative methods and analysis in organizational research: A practical guide* (pp. 118-134). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Kulka, R. A., Schlenger, W. E., Fairbank, J. A., Hough, R. I., Jordan, B. K., Marmar, C. R., et al. (1990). *Trauma and the Vietnam was generation: Report of findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping.* New York: Springer.

Lima, B., Pai, S., Santacruz, H., Lozano, J., & Luna, J. (1987). Screening for the psychological consequences of a major disaster in a developing country: Armero, Columbia. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 76*(5), 345-352.

Lopez-Ibor, J. J. (2005). What is a disaster? In J. J. Lopez-Ibor, G. Christodoulou, M. Maj, N. Sartorius, & & A. Okasha (Eds.), *Disasters and Mental Health* (pp. 1-12). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Makoba, N. (2007, 15 September 2007). Shack dwellers moved to Delft see no way out*. Weekend Argus,* p. 14.

Marsella, A. J., & Christopher, M. A. (2004). Ethnocultural considerations in disasters: an overview of research, issues, and directions. *Psychiatric Clinics Of North America, 27*, 521-539.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Towards a psychology of being.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

May, J. (1998). *Poverty and inequality in South Africa. Report prepared for the Office of the Executive Deputy President and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality.* Pretoria.

McFarlane, A. H. (1989). The aetiology of post-traumatic morbidity: Predisposing, precipitating and perpetuating factors. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 154*(221-228).

McFarlane, A. H. (2005). Psychiatric morbidity following disasters: Epidemiology, risk and protective factors In J. J. Lopez-Ibor, G. Christodoulou, M. Maj, N. Sartorius & A. Okasha (Eds.), *Disasters and mental health* (pp. 37-64). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

McIntyre, A., Chatzopoulos, N., Politi, A., & Roz, J. (2007). Participatory action research: Collective reflections on gender, culture, and language. *Teaching and teacher education, 23*(5), 748-756.

Monnier, J., Cameron, R. P., Hobfoll, S. E., & Gribble, J. R. (2000). Direct and crossover effects of prosocial and antisocial coping behaviours. *Journal of Family Psychology, 14*(4), 570-584.

Monnier, J., & Hobfoll, S. E. (2000). *International handbook of human responses to trauma.* New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Morrow, B. (1999). Identifying and mapping community vulnerability. *Disasters, 12*, 1-18.

Myers, D., Zunin, H. S., & Zunin, L. M. (1990). Grief: The art of coping with tragedy. *Today's Supervisor, 6*(11), 14-15.

Nattrass, N. (2007). Disability and welfare in South Africa's era of unemployment and AIDS. In S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, R. Southall & J. Lutchman (Eds.), *State of the nation. South Africa 2007* (pp. 179-200). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Newman, D., & Paasi, A. (1998). Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: Boundary narratives in political geography. *Progress in Human Geography, 22*, 186-207.

Nomdo, C. (2002). Urban Vulnerability. Perspectives from southern Africa. In C. Nomdo & E. Coetzee (Eds.), (pp. 134-147). Cape Town: Periperi Publications.

Norris, F. H., & Kaniasty, K. (1996). Received and perceived social support in times of stress: A test of the social support deterioration deterrence model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*(3), 498-511.

Norris, F. H., Perilla, J. L., & Murphy, A. D. (2001). Postdisaster stress in the United States and Mexico: A cross-cultural test of the multicriterion conceptual model of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 110*(4), 553-563.

Norris, F. H., Perilla, J. L., Riad, J. K., Kaniasty, K., & Lavizzo, E. A. (1999). Stability and change in stress, resources, and psychological distress following natural disaster: findings from Hurricane Andrew. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping 12*(1), 363-396.

Norris, F. H., Weisshaar, D. L., Conrad, M. L., Diaz, E. M., Murphy, A. D., & Ibanez, G. E. (2001). A qualitative analysis of posttraumatic stress among Mexican victims of disaster. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 14*(4), 741-756.

Oliver-Smith, A. (1996). Anthropological research on hazards and disasters. *Annual Reviews of Anthropology, 25*, 202-328.

Open University. (1993). *Principles of Social and Educational Research*. Milton Keyes: Open University.

Parker, G. (1977). Cyclone Tracy and Darwin evacuees: On the restoration of the species. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 130*, 548-555.

Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. London: Sage.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual review of psychology, 49*, 65-85.

Phillips, B. (2002). Qualitative methods and disaster research. In R. A. Stallings (Ed.), *Methods of disaster research* (pp. 194-211).

