

DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF STRESS:
A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to understand the meaning of stress, and towards this end eleven individuals who claimed to have experienced the phenomenon during the six months prior to data collection were asked to describe their experience. These transcribed protocols were explicated in terms of a phenomenological praxis, and the emotional content of descriptions subjected to taxonomic analysis. In addition, a literature review for the purposes of tracing the development of contemporary stress models and related constructs was conducted. The latter critiqued current conceptualisations of stress, and attempted to highlight some important contributions.

Explication in terms of phenomenological praxis identified seven central features associated with lived stress, namely, lived stress as : the perception of personal cost; a sense of entrapment; persistent coping efforts; learned helplessness; embodiment; and, poor social relations. In addition, the unfolding nature of the experience suggested stress as a continuous process of adjustment to worldly demands, and furthermore, highlighted several variations of structure. The latter themes were used to develop a more inclusive model of lived stress as a dynamic and unfolding process.

Dialogue with existing literature was able to confirm the self-world split proposed by the transactional approach to stress as legitimate, and furthermore, confirmed the primacy of cognition for the stress phenomenon. In addition, the link between stress and personality factors, psychopathological conditions and related fields of enquiry (such as anxiety and burnout) as well as more positive modes of being (such as creativity) were discussed. Furthermore, lived stress was shown to involve a threat to the individual's continued existence, both with respect to his/her the desired self and its unfolding and his/her physicality, while the presence of mutual hostility between self and world was also noted.

The study concludes with reflection concerning the methodologies employed, and suggests that while qualitative and interpretive methods are both cumbersome and time consuming if rigorously applied, they do enrich the understanding of complex experiential phenomena. Finally, several suggestions are made for further research and refinement in the stress field, the most pertinent of which appears to be that of establishing the relationship between lived stress and the development of more debilitating psychopathological conditions.

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CONTENTS

TABLES.....	xiii
FIGURES.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: DISCOVERING THE INDICES OF WHAT?.....	1
1. DISCOVERING THE MEANING?.....	1
2. A QUALITATIVE APPROACH.....	3
3. DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF STRESS.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES.....	7
1. TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS.....	8
2. TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS.....	10
2.1 Choice of Subjects.....	11
2.2 Data Collection.....	12
2.2.1 Written Protocols.....	12
2.2.2 Verbal Interviews.....	13
2.3 Data Explication.....	14
2.3.1 Holistic Grasp of Data.....	15
2.3.2 Sense Units.....	15
2.3.3 Case Synopses.....	16
2.3.4 Second Order Sense Units.....	16
2.3.4.1 Contextual Relations.....	17
2.3.4.2 Structural Unfolding.....	18
2.3.4.3 Essential Meaning.....	19
2.3.5 Establishing Central Themes.....	19

2.3.6	Meaningful Synthesis.....	20
3.	FURTHER QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS.....	20
3.1	Stress and Emotion.....	21
3.1.1	Theoretical Views of Emotion.....	21
3.1.2	A Taxonomy of Emotional Terms.....	22
4.	METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS....	23
4.1	Towards Conceptual Synthesis.....	24
4.2	Towards Meaningful Synthesis.....	24
4.2.1	The Question of Original Experience.....	25
4.2.2	The Question of Generalisability.....	26
4.2.3	The Question of Interpretive Validity.....	26
4.3	Additional Qualitative Methods.....	27
4.4	The Question of Triangulation.....	28
	CHAPTER THREE: STRESS AS AN EVOLVING CONCEPT.....	29
1.	EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN STRESS RESEARCH.....	30
1.1	The Symptom Orientated Approach.....	31
1.1.1	Psychological Symptoms.....	32
1.1.2	Behavioural Symptoms.....	32
1.1.3	Physiological Symptoms.....	33
1.1.4	Stress and Stress Symptoms: A Critique.....	33
1.2	The Stimulus Orientated Approach.....	34
1.2.1	Stress and Stress Stimuli: A Critique.....	35
1.3	Simple Cause-Effect Models of Stress: A Critique....	37
2.	SUBJECT ORIENTATED APPROACHES.....	39
2.1	Cognitive Processes.....	40

2.1.1	Cognitive Appraisal.....	41
2.1.2	Factors Affecting Cognitive Appraisal.....	41
2.1.3	Stress and Cognitive Processes: A Critique.....	42
2.2	Coping Processes.....	44
2.2.1	Coping Resources.....	44
2.2.2	Coping Strategies.....	45
2.2.3	Coping Behaviours.....	46
2.2.4	Stress and Coping Processes: A Critique.....	46
2.3	Cybernetic Models of Stress: A Critique.....	48
2.3.1	The Model.....	48
2.3.2	Predictive Value.....	52
2.3.3	Situating the Components.....	52
3.	TRANSACTIONAL APPROACHES TO STRESS.....	54
3.1	The Model.....	55
3.1.1	The Concept 'Misfit'.....	57
3.1.2	The Concept 'Homeostasis.....	58
3.2	Transactional Approaches and Coping.....	58
3.3	Transactional Approaches and Symptoms.....	60
3.4	Critique of Transactional Models of Stress.....	60
4.	CONCLUSIONS.....	64
4.1	The Problem of Definition.....	64
4.2	The Problem of Prediction.....	66
4.3	The Problem of Stress-Related Constructs.....	68
	CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEMPORARY STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS.....	69
1.	PERSONALITY VARIABLES.....	70

1.1	The Type-A Behaviour Pattern.....	70
1.2	Personality Hardiness.....	73
1.3	Stress and Control.....	75
1.3.1	Locus of Control.....	76
2.	SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS.....	78
2.1	Social Support as a Generic Factor.....	79
2.2	Social Support as an Intervening Process.....	79
2.3	Social Support and Coping.....	80
2.4	Social Support and Related Constructs.....	81
2.4.1	Companionship.....	82
2.4.2	Social Competence.....	82
2.4.3	Social Interest.....	83
2.5	Conclusions Concerning Social Support.....	84
3.	STRESS AND COPING.....	84
3.1	The Classification of Options for Coping.....	85
3.1.1	Control Strategies.....	85
3.1.2	Escape Strategies.....	87
3.1.3	Symptom Management Strategies.....	87
3.2	The Problem of Classification.....	88
3.3	The Problem of Evaluation.....	90
3.4	Conclusions Concerning Coping.....	91
5.	CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS.....	92
5.1	Intervening Processes as Generic.....	92
5.2	Intervening Processes as Non-Unitary.....	93
5.3	Intervening Processes as Interactive.....	95
5.4	The Problem of Context and Meaning.....	96

6. CONCLUSIONS.....	98
CHAPTER FIVE: TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS.....	100
1. THE COGNITIVE CONTRIBUTION.....	101
2. THE COPING PROCESSES CONTRIBUTION.....	101
3. THE TRANSACTIONAL CONTRIBUTION.....	103
4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS.....	104
5. A TENTATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF STRESS.....	105
5.1 The Model.....	106
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	110
CHAPTER SIX: TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS - RESULTS.....	112
1. INTRODUCING SUBJECT 1.....	113
1.1 Written Protocol.....	113
1.2 Transcribed Interview.....	115
1.3 Sense Units.....	121
1.4 Case Synopsis.....	126
2. SECOND ORDER SENSE UNITS.....	129
2.1 Themes of Context.....	129
2.2 Themes of Structure.....	130
2.3 Themes of Essence.....	130
3. MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS.....	131
4. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.....	135
4.1 Contextual Relations.....	136
4.2 Structural Unfolding.....	137
4.3 Essential Meaning.....	138

CHAPTER SEVEN: TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS - DIALOGUE.....	140
1. LIVED STRESS AS THE PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL COST.....	141
1.1 Pressure to Meet Contextual Demands.....	141
1.2 Call to Abandon Personal Needs.....	143
1.3 Dialogue.....	144
2. LIVED STRESS AS A SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT.....	145
2.1 The Past as a Limitation.....	145
2.2 The Present as Uncomfortable.....	147
2.3 The Desired Future as Untenable.....	148
2.4 Dialogue.....	149
3. LIVED STRESS AS PERSISTENT COPING EFFORTS.....	150
3.1 Coping as Reflective Activity.....	150
3.2 Coping Efforts as Negotiation with the World.....	151
3.3 Coping Efforts as Movement Away from the World.....	152
3.4 Coping Efforts as Movement Against the World.....	153
3.5 Coping Efforts as Movement Away from the Self.....	154
3.6 Dialogue.....	156
4. LIVED STRESS AS LEARNED HELPLESSNESS.....	158
4.1 Challenge to the Desired Self.....	158
4.2 Loss of Faith in Coping Ability.....	160
4.3 Dialogue.....	161
5. LIVED STRESS AS EMBODIED.....	162
5.1 Medical Symptoms.....	162
5.2 Physiological Symptoms.....	163
5.3 Behavioural Symptoms.....	163

5.4	Sleep Disturbances.....	165
5.5	Dialogue.....	165
6.	LIVED STRESS AS POOR SOCIAL RELATIONS.....	166
6.1	Holding Others Responsible.....	166
6.2	Others as Hostile and Disapproving.....	167
6.3	Alienation and Distance from Others.....	168
6.4	Dialogue.....	170
7.	CONCLUSIONS.....	171
7.1	Lived Stress and the Nature of Threat.....	172
7.2	Lived Stress and the Classification of Coping Efforts.....	174
7.3	Lived Stress and the Role of Personality Factors.....	175
7.4	Lived Stress and the Role of Social Support.....	176
7.5	Lived Stress and Causal Models.....	177
CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS: A MODEL.....		178
1.	LIVED STRESS AS CONTINUOUS.....	179
2.	LIVED STRESS AS VARIATIONS OF STRUCTURE.....	181
3.	CONCLUSIONS.....	185
CHAPTER NINE: TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL TERMS.....		188
1.	THE TAXONOMY AS APPLIED TO LIVED STRESS.....	188
1.1	Lived Stress as a Series of Unpleasant Emotions.....	190
1.1.1	Passive Subject.....	191
1.1.2	Threatened Subject.....	192
1.1.3	Active Subject.....	192

1.2 Positive Emotional Terms.....193
 1.3 Physical and Cognitive Arousal.....194
 2. CONTRIBUTIONS.....195

CHAPTER TEN: MEANINGFUL CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS -

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....197
 1. STRESS AND THE SELF-WORLD SPLIT.....198
 2. STRESS AND THE PRIMACY OF COGNITION.....199
 3. STRESS AND PERSONALITY FACTORS.....200
 4. STRESS AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY.....201
 5. STRESS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT.....203
 6. STRESS AND RELATED FIELDS OF ENQUIRY.....203
 6.1 Anxiety as the Snapshot.....204
 6.2 Stress as the Movie.....205
 6.3 Burnout as the Oscar Award.....206
 7. STRESS AND MORE POSITIVE MODES OF BEING.....207
 8. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION.....208

NOTES.....211

APPENDIX 1: Choice of Subjects According to Criteria

Listed by Stones (1979).....213

APPENDIX 2: Categories of Stress-Related Stimuli.....216

APPENDIX 3: Case Synopses: Subject 2 to 11.....225

REFERENCES.....252

TABLES

1. Mother-Tongue of Subjects.....	250
2. Place of Interview.....	250
3. Knowledge of Psychological Theory.....	250
4. Age of Subjects.....	251
5. Biological Sex.....	251
6. Nature of Employment Organisation.....	251
7. Educational Qualifications.....	251
8. Emotional Terms Indicating a Passive Subject Associated with Lived Stress.....	191
9. Emotional Terms Indicating a Threatened Subject Associated with Lived Stress.....	193
10. Emotional Terms Indicating an Active Subject Associated with Lived Stress.....	193
11. Positive Emotional Terms Associated with Lived Stress.....	194
12. Physical and Cognitive States Associated with Lived Stress.....	195

FIGURES

1. Simple Cause-Effect Model of Stress.....	38
2. A Cybernetic Model of Stress Incorporating Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Processes.....	50
3. Components of the Transactional Model of Stress, as adapted from Cox & Mackay (1981).....	56
4. Transactional Models' Contribution to Cybernetic Models of Stress that Incorporate Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Processes.....	63
5. A Tentative Psychological Model of Stress Illustrating the Components and their Logical Relationships as per Conceptual Synthesis of the Literature Review.....	107
6. Lived Stress as an Unfolding Process.....	184
7. Storm and Storm's (1987) Taxonomy of Emotional Terms Applied to the Experience of Stress.....	190

CHAPTER ONE

DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF WHAT?