Powell, J. A., Jeffries, H. K., Newhart, D. W., & Stiens, E. (2006). Towards A Transformative View Of Race. The Crisis and Opportunity of Katrina. In C. Hartman & G. D. Squires (Eds.), *There is no such thing as a natural disaster. Race, class, and Hurricane Katrina.* (pp. 59-84). London: Routledge.

Powers, M. P. (2006). A Matter Of Choice. Historical Lessons For Disaster Recovery. In C. Hartman & G. D. Squires (Eds.), *There is no such thing as a natural disaster. Race, class, and Hurricane Katrina* (pp. 13-36). London: Routledge.

Quarantelli, E. L. (1998). What is a disaster? In E. L. Quarantelli (Ed.), *What is a disaster? Perspective on the question.* (pp. 285-304). London: Routledge.

Ramphele, M. (1993). *A bed called home. Life in the migrant labour hostels of Cape Town.* Cape Town: David Phillip.

Raphael, B., Lundin, T., & Weisaeth, L. (1989). A research method for the study of psychological and psychiatric aspects of disaster. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 80*(353), 1-75.

Ratele, K. (2005). The interior life of Mtutu: Psychological fact or fiction? *South African Journal of Psychology, 35*(3), 555-574.

Rocco, T. S., Spangler, S., & Boggs, D. L. (1998). Methodological considerations for comparing literacy, historical and living adults as data sources. *Educational-Gerontology, 24*(6), 567-583.

Salzer, M., & Bickman, L. (1999). The short-and long-term psychological impact of disasters: Implications for mental health intervention and policy. In R. Gist & B. Lubin (Eds.), *Response to disaster: Psychological, community, and ecological approaches.* (pp. 63-82). Philadelphia: Brunner/Maze.

Schurr, P. P., Friedman, M. J., & Rosenberg, S. D. (1993). Preliminary MMPI scores as predictors of combat-related PTSD symptoms. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 150*, 479-483.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1975). *Helplessness.* San Francisco: Freeman.

Selye, H. (1956). *The stress of life.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Shalev, A., Schreiber, S., & Galai, T. (1993). Early psychological responses to traumatic injury. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 6*, 441-450.

Shore, J. H., Tatum, E. L., & Vollmer, W. M. (1986). Psychiatric reactions to disaster: The Mount Helens experience. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 143*, 590-595.

Sibley, D. (1992). Outsiders in society and space. In K. Anderson & F. Gale (Eds.), *Inventing places: Studies in cultural geography* (pp. 107-122). Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Silverman, D. (2007). *Doing qualitativev research.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Smit, R. (2001). The impact of labor migration on African families in South Africa: Yesterday and today. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 32*(4), 533-548.

South African Government. (2007). **http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm** [Electronic Version]. Retrieved July 2007.

Spielberger, C. D. (1966). *Anxiety and behavior.* New York: Academic Press.

Stallings, R. A. (2002). Methods of Disaster Research: Unique or not? In R. A. Stallings (Ed.), *Methods of Disaster Researh* (pp. 21-46). California: International Research Committee on Disasters.

The Sphere Project. (2007). **http://sphereproject.org/** [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 19 September 2007.

Tredoux, C., Dixon, J., Underwood, S., & Finchilescu, G. (2005). Preserving spatial and temporal dimensions in observational data of segregation. *The South African Journal of Psychology, 35*(3), 412-432.

Ukuvuka Operation Fire Stop. (2007). **http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/country/za/za_20.htm** [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 16 May 2006.

United Nations. (2007). **http://www.undp.org/** [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 6 November 2006

Wallace, R., Fullilove, M. T., & Wallace, D. (1992). *Family systems and de-urbanization: Implications for substance abuse.* (Vol. 2nd Edition). Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.

Wandersman, A., Imm, P., Chinman, M., & Kaftarian, S. (2000). Getting to outcomes: a results-based approach to accountability. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 23*(2000), 389-395.

World Health Organisation. (2000). *Disasters and Mental Health: Managing the psychosocial consequences of disasters. Training modules (field test version)*. Geneva.

Wright, K. M., & Bartone, P. T. (1994). Community responses to disaster: The Gander plane crash. In R. J. Ursano, B. G. McCaughey & C. S. Fullerton (Eds.), *Individual and community responses to trauma and disaster: The structure of human chaos* (pp. 267-284). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yehuda, R., & McFarlane, A. H. (1995). Conflict between current knowledge about posttraumatic stress disorder and its original conceptual basis. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 152*(12), 1705-1713.

Zaidi, L. Y., & Foy, D. W. (1994). Childhood abuse and combat-related PTSD. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 7*, 33-42.

ADDENDA

Addendum A: Map of South Africa[60]

---

[60] Copied from (African National Congress, 2007).

Addendum B: Briefing document read to respondents in isiXhosa

Dear Prospective Respondent

The Trauma Centre is a registered NPO working with survivors of violence and torture in the Western Cape. In partnership with the City of Cape Town, it is putting together a psychosocial strategy for Disaster Management in Cape Town.

The Trauma Centre is thus conducting a research study on the Joe Slovo shack fire that took place in the month of January 2005. Our main objective is to explore the personal perspectives of the survivors of the fire. We will conduct this study with the view of collating it to inform the strategy and, later on we will give feedback to the participants.

Your participation in this research will be much appreciated, and will be important in helping The Trauma Centre and the City of Cape Town to develop a strategy to deal with such incidents in the future. Please note that if you agree to participate in this study you will be interviewed by a Xhosa speaking counsellor for roughly one hour. The interview will be tape-recorded but any information that you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Yours Sincerely

Jackie Stewart and Wanga Zembe
Researchers

Addendum C: Interview format

1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender?
   o   Male
   o   Female

3. What is your present marital status?
   o   Never marries
   o   Married (including common law)
   o   Separated or divorced
   o   Widowed

4. What "race" are you?* (*This question is included for statistical purposes only, it does not imply an acceptance of political categories of identity).
   o   Black
   o   Coloured
   o   White
   o   Indian

5. What is your home language?
   o   English
   o   Afrikaans
   o   Xhosa
   o   Other

6. What is your highest educational qualification?
   o   No school qualification
   o   School certificate pass
   o   Matriculation exemption
   o   Trade certificate or diploma
   o   University degree or diploma

7. Are you from Langa Hostel or Joe Slovo?

8. Interview Guide:

   How did the 15th of January fire affect you and your family?

   - Describe the acute event
   - Coping in the aftermath
   - Examples; experience
   - Attribution
   - Losses
   - Mastery
   - Strengths/abilities of communities
   - Weaknesses and limitations of community
   - Sense of meaning
   - The gaps

Addendum D: Consent form

Wena Obekekileyo,

Siyi Trauma Center sizibandakanya no funo-lwazi ngamaxesha onke ukuze siqinisekise ukuba siyazanelisa iimfuno zabantu esibancedayo kangangoko sinakho. Ukuthatha inxaxheba kwakho kolu funo-lawzi kunokusincedisa ekubeni sibenolwazi olugcono malunga nendlela iintlekel ezibachaphazela ngayo abantu. Yaye kunokusincedisa kwimizamo yethu yokulwa nokusabela kwintlekele ezenzekayo kwesisi xeko sase Kapa.

Inkcukacha malunga negama lakho zizakugcinwa ziyimfihlelo.

Mna ……………………………………………….……………...…ndingathanda/ andingethandi ukuthata inxaxheba kolufuno lwazi

Name of Respondent: …………………………………….
Signature: …………………………………………………
Date:

Enkosi,

Addendum E: Interview 5[61]

I: Hello Tata

R: Hello

I: Just to introduce us again –I am Wanga Zembe and this is Jackie Stewart. We are from the Trauma Centre, a non-governmental organization that helps survivors of violence. I am not sure if X explained this to you but our interest in coming here is to find out how you the survivors of the 15 January fire experienced the incident and how you have been affected by it and how you are surviving now.

R: Hmmm.

I: We are hoping that the findings we get from this research will help to inform the way we, as an organization, respond to similar incidents in the future. Does any of this sound similar to what X told you?

R: Yes, she did say you would be coming to talk to us about the fire.

I: That's great then Tata. I would like us to start off with you indicating to me that you agree to talk to us by giving me permission to write your name and surname down on a piece of paper that states your consent.

R: Okay, my name is Y.

I: Oh Tata.

R: And the surname is Z.

---

[61] Blind respondent

I: Okay. Okay, Tata, I will begin now by asking you a few questions around your age, your marital status, your sex and so on, this will just help us in the end to be able to say we spoke to so many men and so many women, their ages were between such and such, so many were married and so many not.

R: Hmmm.

I: How old are you Tata?

R: I am 55 years old.

I: And you are male. Are you married Tata?

R: Yes, I am male and I am married but it's a customary marriage.

I: That's fine Tata we consider that to be a valid marriage as well. And you are Black. What is your mother tongue Tata?

R: Well, I am a Mfengu

I: Okay, here we don't have a category for that Tata so as a Mfengu do you consider yourself a Xhosa?

R: Yes[62]

I: Okay. And school Tata?