"(I)f we are to really understand stress diseases, then we must first understand what stress, as normal day to day strain and exertion in the realm of Dasein, actually means' (Boss, 1979:207).

The easiest way to introduce a thesis of this nature is to describe what it intends to do, or more precisely, explore the meaning of its title: 'Discovering the Meaning of Stress: A Qualitative Approach'.

1. DISCOVERING THE MEANING?

The primary objective of the present investigation is to answer the question: what is stress? Or, more specifically, attempt to understand what people mean when they stand around a coffee machine at ten in the morning and claim to be 'feeling stressed'.

The nature of the question above, which pertains to the meaning or quality of a human experience, rather than the degree to which this quality (stress) is or is not present to the person, implies that traditional quantitative methods of investigation are inappropriate. More specifically, such methods insist that the component parts (variables) of a phenomenon be defined in order to facilitate their unambiguous measurement. Furthermore, these methods insist that variables be located within a cause-effect model (as independent, dependent and intervening variables) so that the relationship between variables may be established (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). Quantitative methods, therefore, involve a priori conceptualisation and in this sense tend to impose, rather than reveal, meaning.

The present question from the outset, however, assumes that the subjective or lived meaning of stress still requires elucidation. As such, it presents an exercise in meaningful thinking: it attempts to reveal the unveiled vivid relations (Koch, 1969) of lived stress prior to theoretical abstraction, definition and measurement. In this sense, the investigation presents an act of discovery: a first scientific step that attempts to ensure a rigorous starting point for further research (Giorgi, 1975)

2. A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The emphasis on meaning with respect to the present research task implies that descriptive or qualitative methods be employed, since the approach and method a researcher uses is always dependent upon the question he or she asks before starting the scientific enterprise (De Koning, 1979).

Qualitative methods, however, are not without their own problems. Firstly, the label 'qualitative methods' has no precise meaning in any of the social sciences. At best, says Van Maanen (1983:9) "(i)t is ... an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world." Secondly, few researchers who use descriptive and interpretive methods of investigation have published their methodological reflections. Unlike quantitative methods, therefore, there appear to be few set guidelines for either conducting or assessing the soundness of a given qualitative technique (Van Maanen, 1983). Consequently, the development and application of the methods used in this investigation present a creative act of discovery, where discovery is defined as a mixture of instinct and method (Husserl, 1970).

Because the use of any one method on its own is insufficient (Baumeister & Scher, 1987) and limiting (Beshai, 1975), and because research constitutes a cautious inquiry involving a critical and exhaustive investigation of its subject matter (Stones, 1986), the present investigation sets out to reveal the meaning of stress using three primary methods: a literature review directed towards conceptual synthesis; a phenomenological and descriptive method directed towards meaningful synthesis; and, a taxonomic analysis of the emotional terms used to describe lived stress. As such, the investigation presents a triangulation of qualitative research methods, where triangulation is defined as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1978:291). Furthermore, the synthetic nature of the literature review suggested that it should be placed subsequent to the outline of the methodological procedures adopted (Chapter 2).

3. DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF STRESS

Of course, the question arises as to why offer an alternative method at all, if the heuristic value (Spring, 1986) and meaningfulness (Hinkle, cited in Depue & Monroe, 1986) of the stress concept is already under question.

Firstly, Bailey (1988) provides evidence to suggest that

managements are prepared to spend vast sums of money on stress prevention and management programmes, and claim benefits in thousands and millions of dollars. At the same time, stress is not always bad, in that medical research finds stress productive up to a point (Benson & Allen, 1980).

These latter observations have important implications for the legal profession. Sheridan (1987), for instance, reveals that stress claims under the United States workers' compensation system doubled between 1980 and 1983, and that psychological disorders have been identified as one of the ten leading work-related maladies in the United States of America (Kendall, 1987). Assessing whether such compensation claims are justified in view of the ambiguous definitions of stress (White, 1979), its constantly shifting meaning (Chandler & Shermis, 1985), and its relation to other equally ambiguous and vaguely defined fields of enquiry, such as anxiety (Pichot, 1971), burnout (Etzion, 1984; Garden, 1987) and fatigue (Esenberg, 1986), is thus a thorny problem. As such, attempting to discover the parameters and meaning of stress for human beings would be of some practical value.

Secondly, and perhaps more important, is that the best reason in science for considering new ways of looking at concepts is, according to Wispe (1986), that they will lead to new research or to more fruitful ways of looking at past research and ideas.

A rigorous, systematic and disciplined understanding of lived stress, as a subjective phenomenon, therefore, offers the opportunity for conceptual integration within the stress field, as well as ideas for future research and refinement.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

'(A)ny methodic principle is merely an attempt to comprehend the inexhaustable wealth of forms in which human life manifests itself' (Strasser, 1963:133).

Methodologies are neither appropriate nor inappropriate until applied to a specific research problem (Downey & Ireland, 1983). The question posed by the present investigation is one of quality, rather than quantity: it seeks to understand the experiential world of the stressed individual, rather than measure the degree to which that individual is, or is not, stressed.

At the same time, it is not the intention of this research to reinvent the wheel. Thus, while phenomenological purists would argue that a conceptual overview of the stress field presents problems with respect to the bracketing of preconceptions, the author contends that the aim of bracketing

preconceptions is not so much that of ignoring what one already knows on a conceptual and theoretical level, but that of being aware of the limitations that these a priori conceptualisations present for interpreting the data.

A logical place to start in any research venture, therefore, be the investigation of a qualitative or quantitative nature, is by reviewing previous research in the area.

1. TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

There are several problems associated with attempting to understand stress by means of literature review, not least of which, according to Zales (1985), has been its growth in popularity both publically and professionally (1). To conduct a traditional research review, characterised by the separate description of related studies and the intuitive integration of their results would thus prove futile, if not impossible. As H. Cooper (1983:835) remarks, "when dozens and hundreds of studies are involved,... the narrative description of them is inane...(and) the intuitive synthesis...untrustworthy". Instead, as Cooper (1983) suggests, a meta-analysis, or critical synthesis of conceptual and methodological issues within the stress field, will be attempted.

Towards this end, the literature review aims to achieve two

primary objectives: it traces the evolution of the stress model from its inception to the present day (Chapter 3); and, explores the contemporary status of some more popular stress-related constructs (Chapter 4). Since the primary goal of the literature review is that of comprehension, or a synthesis of the parts into the whole rather than explanation, or the analysis of the whole into its parts (Hollnagel, 1978), Chapter 5 attempts to bring the meanings implicit in the foregoing chapters together, and in so doing, attempts to achieve some measure of conceptual synthesis within the field. In this sense, the literature review can itself be understood as a qualitative method: it attempts to describe, translate and interpret the conceptual development of the concept and its related constructs in a meaningful way.

While stress is recognised as a subjective experience having phenomenological components (Moerdyk, 1983; Hetherington, cited in Garbarino, 1985), and furthermore, as a slippery opponent which resists clear-cut traditional approaches (Sheridan, 1987), there appear to be relatively few stress investigations of a phenomenological nature. Indeed, most research within the stress field makes use of measurement orientated natural scientific methods.

The latter criticism, primarily a methodological one, implies the need for an alternative method, one that would enable the

investigator to access the subjective nature of lived stress, and interrogate it. A phenomenological approach offers such an opportunity.

2. TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS

The approach of phenomenology is characterised by an attitude of openness for whatever is significant for a proper understanding of human phenomena (Giorgi, 1970a), and seeks to reawaken, thematize and eidetically understand the phenomena of everyday life as they are actually lived and experienced (Fischer, 1974). As such, it is concerned with how we are aware of the world, and the manner in which we discover meaning in the world (Arcaya, 1979). A phenomenological approach is, therefore, well suited to the question being addressed, since it offers a systematic study of stress as it is actually lived.

While the phenomenological approach may be a valid one in terms of this investigation, primarily because it is true to its datum (Callanan, 1979), it can hardly be termed precise when translated into method. Indeed, Giorgi (1970b) wrote that even those researchers who understand the phenomenological approach have experienced difficulty translating it into praxis in a systematic and sustained way.

The method used in this investigation, developed in conjunction

with the work of various phenomenological researchers (Fischer, 1974; De Koning, 1979; Fischer and Wertz, 1979; Stones, 1979; 1986) who have attempted to clarify their praxis more precisely is explored below, since as Giorgi (1986:9) observes "...until the criteria for descriptive work get specified, we must present our criteria with our research."

2.1 Choice of Subjects

Stones (1979) stipulates a variety of conditions and criteria that need to be met when choosing people to participate in a phenomenological investigation. Due to the limitations of space, problems encountered in fulfilling these conditions, as well as the steps taken to overcome these problems, are discussed in detail in Appendix 1. It is sufficient to note here, however, that as far as possible volunteers were interviewed in a language (Table 1) and place (Table 2) of their choice. Furthermore, the richness of these individual descriptions was witness to the degree of rapport achieved.

A possible limitation noted was subjects' formal (training) and informal (therapy) knowledge of psychological theory (Table 3). Explication, however, revealed no meaningful differences between subjects in terms of the amount of psychological jargon present, or in the quality or richness of the information provided.

2.2 Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases. Prospective subjects were initially asked to provide a written description of their experience. Thereafter, a verbal interview was conducted with each subject, since subjects are generally better able to articulate their lived experience in verbal, rather than written, descriptions (Stones, 1979; 1986). Each of these phases of data collection is discussed below.

2.2.1 Written Protocols

A fundamental requirement of phenomenological research is that the experience being investigated be present to the consciousness of the individual taking part in the study (Giorgi, 1975; Arcaya, 1979). In order to ensure that this requirement was met, prospective subjects were asked to indicate whether, during the past six months, they had experienced stress.

Subjects who answered in the affirmative were then asked to: 'Please describe a specific experience of being stressed as fully and as accurately as possible.' The question was broadly phrased in order to prevent unnecessary bias in description, and emphasis was placed on the nature of the task as descriptive and personal.

An initial pilot study suggested that subjects had difficulty knowing what 'describe' meant. Consequently, two original descriptions, one of boredom and the other of creativity, were included. Subjects were asked to refer to these as examples of a description, should they experience difficulty completing the task.

The two examples chosen conformed to the following criteria. Firstly, they were both original descriptions of good quality extracted from a previous phenomenological investigation by the author (Crowley, 1983). Secondly, they were of unequal length. Thirdly, one was a negative experience and the other a positive experience. As such, subjects were given no indication of how long their written protocol should be, or whether they were expected to view stress as a positive or negative phenomenon.

Personal data, comprising selected biographics (such as age, education and occupation), were also collected. In addition, subjects were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a recorded interview on the basis of the written description.

2.2.2 Verbal Interviews

Written protocols were subjected to the initial phase of scientific explication: that of establishing meaning or sense units. As such, clarificatory questions that could be construed

as leading were avoided.

Interviews were open-ended, and the subject him or herself generally determined its duration and direction. Redirection was necessary only in instances where the subject became overly reflective, or intellectualised, about the experience. This allowed greater flexibility than would have been possible in a structured interview, and facilitated greater understanding of the subjects' experiential world.

Verbal interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then subjected to the scientific phase of explication.

2.3 Data Explication

All subjects who expressed a willingness to describe their experience of stress in a recorded interview based on their original written protocols were included in the study. Of the 20 subjects approached initially, 13 returned the written protocol by the given deadline, and of these, two preferred to forgo further involvement. As such, eleven descriptions were fully explicated.

Explication involved six mutually interdependent and overlapping stages, each of which presented a more precise attempt to reveal the lived meaning of stress. These stages of

explication are outlined in some detail below, since as Shipman (1973) observes, interpretative methods require more, not less, emphasis on the methods used due to their being no established traditional way of organising and reporting descriptive or qualitative research.

2.3.1 Holistic Grasp of Data

Each interview was transcribed and read repeatedly until a holistic grasp of the subject's experience of stress was achieved. Initially, preconceptions and judgements were bracketed, in order to remain faithful to the experience as it revealed itself.

2.3.2 Sense Units

The second stage was more reflective and exacting. The original data were transformed into sense units, each sense unit conveying a particular meaning. These were expressed in reduced form as concisely and as accurately as possible, and wherever possible, in the subject's own linguistic style. As such, the data were allowed to speak for itself.

At this stage of explication, few sense units were eliminated on the grounds of either repetition or irrelevancy. More specifically, the unfolding scenes evident in the holistic

understanding of each subject's experience suggested that stress be viewed as a cyclical, rather than linear, process. As such, initial elimination on the grounds of repetition was regarded as premature, and only those sense units that were obviously irrelevant were eliminated.

2.3.3 Case Synopses

Having listed the sense units, a condensed summary of each original description was written. This expressed the essence of each subject's lived experience. At this point in the investigation subjects were asked to review their descriptions in order to ensure some measure of intersubjective validity. No significant changes resulted from this exercise.

2.3.4 Second Order Sense Units

Second order sense units were the product of repeating steps one and two on case synopses. At this stage of explication it became clear that:

- a) different subjects located or focused their description of being stressed in different contexts;
- b) being stressed appeared as a series of scenes revealed over a period of time for each subject; and,
- c) being stressed was characterised by several consistent views or perspectives of the world.

While no study can serve all purposes (Giorgi, 1970a), the lived meaning of stress was more adequately accessed by explicating the data in terms of all three emphases. All three sets of second order sense units were thus listed, numbered and checked against the original data for each subject, in order to ensure that these accurately reflected the original data. The principles governing the extraction of meaning for each analytic emphasis are discussed below.

2.3.4.1 Contextual Relations

While Stones (1979) suggests that investigators use a variety of subjects in order to increase the validity of their general description (since the possibility of finding underlying themes or constants is thereby greatly increased), using a variety of subjects also tended to complicate the explication.

More specifically, subjects appeared to locate or focus their personal experience of stress in different areas of their existence. For instance, some subjects situated their experience in only one area of their existence, while others suggested 'feedback loops' between the various contexts in which they were engaged, or described a more pervasive attitude that affected their engagement in several contexts. Moreover, subjects' movement from one focal context to another could frequently be understood as an attempt to resolve stress in an

initial context.

At the same time, subjects did not describe isolated stimuli pertaining to these contexts, but interpreted the meaning of these stimuli with reference to their engagement within that context. As such, the relational nature of the context was emphasized. This confirmed Spignesi's (1981) observation that people interpret the meaning of stimuli with reference to the larger spatial, temporal and social contexts in which they are located.

2.3.4.2 Structural Unfolding

Phenomenological psychologists appear to differ in terms of what they mean, precisely, by the structure of an experience as opposed to its essence. Giorgi (1970a & b; 1975), for instance, lays great emphasis on the achievement of a general structure. As Edwards (1989a) remarks, however, Giorgi's understanding of structure is problematic in that it is a static metaphor, whereas most complex human experiences, including stress, occur as processes over time.

Fischer (1974) and De Koning (1979), on the other hand, imply structure as a chronological series of interrelated scenes which reveal something of what subjects bring to an experience, how they move through that experience, and how that experience

comes to an end, if at all. This understanding of structure accommodates the dynamic nature of lived stress, and as such, was regarded as a more appropriate focus for coming to terms with the question: 'how is stress experienced?'

2.3.4.3 Essential Meaning

Being stressed was also characterised by more pervasive and consistent views or perspectives of the world. Thus while Arcaya (1979) implies the essential organisation of an experience as its structure, the ontological or universal dimensions of all human experience identified by him are viewed as the essence of being stressed for the purposes of this investigation. The explication of essence, therefore, attempts to address the question: 'what was revealed to subjects about their world during lived stress?'

2.3.5 Establishing Central Themes

Phenomenological explication in terms of each analytic emphasis, i.e. context, structure and essence, revealed that the categories extracted by means of one emphasis confirmed, complimented and even repeated those categories extracted by means of alternative analytic emphases. Thus, while useful as a research tool for understanding complex descriptive data, and for ensuring the data as fully explicated, this feature

reiterated the view that context, structure and essence exist in dialogue with one another (Giorgi, 1986), and furthermore, that they cannot be realistically divorced except for the purposes of analysis.

Consequently, categories with similar meaning across and within each analytic emphasis were gathered into clusters. These were subjected to a final stage of analysis in which the central themes present in each cluster were identified, listed and discussed (Chapters 7 and 8).

2.3.6 Meaningful Synthesis

Using the central themes identified an extended description, or meaningful synthesis, of lived stress was written (Chapter 6). This provides a general and condensed summary of the meaning of lived stress.

3. FURTHER QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Lived stress was characterised by a wide variety of more and less intense and unpleasant emotional states. The number and range of emotional terms identified suggested that further qualitative analysis would be required if the meaning of lived stress was to be fully explicated.

3.1 Stress and Emotion

Stress has frequently been associated with the presence of unpleasant or distressful emotional states (Suls & Wan, 1989; Aldwin, Levenson, Spiro III & Bosse, 1989; Kernis, Grannemann & Barclay, 1989), and an ongoing debate within stress research concerns whether objective (for instance, major life events) or subjective (for instance, emotion) measures are more appropriate as means for assessing the effects of stress on health outcomes (Aldwin, et al, 1989). At the same time, there appears to be no consistent idea of what emotion itself is (Hall & Cobey, 1976). Thus, while assessing the appropriacy of various theoretical perspectives of emotion and the status of emotion with respect to stress research does not constitute the major thrust of the present investigation, it was thought important to outline these theories very briefly.

3.1.1 Theoretical Views of Emotion

Various theories within psychology tend to view emotional states differently. The central theory, for instance, regards emotional experience as 'the irreducible experience of pleasure or pain of central origin' (Frijda, Kuipers & Ter Sche, 1989: 212), the peripheral theory as sensations coming from the bodily periphery, the skeletal muscles and the viscera, and the cognitive theory as nonspecific bodily sensations combined with

cognitions regarding their likely cause. Recent research, according to Frijda, et al (1989), has produced sizable support for the latter approach by demonstrating strong relations between emotions and cognitive appraisal structures.

Existentialist understandings (for instance Sartre, cited in Hall & Cobey, 1976) depict emotion as a transformation of the world, as a process, and furthermore, as consciousness of the world. In this sense, emotion is viewed as a relationship between the individual and his/her world, and contains and expresses 'the way we adjust the continual interplay between self and world' (Hall & Cobey, 1976:182).

3.1.2 A Taxonomy of Emotional Terms

In total, some 134 different emotional states were identified during the course of analysis. In order to ensure the data as manageable, and extract the themes implicit, these terms were subjected to a taxonomy developed by Storm & Storm (1987). While the latter innovation diverged somewhat from a pure phenomenological procedure it did not invalidate the latter, but rather served to emphasize that the methodological procedure adopted in any particular study is always developed in dialogue with the phenomenon or content being explored (Giorgi, 1970b).

Furthermore, Storm & Storm (1987) explored the semantic relations between emotional terms in English by focusing on the experience rather than language of emotion. As such the fundamental assumptions of their study were congruent with that of the present study, i.e. the taxonomy was primarily qualitative in nature.

The taxonomy includes a total of 525 emotional terms and Storm & Storm's (1987) analysis presents 61 groups of terms deemed psychologically distinct from other terms. These groups are subordinate to seven major categories. As such, the latter are associated with less specific meanings than are groups.

While the taxonomy proved useful for assessing interpretative validity, application to the descriptive content of subjects' protocols suggested several minor modifications as necessary. These modifications and the results of this exercise are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

4. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The methods outlined above, although precise, were flexibly employed. There was considerable overlap and repetition of stages in order to ensure that the investigator remained faithful to the experience as it appeared (Kruger, 1979) and the principles underlying the methods employed. In addition,

taxonomic analysis was applied so as to reduce range of emotional terms to more manageable proportions.

All methods have unique strengths and weaknesses (Smith, 1975). Furthermore, the triangulation of methods presents the danger of compounding these weaknesses, rather than compensating for them (Van Maanen, 1983). It would seem both pertinent and honest, therefore, to point these limitations out (as they pertain to the present inquiry), prior to exploring what they revealed.

4.1 Towards Conceptual Synthesis

The literature review confirmed that subjects were indeed describing stressful, rather than depressed or anxious, experiences. At the same time, however, it was limited in the sense that its conclusions could be no more valid than the evidence surveyed (Baumeister, 1987). In this sense, the review of contemporary stress-related models and constructs cannot pretend to be exhaustive, nor can the conceptual synthesis be claimed complete.

4.2 Towards Meaningful Synthesis

Phenomenological praxis as outlined above provides a qualitative method that is rigorous, methodical and systematic

in its nature and application. In this sense, it can be considered scientific (Stones, 1979; 1986). At the same time, however, several important questions need to be addressed. These concern the extent to which the data can be considered original and the degree to which the findings can be generalised.

4.2.1 The Question of Original Experience

Phenomenology, as an approach, recognises the person as situated at the centre of his or her world (Kruger, 1979) and that from this centre he or she perceives this world from a unique and individual perspective, or point of view. In this sense, subjects' accounts of their experience of stress were both incomplete and imperfect.