R: I left in standard 3 (Grade 5).

I: Okay. And are you from Joe Slovo or from Langa Hostel?

R: We are from the hostel[63]

---

[62] The Mfengu people are sub-clan of the wider Xhosa nation, but they have a different chief

I: Oh, and did you stay with your children in Langa?

R: Yes.

I: How many children do you have Tata?

R: We have 6 children

I: Wow! So how long have you been in Cape Town?

R: I arrived here in 1968.

I: Wow! And in Langa specifically, how long have you been staying there with your family?

R: I would say 25 years now.

I: Wow, that's a long time. So you have witnessed and experienced other fires before this one?

R: Well, we witnessed and experienced the 1996 15 December fire, which was a big fire where I lost my brother and 3 of his children.

I: Sjoe, that must have been a terrible fire!

R: It was, I lost 4 people in one day.

I: Yes, but you and your immediate family, you all survived it?

R: Yes, we survived it. It was a very big fire.

---

[63] **This refers to the area more than an actual Hostel building –the area where the hostels is generally referred to as Langa Hostels even though there are independent building structures and shacks around the area.**

I: I can imagine Tata. Was it in Joe Slovo or Langa?

R: It was in Langa.

I: Sjoe. So perhaps now we can start talking about the fire that took place on January 15, if you can just take me through it, starting from the day itself – where you were, what you saw, how you responded including your family's experience of it, right up to this moment.

R: On January 15 I was there at home. The fire started in the morning. The first sign for us when the taps suddenly went dry or were dripping and not releasing a lot of water. Soon after noting that we heard that there is a fire in Joe Slovo. We didn't think too much of this because we thought we were too far – being at Zone 23 in Langa – we thought the fire would never reach us so we didn't worry ourselves too much about it. Now I sell liquor at home so there are always people sitting and drinking at my house. So some of my customers would go out of the shebeen to observe what was happening. They kept coming back reporting that the fire was raging fiercely and that it was becoming very windy. As they kept on coming in and going out they reported that the fire trucks were unable to stop the fire because there was no water in the taps – it had been finished, and they were unable to access the points where the fire was raging the most. So we kept on listening out for updates on what was happening and then I began to hear people say that the fire had reached Langa and was in [Zone] 18, soon I heard that it was in 25 but people were still saying that it would never reach 26 because we were too far even from 25. But the wind was blowing hard and it took no time for it to get to 26, the funny thing is that according to the reports of people who were watching, the fire skipped 24 and got to 25, and then went to 26.

I: This was now the fire as it was spreading.

R: This was now the fire spreading. And you can imagine, I am blind so I am dependent on people telling me what is happening. Whilst one person was still saying the fire was too far to reach us at 26, I started smelling smoke right inside the house where I was sitting, so I was frantic trying to take some things with me, but as I would be trying to

195

decide on what to take people would reassure me that the fire was too far to reach my place. The other thing was that relatives from other streets in the area were coming in, in their numbers with their belongings and valuables asking me to keep them for them because they didn't believe that the fire would reach my place as well. So all those things were burnt up along with my shack. The worst thing was that I couldn't move out my own belongings because I was blocked by my relative's belongings and valuables – big items like TV, Hi-Fi systems and fridges.

I: My goodness! So you couldn't reach your own stuff?

R: They were blocking the way. In any case as smoke began to fill my house and I knew the fire had reached us, the police suddenly arrived at my place, they called for me and assisted me out of the house –they said that one of my neighbours had called them and told them that a blind man was in one of the shacks so that was how the police were able to come and get me.

I: That was good of your neighbour.

R: Yes, and actually when the police came I was at a point where I was wondering how on earth I would be able to get out with everyone running around. So the police took me to another house along with my children – that was at Zone 20 near the terminus far away.

I: So you were safely out of danger. Now you had not managed to save anything from the house?

R: Nothing, we had not managed to get anything out. When we got to the house at the terminus my children went back to check on the house and one of them came running back and said 'Tata our house is in ashes' – now, my house had been the biggest in that Zone 26 – from a distance you would never think it was a shack. I had lost everything – my fridges, my TVs – everything. No one could go back to that area because there were helicopters flying over the entire area trying to put out the fire – some of my neighbours and fellow community members who had also come to the terminus stopped me trying to make my way back and told me that it wouldn't make

sense for anyone to go back, much less a blind person like me, so they took me back to that house in Zone 20 and we sat there and waited. My wife said that we should go and sleep at her family's home in Khayelitsha, so we all slept in Khayelitsha that night. So on Sunday we came back to Langa to see how much damage had been done and salvage any building material like iron sheets that could be reused again. So we went back to Langa with my wife's sisters and we tried to salvage some building materials but everything else like my fridges and TV sets they were all ashes - one would have thought their original form had been cardboard! On Sunday we went back to Khayelitsha and then on Monday we went to Langa again – this was still very unreal to me – I kept expecting someone to tell me that it was all a joke, all a lie, that it had not really happened.

I: Yes.

R: So on Monday the tents were being put up and then we saw some activity near the tents, my wife said we must go and find out what was happening. We did and we found that blankets were being handed out to all the survivors – now I have a family of 8 altogether including my wife but we were given 6 blankets and no mattresses were provided for. We decided to go to my wife's uncle who stays in Settlers[64] whom we thought might be able to provide us with something to sleep on. The uncle gave us a plastic sheet that was made from hard material like a sail (tent) so that we could lay it down on the ground and sleep on top of it. So we went back to the tent and we slept in the tent from that Monday onwards. From that day onwards our lives were preoccupied with going up and down to different places to register for this and register for that.

I: Sjoe! And how were you feeling inside during this whole period?

R: My heart was like, I didn't know how I was feeling, I couldn't feel myself – I was in a daze. We were just going back and forth.

I: Being sent from place to place.

---

[64]A middle class part of Langa

R:	From place to place, we had to go to this one place for the kids' schooling arrangements, to this other place for something else. That's what we did everyday. And then after a couple of days an acquaintance I knew from Langa who had also been part of the fire came to me and told me that a friend of his had been given a bed by his employer and had given it to him, and he was choosing to give it to me. So I got that bed and I was able to sleep on a proper bed though it was one bed and I had to share it with my 6 children and wife.

I:	Sjoe, how do 8 people share a bed?

R:	A ¾ bed at that!

I:	Yes. So you're saying your friend just freely gave it to you for nothing?

R:	Yes, but it was only the base of the bed and he told me that I would have to find my own mattress. So we put a blanket on the base and I shared it with my wife and our twin toddlers, the rest of the children slept on the floor. So life went on, we were still being pulled in different directions. All this time I couldn't figure out what state my mind was in – I would just think of all the valuables I had that had all gone up in smoke, and I mean for a person like me who lives on government grant – how will I get those things back.

I:	Things that must have taken years to acquire.

R:	It had taken me a very long time to acquire them – I had just finished paying for the fridge, which had taken me 2 years to pay off, and it was no longer under guarantee because I had finished paying for it.

I:	They couldn't give you another one.

R:	They told me that they wouldn't be able to give me another one, but they could arrange for me to get another one on credit again. But I couldn't even take this option because I still didn't have a stable place to stay in, I still don't, so I cant just buy another fridge on

credit when I don't even know where I will be going next, I don't even have space to put that fridge in right now.

I: Indeed.

R: So I couldn't. So the schools opened when we were still in the tents so I had to make to sure that I made preparations for the kids' schooling – the four who are school-going.

I: Is it the older kids or the younger kids who are school-going?

R: Well, one is in Std 8, then two are in Std 7 and then the younger one in Std 3. So they went back to school and we stayed in the tents until the opportunity to move to this place came up. Even here it's not nice, its not easy, you can't put different families in one room and expect something different, we are different people with different backgrounds and different ways of being.

I: So your family of 8 stays with you in one room – you have to share your room with your children?

R: Yes, but its not only that, I have my family of 8 and then there are other families who are sharing the same room.

I: How many other families?

R: Well, there's one other couple and 3 single people.

I: And the others have children as well?

R: Well, the one couple has one child but fortunately the other 3 people don't have children. So I sleep with my children on bunks below and above me. I have never slept with my children in the same room, children are supposed to have a separate room to their parents.

I: Yes.

199

R: So we are not happy at all. Sharing a small space with other people whom you do not know is not nice nor easy. You will find that one of my children will, say accidentally break a cup or something, then you will hear one of the childless roommates making a comment about how undisciplined my children are – now I don't like that, it does not go down well at all.

I: Yes, Tata. So do you have any idea how long things are going to be this way, how long you're going to be here?

R: We have no idea. I don't know. Even the project manager who used to come here, he doesn't come anymore. So we have no one updating us on what is happening.

I: To live is such a state, of not knowing such important information concerning your life, must be so difficult to bear.

R: It is, it is. So we are living in such state here, we don't know anything. One easily comes to the conclusion that it would have been better if they had just left us there to build on the same sites – that's what we have always done in any case – we have always found a way to build for ourselves no matter what the quality of those shacks were.