Firstly, each subject could only speak of the experience as it appeared, and then only in terms of the meanings that were particularly significant for him/her. In other words, the lived experience of stress is never fully grasped by the subject, even during the experience.

Furthermore, asking a subject to describe his/her experience of lived stress, while still being ethical, required the subject to make his/her experienced past present to the investigator (Kruger, 1979). Recreating the experience on a

descriptive level therefore implied the raw data as already twice selected - once by the subject's conscious awareness during the experience, and twice by the subject's ability and willingness to articulate this experience. The data explicated, therefore, can only be termed original in the sense that subjects' described their own personal and subjective experiences of stress.

4.2.2 The Question of Generalisability

It was evident that subjects differed in terms of age, educational qualifications, marital status, gender preference and size of employer organisation. For the purposes of generalisation, however, it is important to note that subjects were all 25 years or older (Table 4), that the sample contained fewer men than women (Table 5), and that most subjects held a professional post in a reasonably large and bureaucratic organisation (Tables 6 and 7). As such, the data collected reflect stress as experienced by reasonably well-educated and fairly affluent individuals.

4.2.3 The Question of Interpretative Validity

The aim of a phenomenological method is to remain true to the facts as they are happening (Van den Berg, 1972). This raised questions concerning objectivity, in terms of the author's

interpretation of the data.

Consultation with selected subjects with respect to case synopses, and broader consultation concerning the model developed on the basis of phenomenological explication provided some measure of intersubjective validity, and thus confirmed that the author had bracketed her preconceptions relatively successfully.

Furthermore, Subject 1 agreed to have her entire interview included verbatim. Explication of data up to and including Subject 1's case synopses is given in Chapter 6, and serves to demonstrate the systematic application of the method.

4.3 Additional Qualitative Methods

Phenomenological explication revealed the need for an additional qualitative method, i.e. taxonomic analysis, in order to ensure that the range of emotional terms was manageable. This was developed in conjunction with the subject matter, however, thus conforming to the phenomenological attitude adopted. Furthermore, the meanings explicated by means of this method served to confirm those meanings revealed by means of phenomenological explication.

4.4 The Question of Triangulation

Whereas attempts to achieve conceptual synthesis left the author drifting upon a sea of conceptual confusion, the more qualitative methods left her lost to the richness of each individual's story. Integration of the material was therefore exceedingly complex.

In terms of the research process itself, data was collected and explicated prior to serious attempts to integrate the literature. This sequence of events served to assist the bracketing of preconceptions, and suggested that explication informed the conceptual synthesis, rather than otherwise.

At the same time, the literature review provided some degree of focus for several categories of meaning, and furthermore, prevented the creation of new terms for concepts and understandings that already exist. In this sense, the methods adopted, and their triangulation, both informed and confirmed each other.

CHAPTER THREE

STRESS AS AN EVOLVING CONCEPT

"Unfortunately, as important as the concept stress is in the behavioural sciences, it has an indefinite meaning and symbolizes different things to different people." (Dodge & Martin, 1970:30)

Any formal body of knowledge develops within a particular historical context, and the concepts and models that come to constitute this knowledge base are subject to the same limitations as those of the dominant paradigm at the time.

Psychology was founded in about 1879 by Wundt (Giorgi, 1976), primarily upon the mechanistic assumptions of natural science (Biddiss, 1977). The initial adoption of the mechanistic model for psychology was not surprising. Firstly, the industrial revolution, and the invention of the machine, proved a useful analogy for attempts to predict and control the universe, and as Koch (1969) points out, the Victorian vision that dominated at the time was that of a totally orderly universe,

totally open to the methods of science, and a totally orderly science at that.

Secondly, the outstanding successes and insights gained in the natural sciences ensured its model, methods and criteria as a natural choice for a knowledge base still seeking scientific status. As such, the stipulation that psychology be adequate to science was taken more seriously than the commitment that it be adequate to the study of humankind (Koch, 1969). Initially, then, psychology was formulated in terms of that which was observable, and more important, measureable. Formal scientific inquiry into stress, as a body of knowledge within psychology, proved no exception.

The following chapter traces the development of various stress models, and the definitions implicit within these, from the mechanistic understanding out of which they evolved pre-World War II to the more sophisticated cognitive and transactional models developed post-World War II and during the eighties.

1. EARLY DEVELOPMENTS IN STRESS RESEARCH

There appears to be controversy with respect to who first borrowed the term 'stress' from physics and applied it to human beings. Hobfoll (1989) implies Walter Cannon is the

first modern researcher to use the analogy in 1932, whereas Selye (1971) claims to have coined the term as early as 1926, after realising that diverse medical diseases were characterised by a common syndrome, which he called the General Adaptation Syndrome, or GAS. More specifically, on the basis of his experiments with rats and their biochemical reactions and lesions, Selye (1971) described stress as a syndrome produced by various noxious agents to which the organism reacted with initial alarm, subsequent resistance and finally exhaustion.

Regardless of who claims ownership of the term, since it has long been a tenet of folk wisdom as well as causal observation that health problems frequently follow periods of emotional distress or upset (Selye, 1971), it would seem that stress, as a field of formal scientific enquiry, initially evolved out of a symptom orientated approach within the medical profession.

1.1 The Symptom Orientated Approach

In this approach stress is defined in terms of the presence of characteristic symptoms, and human beings are diagnosed as suffering from stress when they manifest all or some of these objectively verifiable outcomes. Symptoms may be categorised as psychological, behavioural and physical.

1.1.1 Psychological Symptoms

The various psychological symptoms identified almost exhaust the subject matter of psychology, and can be broadly summarized as disturbed affect, impaired cognitive functioning and degrees of identity distortion. Indeed, the list includes disturbances associated with a host of neurotic and/or psychotic conditions (Kendall, 1987). Furthermore, many of these disturbances constitute the focus of deeper psychological enquiry, for instance depression and learned helplessness.

1.1.2 Behavioural Symptoms

The various behavioural disorders associated with stress cover a broad range of human activity, most of which appear to be anti-social, self-defeating and/or self-destructive.

Research concerning wife abuse (Barling & Rosenbaum, 1986), for instance, links stress and aggression. In addition, Nimh (cited in Kisker, 1977) claims that stress-related suicide is the leading cause of death among college students in the United States of America, and the third most frequent cause of death in the 15 to 19 year old age group (Ross, cited in Kisker, 1977). Stress has also been associated with the intake of harmful and addictive substances, such as nicotine,

caffeine and alcohol (Baumeister & Scher, 1988; Istavan, 1986).

1.1.3 Physiological Symptoms

The extensive list of physical diseases linked to stress suggest that it manifests as a medical disturbance in almost any bodily organ and/or process, including immune system suppression (Kendall, 1987) (2).

The nature of these diseases emphasize that excessive stress kills. Coronary heart disease, for instance, accounts for some 41 per cent of all deaths in the 25 to 44 year age group (Cooper, 1983), and is the single most frequent cause of death among white South African men (Wyndham, 1984). Indeed, Johannesburg has earned the dubious honour of being called the coronary capital of the world (Van der Merwe, 1986).

1.1.4 Stress and Stress Symptoms: A Critique

The symptom orientated approach to stress can be criticised on a number of accounts. Firstly, and a fundamental problem, is the broad range of symptoms that have been identified. These emphasize that stress affects almost every aspect of a persons life (Esenberg, 1986), and most often in a detrimental fashion. While this may account for the

popularity of stress to a number of disciplines besides psychology, it has done little to establish clear parameters for the field. Indeed, in terms of this approach, stress is defined as the presence of any identifiable disturbance, disorder or disease.

Furthermore, as Hobfoll (1989) intimates, the symptom orientated approach to stress precludes the possibility of proactively identifying the cause or causes of stress. In other words, the 'noxious agents' are seldom clearly identified, and the researcher is forced to wait until the subject is already disturbed, disordered or diseased before making a diagnosis. Thus, while research based on this approach is useful, in that it treats and remediates subjects' symptoms, it is unable to suggest means for preventing the manifestation of further symptoms.

1.2 The Stimulus Orientated Approach

The stimulus orientated approach to stress, while less well articulated as a formal approach (Hobfoll, 1989), is a nonetheless prolific area of research. Here stress is defined in terms of contextual demands and constraints, rather than in terms of the individual's defects (Kisker, 1977). As such, the researcher attempts to identify the cause or causes of stress for human beings, and understands stress as the

stimulus or 'noxious agent' that allegedly leads to the disturbance, disorder or disease.

Perusal of the stress-related literature identified at least ten broad categories of stimuli. These are listed in Figure 1 (see p. 38) and are discussed in more detail in Appendix 2.

In addition, research concerning the role characteristics of various occupations led to more precise distinctions between various types of role demand. More specifically, role overload is described as feeling that one has too much to do in too little time; role conflict as feeling pulled apart by the contradictory demands of two or more roles; role burden as feeling responsible for one's job and subordinates (Baruch, Biener & Barnett, 1987); and, role ambiguity as feeling that one does not know where one stands in relation to other organisational roles (Benson & Allen, 1980). Less well documented are factors such as role underload, or skill underutilisation (Ganster, Marcelline & Mayes, 1986; Hobfoll, 1989).

1.2.1 Stress and Stress Stimuli: A Critique

While the stimulus orientated approach proves useful in terms of identifying various demands associated with particular contexts, it also proves problematic for defining stress.

Firstly, a vast range of stimuli, both within and across contexts, are identified. These are too broad and general to be of any practical use in defining stress, except as a demand for adaptation. Indeed, the approach appears to imply the very act of living as stressful.

The latter criticism challenges the very usefulness of the stress concept, since if, as Heiman (1985) comments, stress is used to explain everything it loses its meaning and becomes almost synonymous with modern life. This criticism has not gone unnoticed by investigators, and Weiner (cited in Zales, 1985) goes so far as to say that only catastrophies warrant investigation, and that milder events, such as unemployment and bereavement, do not justify high priority research. Other researchers have attempted to distinguish between chronic stress, such as daily hassles, and acute stress, or events outside the normal range of human experience.