I: Hmmm, so you are saying, Tata, that you think it would have been better if you had been allowed to go back and build your shacks on your sites rather than this process?

R: Yes, even though we were living in shacks but we were happy, and I am not saying that staying in a shack is good, it is not good that is why we agreed to come here, but then we thought that the process of building or finding us houses would not be take this long or be this complicated. We thought we would just be moved into small houses. But obviously this processes is longer than we expected it to be.

I: It's taking long.

R: I even think that Christmas might find us here still. I mean there are people who are still housed in the Langa halls; there are still people in (inaudible) who are also waiting to be given proper housing. Now those people are living in far worse conditions than we are here, I think our conditions are slightly better than theirs.

I: Why is that so, why do you say that?

R: Well, we have running water here, we have bathrooms and toilets, we have places to cook our food in, whereas there, there is none of that, they are just living in halls.

I: Oh, its halls that have not been converted for residential use?

R: Yes, its just halls, like halls where people used to hold meetings in. So if you consider that we are much better off. I am not saying this place is good; we are not living well at all here.

I: Yes, having to share with so many different people when you are used to having your own space.

R: When you are used to eating your own cheap food in your house with no one knowing about it.

I: Without being so exposed.

R: Yes.

I: Sjoe! So how are you able to live through all of this Tata, how do you keep going?

R: Well, I'm not sure really apart from the fact that I know I have to go on and just focus on being able to provide for my children to the best of my ability.

I: So your children keep you going?

R: They keep me going. They are my only concern.

I: Yes. And as far as how people treat each other, what is your opinion?

R: Well, people do not treat each other well. People have different habits and some have no regard or respect for others – for instance, we have a kitchen here where we cook our food and where we store some of our food in the refrigerators, now there are people here who sometimes lock up the kitchen and go away with the key

I: Is it regular practice to lock the kitchen, is it supposed to be locked?

R: Yes, it can be locked but then the key has to be placed in this office for instance where other people can be able to have access to it, now there are people here who think they are the Board of this place. Some of us keep quiet about this because we are not people of many words – we hate stirring up trouble. But we are well aware that the way we are being treated is not right, it is wrong, it is not fair. This is the reason why we are not happy.

I: Yes. And was there any difference in the way people treated each other in the beginning after the fire had just happened, during life in the tent and when you first arrived here?

R: You see the difference is that with each passing day people realize that they can get away with more misbehaviour.

I: So the longer people are here, the more they are able to take advantage of the situation and the less tolerant and considerate they are?

R: That's it.

I: How was it different in the beginning?

R: Well, everyone was still figuring their way around here, and no one knew how things were going to turn out. There was order then because we were still being looked after by the people who put us here. So now people are becoming freer and freer to do as

they wish. And the other thing is that we are not all from the same place in Langa here, some of us are from Joe Slovo and some from Langa Hostels.

I: Oh. And are the people here that you know from the area you were living in before the fire?

R: Yes, there are few, it's just that they don't stay in the same section as us, we are now in Section D and they are in other units.

I: Okay. Do you find that you visit each other?

R: No, not really we each keep to ourselves really.

I: And is this a pattern you have noticed with others in your room?

R: Yes, I actually do not think I have ever heard of anyone visiting the people in our room who came from the same place as them, say for instance who knew them from Joe Slovo.

I: And for you Tata, was the pattern any different when you were still in Langa?

R: It was very different, we visited each other a lot – you could easily spend a whole day in a neighbour's house. Here it seems to be different.

I: Yes, so a lot has changed. And how has been the functioning of your family been affected by all of this?

R: Our lives have changed as a family, we are not doing things the way we used to. At home we ran a small business selling different things – like liquor as I mentioned earlier – so we were able to provide for the needs of the children. Now here we just sit, we don't do anything because we are not allowed to sell anything because this place is owned by government, it's near a hospital so we have to observe certain rules. For instance we cannot sell liquor here – and selling liquor formed a big part of our income – we cannot do that here. Something as simple as giving them lunch money for

instance, which, on the face of it, does not seem like a lot of money because its only R3 a day per child, but if you calculate that over a month it adds up to around R200 a month – I haven't even mentioned groceries yet. All this has to come from my grant, whereas with my small business I didn't have to depend on my grant. So life has changed but somehow my children are still able to go to school.

I: in spite of everything.

R: In spite of everything. But life is really difficult here. The worst thing is not knowing – you know even if they had told us that we would only be out in 2008 it might not have mattered so much – at least we would know

I: Yes.

R: The thing about not knowing is that you are not able to plan your life properly, if we were told, if we knew for sure that we would be here for the next year or so, we would make our plans accordingly, even if that meant we would still be here for a long time but at least we would know. Not knowing is worse.