Secondly, while these stimuli can be grouped into at least ten very broad categories, or contexts of human interaction, several of these categories appear to overlap, and any single subject may be vulnerable to the demands of more than one category of stimuli at any one time. As such, it is difficult to establish which particular set of demands are responsible for the symptoms identified. In addition, few studies deal

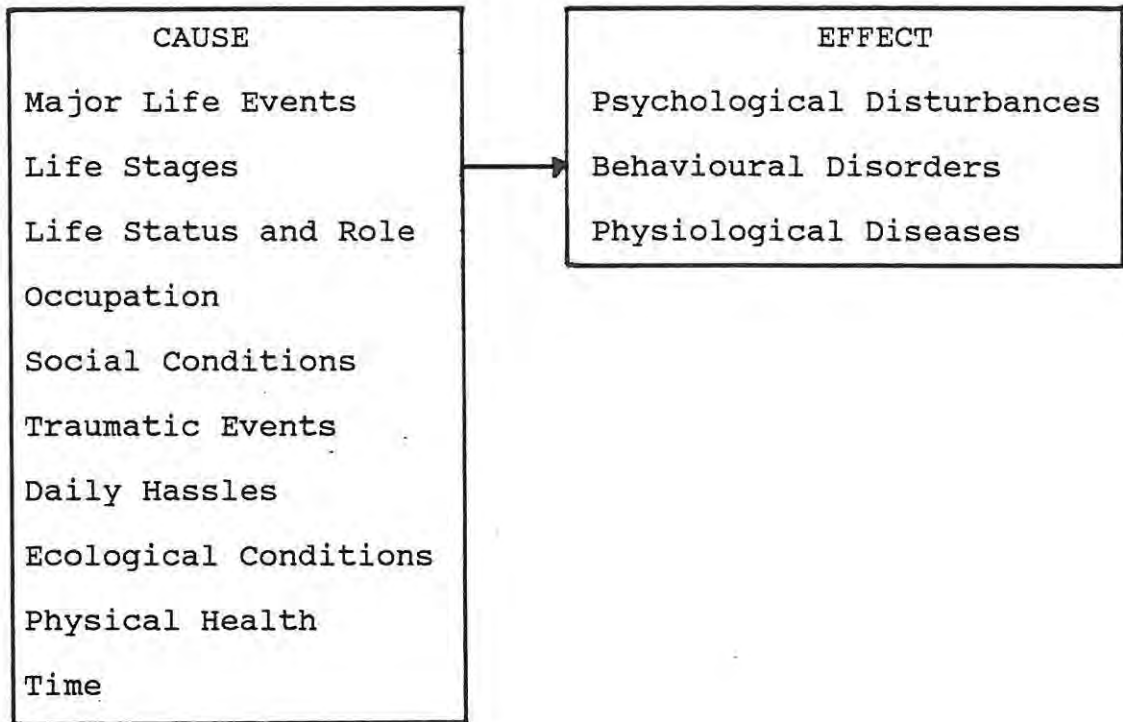
with the demands of these various contexts simultaneously (Israel, House, Schurman, Heany & Mero, 1989), despite the obvious practical difficulty of separating out the various areas of human existence.

1.3 Simple Cause-Effect Models of Stress: A Critique

The symptom and stimulus orientated approaches to stress were initially incorporated into a simple cause-effect model (Figure 1 below), and provided the initial means for explaining stress. More specifically, earlier models of stress contended that certain categories of stressful stimuli (or demands for adjustment) led to the manifestation of symptoms.

Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend (1974), however, question the direction of causality in this equation, and comment that one cannot safely make the aetiological inference from a correlation that life events cause illness since it is also possible that the correlation is due, at least in part, to the onset of illness causing life events, or to a common factor causing both. As such, the hypothesis that life events cause health problems and the converse hypothesis that persons with such problems are more likely to experience negative life events are equally probable (Zahn, 1981).

Figure 1: SIMPLE CAUSE-EFFECT MODEL OF STRESS



Perhaps the most damaging critique for the simple cause-effect model with respect to understanding stress, and one that has engendered a great deal of research as well as the development of more complex models, is that identical pressures and demands do not appear to constitute a source of stress for all individuals (Kisker, 1977).

In this sense, the model, which focuses upon that which is observable or at least objectively verifiable, is limited, since it tells us only that demands for adaptation lead to psychological disturbance, behavioural disorder and/or physical disease. Thus, while the causes and effects of

stress identified by means of this approach are important aspects of the stress phenomenon, not only can the causes often not be distinguished from the effects, but even where this is possible their relationship cannot be taken for granted.

2. SUBJECT ORIENTATED APPROACHES

The object orientated natural scientific approach dominated psychology until about the 1950's, when existentialism emerged from a purely philosophical school to become a slow but important influence in psychology (Giorgi, 1976). Initially, scholars like Rollo May, Carl Rogers, and George Kelly (Jancowitz, 1987) emphasized the individual as an active participant in his/her world. In short, the influence of existential philosophy on psychology was that of returning psychology to its original subject: the human being.

Congruent with this paradigm shift in the broader psychology, a major quantum leap occurred in stress research during the late 1950's, when Lazarus first conceptualised 'cognitive appraisal', or the view that a person must first evaluate the stimulus as a threat before it can be considered a stressor (Lazarus, 1971).

2.1 Cognitive Processes

On the basis of cognitive appraisal, Lazarus (1971) was able to distinguish between psychological, sociological and physiological stress. More specifically, psychological stress came to concern only those conditions and outcomes associated with perceived threats to the phenomenological and physical self (Speilberger, cited in Hobfoll, 1989).

The latter development went some way towards reinstating the subject of psychology, i.e. the human being, into existing stress models, since it implied that human beings evaluate the significance of cues at hand for themselves. If, says Lazarus (1968), these cues are taken to signify the imminence of harm or threat, then stress outcomes are produced, whereas if a subject believes he/she can readily overcome or reverse the danger, threat is minimal or absent, and stress outcomes unlikely.

Furthermore, recognition of the causal sequence from an objective event to a stress symptom as conditioned by a host of individual and contextual factors (Caspi, Bolger & Eckenrode, 1987) led to research into these factors (Chapter 4).

2.1.1 Cognitive Appraisal

Lazarus stipulated two types of appraisal. Primary appraisal concerns the initial perception of threat (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989) and thus recognises that what disturbs an individual most is not the event itself (i.e. the stimulus), but his or her judgement, interpretation and/or assessment of that event (Warga, 1988). In this sense, Lazarus drew attention to the subjective nature of stressors, and more specifically, the primacy of individual patterns of motivation and belief systems in the perception of events as threatening.

Secondary appraisal, on the other hand, concerns individual evaluation of the resources by which that threat may be addressed and reduced (Carver, et al, 1989). Lazarus thus also recognised that human beings respond, rather than react, to their world.

2.1.2 Factors Affecting Cognitive Appraisal

The concept of cognitive appraisal allowed researchers to explain wide differences in different group's and individual's ability to handle threatening stimuli (Kisker, 1977), and encouraged exploration of why a given stimulus was a stressor for one subject but not for another (Kagan, 1971).

This led to the inclusion of intervening processes, or processes that directly or indirectly affect the manifestation of stress symptoms within existing stress models. Two types of intervening process were postulated.

Moderating processes (moderators) are associated with primary appraisal, and ensure the individual as more or less susceptible to appraising particular demands and events as threatening (Allred & Smith, 1989). In this sense, moderators may also be termed 'stress prevention resources', since the reality being dealt with here is the propensity to perceive threat.

Mediating processes (mediators), on the other hand, are associated with secondary appraisal, or the process of bringing to mind a potential response to the perceived threat (Carver, et al, 1989). Mediators are thus associated with individual evaluation of coping resources, and may also be termed 'stress reduction resources', since the reality being dealt with here is the individual's perceived ability to cope with threat (Zahn, 1981).

2.1.3 Stress and Cognitive Processes: A Critique

The incorporation of cognitive appraisal into the stress equation was particularly useful. Firstly, Lazarus (1971)

emphasized that an individual appraises a situation as stressful and responds to this appraisal rather than the situation itself. As such, the role of the organism's perception of potentially harmful stimuli became the sine qua non of the stress process, and the intervening processes involving evaluation of the stimulus (moderators) and coping resources (mediators) a central concern (Krantz, 1986).

Furthermore, stress was recognised as a subjective phenomenon. At the same time, however, if a stimulus is only a stressor in the eye of the beholder, then the objective distinction between events and demands that do and do not pose a threat becomes difficult. In other words, while there may be broad agreement on what is stressful or threatening (Hobfoll, 1989) as a result of shared cultural, experiential (Lazarus, 1968) and personality factors, certain stimuli by virtue of their unique meaning to particular people prove problematic only to them (Scott & Howard, cited in Cox & Mackay, 1981).

While the approach attempts to address this limitation by predicting the perception of threat on the basis of intervening processes, i.e. by assuming that some life events, hassles and types of coping are a consequence of personality dispositions (Dohrenwend, Dohrenwend, Dodson & Shrout, 1984), personality is itself a theoretical construct.

In other words, it is inferred from behaviour, thought and action, rather than directly observed (Geiwitz, 1969). The danger here, according to Hobfoll (1989), is that without objective referents stress research is forced to return to the psychology of internal processes, and the distinction between stress responding and neurotic symptoms is lost.

To some extent, the focus on coping processes presents an attempt to ground the cognitive approach to stress on objective referents, i.e observable behaviour.

2.2 Coping Processes

The process of coping with stress is both dynamic (Roth & Cohen, 1986) and complex (Latack, 1986). Generally it refers to individual efforts to master conditions that tax or exceed adaptive resources (Monat & Lazarus, 1977).

The term coping, however, is also used to encompass diverse concepts (Israel, et al, 1989), in the sense that it comprises coping resources, strategies, and behaviour.

2.2.1 Coping Resources

Coping resources are relatively stable social resources which people may draw upon or mobilise in order to reduce threat

and are generally considered advantageous across problem situations. In this sense, they present an objective referent for cognitive models of stress i.e. the investigator may attempt to assess the degree of social support within a particular context, or the amount of information available to stressed individuals about the stressor.

2.2.2 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are associated with secondary appraisal, and involve the process of bringing to mind and evaluating the appropriateness of various coping resources identified by the individual. For instance, the stressed individual may consider mobilising the support of others, or at least talking to other people about his/her problem (social support) or assess the utility of gaining access to relevant information about the problem (cognitive control), or evaluate the merits of either resource for reducing perceived threat. The reality being dealt with here is thus the perceived availability of resources that would assist the individual's ability to cope with threat (Zahn, 1981), and furthermore, the nature and extent to which factors affecting appraisal affect the person's openness to possible coping resources.

2.2.3 Coping Behaviours

Coping behaviours (also termed responses), present specific actions that people take in order to deal with a threat or problem, i.e. they are the execution of responses to a specific situation (Israel, et al, 1989). These responses may be termed either adaptive, i.e. they reduce threat and tension, or maladaptive, i.e. they maintain or increase the perception of threat. Generally, symptoms are seen to be the product of repetitive maladaptive coping behaviours. The nature of these responses as either adaptive or maladaptive is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.2.4 Stress and Coping Processes: A Critique

In terms of the definitions above, the level of stress experienced, and the extent to which deleterious effects or outcomes, occur, depends on how and how well the person is able to cope with stressful situations (Latack, 1986). This definition implies that when threat is not addressed, or coped with successfully, tension persists until mechanisms are found to cope with threat (Esenberg, 1986).

The above definition draws attention to two critical characteristics of the coping process. Firstly, coping processes continue until such times as the threat is

alleviated. In this sense, different coping resources may be mobilised at different times, depending on how the person evaluates their potential effectiveness for addressing the threat, and furthermore, a variety of behaviours might be exhibited before a reduction of tension is achieved. The latter feature emphasizes stress as continuous, and coping as an attempt to reduce tension, or adjust and adjust to the situation in such a way that the stimulus is no longer perceived as a threat (Lazarus, 1971).

Secondly, and in terms of developing a model, coping processes are initiated subsequent to the persons acknowledgement, or primary appraisal, of an existing threat. In this sense, the perception of threat is a necessary condition for the manifestation of stress.

Finally, the addition of coping processes into the stress equation assists in establishing a distinction between coping behaviours and stress-related symptoms. More specifically, coping behaviours can be considered the short-term effects of threat, and stress-related symptoms as the long-term effects, or the product of a series of maladaptive (or ineffective) coping behaviours.

2.3 Cybernetic Models of Stress: A Critique

Lazarus (1971) viewed stress research as that which deals with demands that tax the system and the response of that system to these demands, thus still situating stress within a causal framework.

Inclusion of cognitive appraisal and coping processes into a more sophisticated cause-effect model, as well as factors assumed to affect both appraisal and coping, however, ensured that the development of a model for understanding and predicting stress reactions or symptoms was exceedingly complex.

To some extent, the cybernetic information-processing model, based on a computer analogy (Wertz, 1987) was able to contain the complexity discussed above, since it allowed for feedback loops between various operating variables. In this sense, the model (Figure 2 below) recognises stress as a continuous process of adjustment and adaptation.

2.3.1 The Model

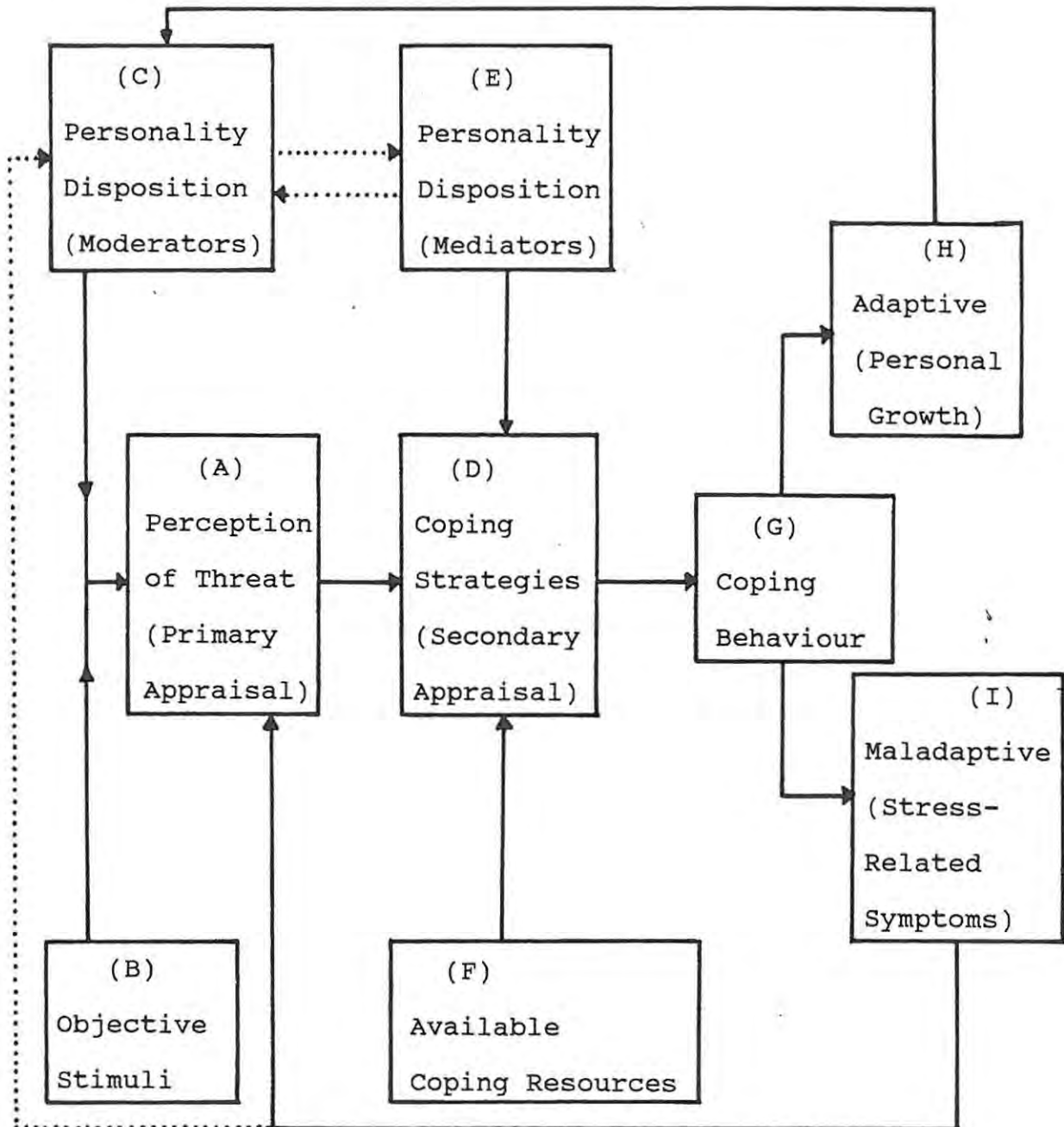
Essentially, the subject-orientated approach to stress concentrates on the category 'stimuli' and individual differences in the appraisal of these as a threat. In this

sense, the approach attempts to integrate the stimulus orientated perspective with that of cognitive appraisal, and adds a dimension called 'moderators', or personality (Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1989), in order to explain these differences. The 'cause' of stress is thus defined as the 'perception of threat' (A), this being the product of an interaction between observable stimuli (B) and the individual's personality disposition (C).

Because the threat must be coped with, the person must employ his/her life experience and coping resources to meet this threat (Lazarus, 1971). In this sense, the formulation of coping strategies, or evaluation of coping resources (D), takes place during secondary appraisal, and is conceptualised as the product of interaction between aspects of a person's personality disposition (now called mediators) (E) and available coping resources (F).

The behaviours executed by an individual in order to reduce threat, or coping responses (G), are viewed as the 'effect'. These coping responses may be either adaptive (H), i.e. they reduce threat and tension and therefore resolve stress, or maladaptive (I), i.e. they maintain or increase the perception of threat.

Figure 2: A CYBERNETIC MODEL OF STRESS INCORPORATING
COGNITIVE APPRAISAL AND COPING PROCESSES



Essentially, stress symptoms are viewed as the product of repeated maladaptive behaviour patterns (Kendall, 1987) or coping responses. These create an exacerbated stress feedback

loop between (I) and (A), since symptoms, such as heart attacks and depressive episodes, constitute an additional threat that must be coped with and mastered.

Adaptive outcomes, on the other hand, imply that the individual is able to transform troubles into challenges that spur growth. While Spring (1986) laments the paucity of information and research concerning such positive outcomes, adaptive coping responses assume that the initial threat has been mastered. Furthermore, adaptive coping may ensure that the individual is less susceptible to further threat by facilitating his/her self-efficacy and confidence. In other words, where successful coping has been achieved, the individual experiences positive personal adjustment and development. In this sense, a personal development feedback loop between (H) and (C) can be postulated.

The model illustrated and explored above is useful for two reasons. Firstly, it allows conceptualisation of stress as an ongoing and dynamic process. Secondly, the model implies that stress need not be viewed as a purely negative experience. In other words, threat, if coped with appropriately, contributes to personal development and growth. Several fundamental criticisms can be leveled at the model, however.

2.3.2 Predictive Value

The prediction of stress symptoms on the basis of Lazarus' model is contentious. Firstly, the underlying assumption that cognitive structures act as a basis for behaviour (Crump, Cooper & Maxwell, 1981) has been challenged by some researchers. More specifically, Cohen, Sherrod & Clark (1986) provide evidence to suggest that generalised thinking styles are not associated with the manifestation of specific medical problems.

Assessing the effects of stress is no less problematic. Besides their measurement being comparatively informal (Lazarus, 1968), it is frequently difficult to distinguish between what are termed coping behaviours, or efforts to reduce threat, and the long-term effects of using maladaptive coping strategies, i.e. stress symptoms. For instance, an accident at work is frequently deemed a stress symptom, but at the same time may constitute a defence against unacceptable feelings such as depression (Levenson, Hirschfeld & Hirschfeld, 1980).

2.3.3 Situating the Components

Several of the components identified can constitute a cause, an intervening variable and/or an effect. For instance,

Caspi, et al (1987) presents evidence to suggest that daily stressors, rather than causing or exacerbating existing stress, mediate the effects of major stressors. Thus, in one context daily stressors constitute a stressor, and in another come to constitute an intervening link between acute stress and maladaptive behaviour. In addition, while clearly defined as a moderator in the literature, it is conceivable that a Type-A behaviour pattern is the product of previous stressful experiences. Furthermore, particular personality dispositions also mediate for or against the use of particular coping resources. For instance, while people with an internal locus of control would seek information about the stressor, people with an external locus of control would be less likely to do so.

As such, and while purely speculative at this stage, personality dispositions may constitute both a moderator (implying the person as more susceptible to perceiving threat in the first place) and mediator (influence the person's appraisal of available coping resources), as well as a behavioural response to stressful cognitions. In order to accommodate these possibilities, a third feedback loop is postulated between (I) and (C) in Figure 2, while (C) and (E) are linked

The cybernetic model is thus able to accommodate the nature of

stress as a process, in the sense that different components and stages are seen to interact. At the same time, many of these components are themselves deemed processes. If everything is a process, however, and all these processes are in relationship to one another, then there is an absence of points of reference, and the empirical measurement of stress in terms of this model becomes difficult.

The latter observations suggest that not only are specific operating variables within the cybernetic model difficult to isolate and define (Lazarus, 1968), but their non-unitary and generic nature (generalised effect) ensures that their placement within this model is exceedingly complex.

3. TRANSACTIONAL APPROACHES TO STRESS

The transactional model of stress is more correctly viewed as a general conceptual framework (Hobfoll, 1989) which focuses on the relationship between organisms and their environment, rather than either the organism or the environment alone (Lazarus, 1971).

The approach suggests that stress and strain result when there is an inadequate fit between the person and his/her environment (Dressler, 1982), and assumes that the greater the perceived incongruence between the person and the

environment the higher the level of stress (Hobfoll, 1989). In other words, a potential for stress exists when an environmental situation is perceived to present a demand which threatens to exceed the person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where the person expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs of meeting the demand versus not meeting it (McGarth, cited in Cox & Mackay, 1981).

3.1 The Model

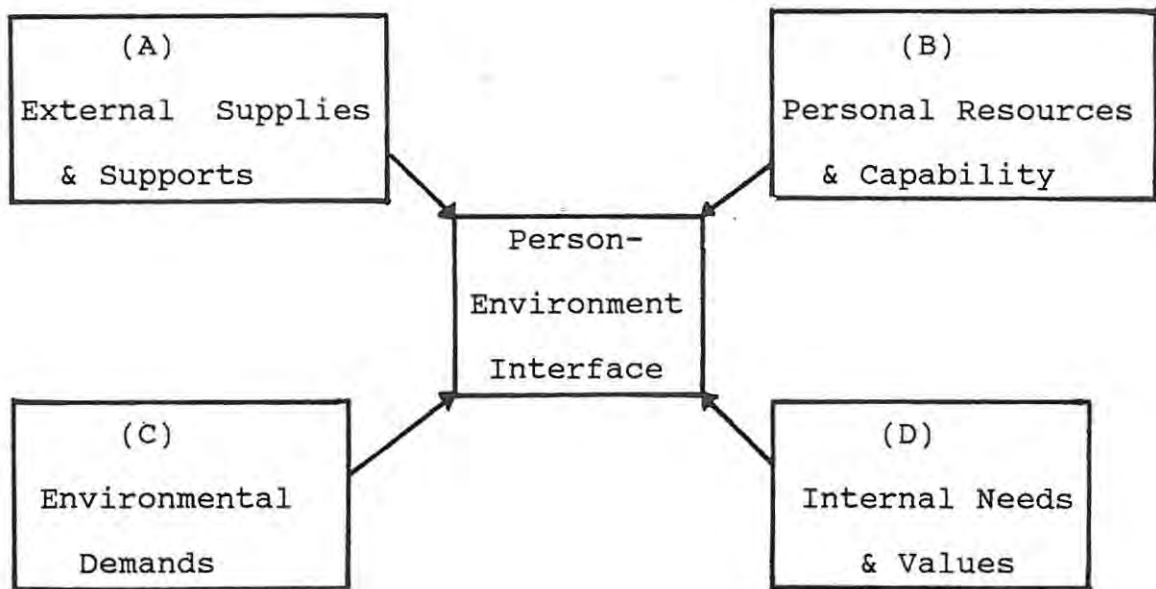
Figure 3 (below), taken from Cox & Mackay (1981), illustrates the four major components of the transactional model.