I: I can imagine, it must make it so much more difficult to bear being here, to come to terms with it because there is no known end to it

R: You can't plan, because just now, you are going to start settling here and make plans according to that and then suddenly you will be uprooted again and you will have to abandon everything and start again.

I: So it must feel like everything is just hanging?

R: Indeed, its just hanging

I: And you didn't anticipate this fire.

R: Not at all, not at all. It seemed to be so far, no one thought it would reach us. Had one known, one would have taken one's valuables and run to a safe place before the fire

reached our area. No one expected it to reach our area, everyone kept saying that it was too far to reach us – besides in the past Joe Slovo fires have never spread to the Zone (Langa).

I: Yes, and there have been many big fires before this one.

R: But none of them ever spread to the Zone, the fire before this one was quite big, it went as far as the robots, but it never reached us. I suppose what made things worse this time was the electric cables, which go from Langa to Joe Slovo and because of that spread the fire so quickly

I: Yes, yes.

R: So you had a situation of a fire that was spreading in 2 ways – the first way being the normal way in which a fire spreads, the second spreading through the cables

I: Sjoe!

R: People back home in the Eastern Cape could not believe it when they heard about this fire – it sounded like a something that came straight out of a story book. And the other thing is that this fire is known as the 'Joe Slovo fire', meantime it spread to us at the Zone – Zone 20, 23, 24, 26 were all affected.

I: And quite significantly as well.

R: It destroyed everything in those areas!

I: That's true, and indeed it is generally known as the 'Joe Slovo fire'.

R: Even in the News, that is how it is known.

I: Hmmm. It was a terrible thing that happened, a terrible thing indeed.

R: Yes.

I: Yes. Well, thank you very much for sharing all of that with me, I have gained a lot of information, a picture of how this has affected you. We will try and come by the end of this year just to verify this information and then we will come back once more maybe around February of next year just to report on the findings.

R: Oh, okay. No indeed we are not happy here; if we are honest with each other we can't say that we are happy. You see the biggest problem here is tribalism[65] – we come from different parts of the Eastern Cape so sometimes you are treated differently because you happen to come from a different area to that person.

I: Is that so? Can you give me examples?

R: For instance, there is a young man in my room who has a Hi-Fi and a TV. It's nothing for him to turn on both of these appliances at loudest volume, if we are talking now we would never hear each other.

I: From all the noise.

R: From all the noise, now he sees nothing wrong with this. In the early hours of the morning when everyone else is still asleep he will turn the music or TV on and leave them on whilst he sleeps, now I wonder to myself how he rationalises this.

I: Yes, what is he thinking about all the other people who are still sleeping.

R: Adult people! He has no respect, sometimes he will leave it on for the whole night and then when he wakes up say in the middle of the night and switches it off, and then switches it on again at around 4 when he wakes up and will only switch it off at 5:30am

---

[65] Comments by the interviewer and translator as how she, as Xhosa, understood what the respondent was saying: "In this instance this means different types of Xhosas according to different areas of the Eastern Cape, the biggest division being those who are from the former Transkei and those who are from the former Ciskei and the rest of the Eastern Cape – the homeland system successfully managed to divide Xhosas in this way".

when he leaves – that does not help me because I wake up at 5:30 to prepare the kids for school so by the time he switches it off I need to wake up anyway

I: It must be so difficult. Tell me, Tata, don't you have dormitory meetings in your room where you are able to talk about problems and grievances?

R: It's difficult to hold such meetings or to talk about such things in meetings because the talk around here is 'no one can tell me what to do here because I did not ask to be here, I came because of the fire and none of us here owns this place so no one can lay the rules', so in such instances it would be useless to address him because he has already made his view of the situation known to us. Sometimes he will place something in front of the door, let's say, and then he will say if anyone dares to move it they will see what he is made of. Now for me who is blind it is very difficult to make sure that I don't trip on that thing.

I: Hmmm. It must be so difficult for you to live under such conditions, to accept such conditions when you used to have your own home where you were able to determine what goes on.

R: Exactly.

I: Hmmm, so there isn't much tolerance and co-operation among the people?

R: There is no such thing. The young people are especially disrespectful – they are not like the young people of our time where if you were young you honoured an older person as your own father, as your own mother.

I: Yes. Sjoe. Thank you so much for all of that, you have given me a very good picture of what is going on here and of how you have been personally affected by the January fire.

R: Okay.

I: Your wife said that we could call her if we were finished with you so I am hoping that we can still talk to her today?