External supplies and supports (A) constitute aspects of the external environment that the individual may mobilise in order to re-establish homeostasis. This may be as simple as having access to required information or colleagues who are willing to assist in meeting a particular demand. In terms of the cybernetic model outlined above this component may be termed coping resources.

Personal resources and capability (B) reflect the person's ability to handle a request or requirement, and refer to both specific and defined skills associated with meeting the demand, as well as aspects of his/her personality and learned

behaviour patterns. In terms of the cybernetic model this component includes mediating processes.

Figure 3: COMPONENTS OF THE TRANSACTIONAL MODEL OF STRESS, as adapted from Cox & Mackay (1981)



The environmental demand (C) constitutes a request or requirement for physical or mental action that must be addressed. It is important to note with respect to environmental demands that their being defined as stressors rests upon the individual's perception of these demands and response capabilities as incongruent, rather than incongruence between objective demands and response capacities (Hobfoll, 1989). In this sense, the transactional model remains cognitive in its emphasis, i.e. it emphasizes the primacy of appraisal for the stress syndrome.

The person's own demands of that environment, i.e. his/her internal needs and values (D), are included. These internally generated needs (called moderating processes within the cybernetic model) place constraints on the person in terms of his/her choice of action (Cox & Mackay, 1981).

3.1.1 The Concept 'Misfit'

In terms of the model outlined above, two kinds of misfit may occur, either of which result in stress (Harrison, cited in Cox & Mackay, 1981).

The first kind of misfit concerns the extent to which the person's capabilities match situational demands (Blau, 1981). In other words, a misfit occurs where the individual has inadequate or insufficient skills and resources to complete a task or address a demand. This type of misfit may also be termed overload (Hobfoll, 1989).

The second type of misfit concerns the extent to which a person's needs are fulfilled or met by the situation (Blau, 1981). For instance, the environment may not meet the person's need for personal development or challenge. In this sense, imbalance may also be the product of underload rather

than overload.

The basic assumption in this approach, therefore, is that when a misfit of either kind occurs, it threatens a person's sense of well-being, and strains occur such as job and life dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression and physiological problems (Cox & Mackay, 1981).

3.1.2 The Concept 'Homeostasis'

A further component within this approach is the concept of homeostasis or equilibrium. More specifically, the model assumes that an internal or resisting force is brought into operation by the presence of external forces or load (Hobfoll, 1989), and that there is a continual effort to return to a state of balance or homeostasis. In this sense, the approach is both active and adaptive, i.e. it recognises that the person is continually appraising environmental demands as well as his/her ability to meet these demands (Cox & Mackay, 1981), and furthermore, perceives the consequences of failing to cope, or re-establish homeostasis, as important (Hobfoll, 1989).

3.2 Transactional Approaches and Coping

The emphasis on context within the transactional approach

implies that particular person and situational variables together shape coping (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen, 1986), and whether homeostasis is achieved depends upon the fit between an individual's coping style or preference and certain demands in the situation (Roth & Cohen, 1986). In other words, the approach recognises that no single resource is beneficial for all events and demands because resources need to be congruent with specific situations and the individual's needs of that situation (Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987).

In addition, Cox & Mackay (1981) draw attention to the relation between the selection of appropriate coping responses (coping strategies) and the implementation of such responses (coping behaviour), since uncertainty with respect to the appropriateness of a response may itself constitute a problem. Cox & Mackay (1981), however, appear to differ in their placement and understanding of secondary appraisal as compared to Lazarus (1971). More specifically, they claim that secondary appraisal occurs subsequent to the initiation of coping behaviour, or active attempts to re-establish homeostasis. In other words, and in terms of Cox & Mackay's (1981) understanding, secondary appraisal concerns the decision of whether or not to continue using the same strategy, rather than the initial evaluation of available coping resources. This suggests that a further coping

process, i.e. coping evaluation, be added to the cybernetic model of stress.

3.3 Transactional Approaches and Symptoms

While Cox & Mackay (1981) note a great deal of misunderstanding with respect to the physiological correlates of stress, in their view, the type of coping behaviour adopted determines the pattern of physiological responses, which then feeds back to other levels and stages. For instance, the sympathetic adrenal-medullar system prepares the individual for active behavioural coping in emergency situations but may prove inappropriate if passivity is required. In such instances, adrenalin accumulates and leads to deactivation and feelings of fatigue. As such, Cox & Mackay (1981) view many of the physiological changes associated with stress as normal homeostatic compensations which, depending on the context, contribute to the development of stress-related diseases.

3.4 Critique of Transactional Models of Stress

The transactional approach to stress is enlightening in the sense that it refines the cybernetic model of stress by positing an additional cognitive process, i.e. coping evaluation, subsequent to the implementation of coping

behaviour. Figure 4 below attempts to illustrate this contribution by building upon the cybernetic model proposed earlier.

In addition, the transactional view of stress as a person-environment mismatch focuses attention upon the nature of the relationship between a subject and his/her world, thus emphasizing the contextual nature of stressful experiences and confirming stress as a continuous process rather than as a discrete and easily identifiable object for scientific study.

At the same time, however, several of these contributions pose problems with respect to the development and operationalisation of the transactional model. Firstly, according to Blau (1981), while most well developed and tested as a model by French and his associates with respect to job-related stress and health, the model appears to have little empirical support in terms of job performance. As such, the predictive value of the model is called into question.

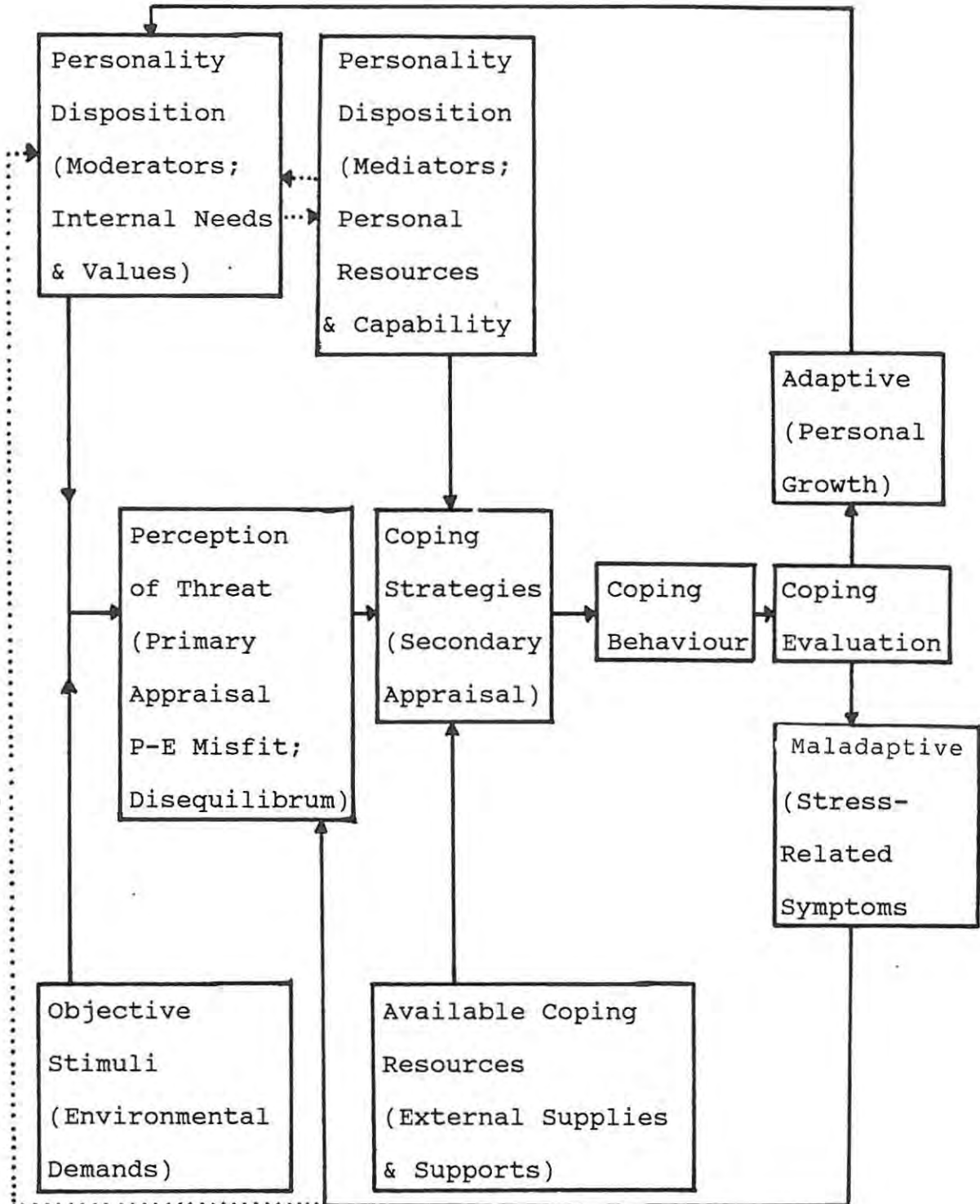
Secondly, the sole emphasis on perception within the transactional approach threatens to leave the model without objective referents, since demands, capability and internal needs exist only in the perceptual world of the subject

(Hobfoll, 1989). Consequently, the model succumbs to the same criticism as that leveled at cognitive models of stress, i.e. these perceptual components can only be inferred following the mobilisation of available coping resources. Furthermore, the appropriateness of a response within a particular context can only be evaluated when, and if, adrenalin accumulation manifests as stress-related symptoms. In this sense, the identification of stress-related demands remains retrospective.

Thirdly, while underload is recognised as an important kind of misfit in terms of the model, few researchers have adopted or followed up on this notion (Hobfoll, 1989), thus excluding a fundamental aspect of the relationship between the person and his/her world. In this sense, the individual's perception of environmental demands, rather than his/her internal needs, remains primary for the prediction of stress reactions.

Furthermore, the de-emphasis on the objective environment implies that certain demands may go unnoticed by an individual because he/she is coping with them in the natural course of events (Hobfoll, 1989). The lack of objective referents therefore precludes the identification of those individuals who can and do cope with stressful contexts.