R: No, I am sure you will be able to talk to her; she has to come and fetch me as well so she will definitely speak to you. We have really suffered but I think I have suffered more than anyone else here, remember the disaster food we used to get for free?

I: Aha?

R: Well, we used to get food here provided to us by the disaster people, now each family was supposed to get a loaf of bread and 2 litres of maas[66], each family –now even if you are one person in your family you will still get the 2 litres and the loaf of bread, if you are 8 in your family like me you will still get the same.

I: My goodness! So 8 people have to share the same loaf of bread that one person shares?

R: Exactly, how does that happen, you tell me, how do 8 people share a loaf of bread whilst one person has the same loaf to himself? I complained about this a number of times but each time I was told that, that is how they measure family – its from one person on and they all have to get the same amount of food. I even went to X from Disaster to complain.

I: Good.

R: So he said to me 'no you can't be treated like a family of one, there's 8 of you, that's nonsense they must give you more' – now when we were still in the tents I used to get an entire 2 litres to myself, not for the whole family.

I: And the other family members?

---

[66] Cultured buttermilk.

R: The children would get a litre and half-a-loaf of bread each. So there was enough for everyone. Now here we have to share two litres of maas – try dividing that by 8.

I: Sjoe it's not much.

R: Its' not even a quarter of a cup, I cant even make a maas meal[67] out of that.

I: No you can't.

R: So I just had to live with that, the main problem lay with the people who were in charge of dishing out the food, they would keep the food for themselves and we would see them loading the buses with loads of mass and bread sending it to their families in Crossroads and other townships.

I: And no one did anything about this?

R: There was nothing that anyone could do. And complaining to the Disaster people didn't help because they would tell you to go back and tell the people dishing out the food that they should give you more food but when you get here the people in the kitchen tell you simply that they won't do that. And do you know that some of these food supplies were sent to the Eastern Cape to be sold?

I: Is that so?

R: Yes, people were making money out of this, selling bottles and bottles of maas in the Eastern Cape, they would deliver it by bus.

I: My goodness, so this was all during the time when the food was still being dished out?

R: Yes, so it was very good that they stopped dishing out the food, it was very good. Then we could all dig into our pockets and suffer together to make ends meet, rather than

---

[67] What others call African Salad –mixture of mealiemeal (grits or corn porridge) and cultured buttermilk.

the pain of knowing your rights and being unable to exercise or benefit from them instead having to watch them being abused by other people!

I: Yes, yes. It's quite an experience you have had here! Thank you so much for talking so freely and openly. We will now go and call your wife.

R: Okay. Thank you. We are really suffering here but what can we do, we must just survive.

Addendum F: COR-E (Conservation of Resources Theory Evaluation tool)

(Hobfoll, 1998)

Personal Transportation (car, truck, etc.)	Sense of humor	Adequate financial credit
Feeling that I am successful	Stable employment	Feeling independent
Time for adequate sleep	Intimacy with spouse or partner	Companionship
Good marriage	Adequate home furnishings	Financial assets (stocks, property, etc.)
Adequate clothing	Feeling that I have control over my life	Knowing where I am going with my life
Feeling valuable to others	Role as a leader	
Family stability	Ability to communicate well	Affection from others
Free time	Providing children's essentials	Financial stability
More clothing than I need*	Feeling that my life is peaceful	Feeling that my life has meaning/purpose
Sense of pride in myself	Acknowledgment of my accomplishments	Positive feeling about myself
Intimacy with one or more family members	Ability to organise tasks	People I can learn from
Time for work	Extras for children	Money for transportation
Feeling that I am accomplishing my goals	Sense of commitment	Help with tasks at work
Good relationship with my children	Intimacy with at least one friend	Medical insurance
Time with loved ones	Money for extras	Involvement with church, synagogue, etc.
Necessary tools for work	Self-discipline	Retirement security (financial)
Hope	Understanding from my employer/boss	Help with tasks at home
Children's health	Savings or emergency money	Loyalty of friends
Stamina/endurance	Motivation to get things done	Money for advancement or self-improvement (education, starting a business)
Necessary home appliances	Spouse/partner's health	
Feeling that my future success depends on me	Support from co-workers	
Positively challenging routine	Adequate income	Help with child care
Personal health	Feeling that I know who I am	Involvement in organizations with others who have similar interests
Housing that suits my needs	Advancement in education or job training	Financial help if needed
Sense of optimism		Health of family/close friends
Status/seniority at work		
Adequate food		
Larger home than I need*		

*Although luxury resources, groups repeatedly admitted investing more in these two luxury resources than other resources they deemed more important.