Figure 4: TRANSACTIONAL MODELS' CONTRIBUTION TO CYBERNETIC MODELS OF STRESS THAT INCORPORATE COGNITIVE APPRAISAL AND COPING PROCESSES



Finally, an imbalance between demand and capability, even where it can be empirically established, does not necessarily lead to coping behaviour, since as Cox & Mackay (1981) observe, imbalance may be tolerated by the individual in order to satisfy or meet a need, and only when this imbalance becomes intolerable will he/she elicit coping behaviour.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It would seem pertinent at this point to draw the various critiques directed towards contemporary stress models together. Once having established their limitations, their scope and usefulness for understanding the stress phenomenon can be assessed (Chapter 5).

4.1 The Problem of Definition

A fundamental critique, and one that has been noted by several authors (Goldberger & Breznitz, cited in Krantz, 1966;

Eisdorfer, cited in Zales, 1985; Kisker, 1987) is the diversity and lack of co-ordination in definition and approach that characterises the stress field.

Within psychology itself stress is defined in a variety of ways, most of which appear to be the product of the models adopted for explaining stress. For example, stress may be defined as: a class of stimuli that threaten a person's sense of well-being (stimulus orientated approach); physiological, behavioural and psychological symptoms (symptom orientated approach); deficient cognitive structuring (cognitive approach); maladaptive coping behaviours (coping approach); a damaging transaction with the world, or upset state of equilibrium (transactional approach); and/or a combination of all or some of the above definitions. Contemporary definitions of stress thus lack consensus (Motowidlo, Packard & Manning, 1986).

A second problem affecting definition of stress is that it may not necessarily be experienced as unpleasant (Caspi, et al, 1987), and indeed, may even be worn as a badge of honour (3) rather than viewed as feelings of exhaustion and tension (Chandler & Shermis, 1985). While Barnard (1968) noted this in her differentiation between 'eustress' and 'dystress' more than two decades ago, formal research concerning the more positive aspects of stress appears implicit, rather than explicit (cf.

Selye, 1971; Kobasa, 1979). As such, the relation between stress, motivation, challenge and subjective well-being remains largely speculative.

A third critical problem affecting precise definition is that stress, as a field of psychological enquiry, lacks defined parameters. Lazarus (1966) himself describes stress as a general rubric for a large collection of related problems, rather than a single narrow concept. As such, stress appears to be a loose concept applied to a host of phenomena related only by their common analogy to the engineering concept. Moreover, despite the usefulness of such analogies for explaining stress, the concept remains difficult to quantify (Benson & Allen, 1980), thus undermining its predictive value.

4.2 The Problem of Prediction

The current movement towards reconceptualising stress as an interactional process between the person and his/her world highlights the role of cognitive appraisal and coping actions as critical features for defining stress (Ludwick-Rosenthal & Neufeld, 1988). In this sense, the subject of psychology, i.e. the human being, is reinstated.

At the same time, however, whilst subjective data is gathered and analysed, the results are too often translated into the

language of the natural sciences. In these terms even cognitive models of stress remain tied to the positivistic principle that human behaviour can be predicted by a network of concepts linked by means of logical-mathematical relations (Edwards, 1989b). Furthermore, and as Polkinghorne (1986) observes, the elaborate technology of such formal experimental designs and statistics prove to be of little practical value, since while these methods establish correlations between small groups of concepts, results remain at the level of statistical probability, and as such, are unable to account for all factors.

From a purely phenomenological viewpoint, cognitive views of stress are criticised on the basis of their self-world and mind-body dualism. Moreover, Giorgi (1970a) implies such dichotomies as too limiting because they presuppose either that the one half of that dichotomy can comprehend the whole phenomenon, or that the other half can be understood by means of successive transformations of the first half. While the transactional approach attempts to address this limitation by posing an interactive understanding of the stressed subject and his/her world, the approach appears to ignore the idea of underload, thus limiting its understanding of the relationship between person and world.

4.3 The Problem of Stress-Related Constructs

The idea of cognitive appraisal led to the postulation of factors deemed to affect appraisal and coping. These processes, however, are largely inferred, and furthermore, are themselves ill-defined. The following chapter explores this problem in more depth.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEMPORARY STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS

"Indeed, the pooled pseudo-knowledge that is much of psychology can be seen as congeries of alternate - and exceedingly simple - images around which one finds a dense, scholastic cluster of supportive research, theorizing and methodological rhetoric" (Koch, 1975:14)

The inclusion of intervening processes (or factors affecting appraisal) within cognitive and transactional models of stress produced a vast array of what may be termed 'stress-related constructs'. These constructs are deemed to affect the initial perception of threat during primary appraisal (moderators), the implementation and evaluation of available coping resources during secondary appraisal (mediators), and the individual's evaluation of implemented coping behaviours.

Holahan & Moos (1986) identify three primary sets of intervening process, namely personality variables, social support and coping strategies. An even cursory reading of the literature, however, suggests that a wide and complex variety

of intervening processes affect individuals' perception and evaluation of a demand or event as threatening.

The present chapter explores some of the more popular stress-related constructs that have been proposed and investigated, and pays particular attention to problems associated with defining and situating these constructs within contemporary models of stress.

1. PERSONALITY VARIABLES

The concept of personality is itself a fairly controversial area within psychology. More specifically, the term is so resistant to definition and so broad in usage that no coherent simple statement can be made about it (Reber, 1985). The nature of the present investigation precludes detailed discussion of this controversy, and will thus restrict itself to the role of these variables within contemporary stress models.

1.1 The Type-A Behaviour Pattern

The Type-A behaviour pattern was first conceptualised by Friedman & Rosenman (1974) as an action-emotion complex. As such, it is viewed as neither a stressor nor a response, but as a style of overt behaviour with which some people confront life situations (Jenkins, cited in Francis, 1981). Sometimes

called 'hurry sickness' (Cooper, 1981) the Type-A behaviour pattern is characterised by competitiveness, excessive drive to achieve and an enhanced sense of time urgency (Francis, 1981) among other criteria.

Perhaps the most important and interesting of these criteria is the Type-A individual's strong achievement orientation. In essence, the Type-A behaviour pattern is exhibited by people who are unwilling to evaluate their own competence, and who measure their success by means of external standards and social comparison (Ward & Eisler, 1987). The underlying achievement motivation evident for Type-A individuals is thus based upon an underlying insecurity about their own self-worth (Van der Merwe, 1986), which while less well-investigated in terms of the stress-disease equation (Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987), implies that low self-esteem and a poor sense of self-worth are important additional criteria (Price, 1982). In addition, Ward & Eisler, (1987) found that Type-A individuals are more anxious and depressed following personal failure, while at the same time, they set themselves up for personal failure by adopting goals in excess of their performance potential.

While initially recognised as an independent risk for CHD in both men and women (Ward & Eisler, 1987), confusion still remains about the role of the Type-A behaviour pattern in the aetiology of CHD (Dimsdale, 1988). Indeed, contemporary

research suggests that the relationship between A-Type behaviour patterns and CHD is tenuous. More specifically, researchers such as Haynes, Feinleib, Levine, Scotch & Kannel (1978), Dimsdale, Hackett, Hutter, Block & Catanzano (1978) and Scherwitz, McKeivain, Laman, Patterson, Dutton, Yusim, Lester, Kraft, Rochelle & Leachman (1983) note few consistent relations between Type-A behaviour patterns and CHD, hypertension and high cholesterol levels. Furthermore, Jenni & Wollersheim (1979) assert that a Type-A behaviour pattern does not necessarily equal anxiety, and O'Donnel (1984) that it is unrelated to ambition. Indeed, according to both O'Donnel (1984) and Williams (cited in Time Magazine, 1986) only the hostility component, or an attitude that makes one distrustful and isolated from others, is related to CHD. As such, hostility, rather than the Type-A behaviour pattern per se, appears to be a better predictor of CHD. In addition, these research refinements suggest that the Type-A behaviour pattern cannot be viewed as a unitary construct, but must be viewed as a collection of behaviours, some of which may be related to CHD and some not (Matthews, 1988).

Nonetheless, Francis (1981) notes that subjects with an Type-A behaviour pattern view their events as more stressful, and also note the occurrence of more stressful events than do subjects with a Type-B behaviour pattern. In addition, while there is little difference between the two groups in terms of

physiological measures under non-stressful conditions, when confronted by stressful or challenging stimuli Type-A's physiological measures elevate to a higher degree.

Despite various refinements, research suggests that the Type-A behaviour pattern is treated as a moderator within stress models, i.e. a factor affecting subject's initial perception of threat. As such, subjects with a Type-A behaviour pattern, particularly where the hostility component is high, are more susceptible to viewing demands and events as threatening.

1.2 Personality Hardiness

Kobasa (1979) first advanced the notion of personality hardiness (Hull, Van Treurnen & Virnelli, 1987) as a constellation of personality characteristics that function to diminish the potentially negative effects of life stress (Ganellen & Blaney, 1984).

Initially derived from existential theory (Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983), hardiness was first conceived of as a mediator. Later research, however, suggested that the dispositional effects are stronger (Hull, et al, 1987), thus implying that hardiness is also a moderator. Indeed, Kobasa & Puccetti (1983) themselves later asserted that hardiness facilitates the kind of perception (primary appraisal), evaluation (secondary

appraisal) and coping behaviour that leads to successful resolution of stressful situations, thus implying that it is a generic factor within the stress equation.

Hardiness initially comprised three dimensions. Firstly, control, as opposed to powerlessness, implies that hardy persons possess a sense of accountability and responsibility which ensures their optimal use of even marginal social assets, such as wealth and education. Hardy persons, therefore, have a strong belief in their own effectiveness (Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983). Secondly, challenge, as opposed to threat, implies that hardy individuals are willing to embrace change as an opportunity for growth (Hull, et al, 1987). As such, hardy persons view stressful events as an impetus for development. Thirdly, commitment, as opposed to alienation, implies that hardy individuals have a sense of purpose and involvement in the world (Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983).

Later empirical research, however, suggested the view of personality hardiness as a unitary phenomenon as questionable (Hull, et al, 1987). Firstly, scholars can seldom agree on the items to be included in hardiness measures, and secondly, research measuring the independent effects of control, challenge and commitment has become more common. Indeed, the control dimension, and particularly that concerning locus of control, appears to have developed into a prolific and

relatively distinct area of research.

1.3 Stress and Control

Many psychological theories have suggested that human beings have an intrinsic desire to explore and understand reality and to experience themselves as effectively controlling reality (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). A factor anticipated to affect the stressfulness of events, therefore, is the belief individuals have about their ability to control events in their own lives (MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1986).

Three types of control are generally considered to affect appraisal, and therefore, stress outcomes. These may be termed locus of control, behavioural control and cognitive control. The contribution of each type of control within stress models is difficult to assess, however, since researchers often fail to distinguish between them, and particularly between cognitive and behavioural control (Ludwick-Rosenthal & Neufeld, 1988), and/or clarify the relationship between these constructs. This has resulted in controversy as to whether control should be viewed as a moderator (Sarason, Johnson & Seigel, 1978; Crandall, 1984; Ganellen and Blaney, 1984) or mediator (MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1986).

In terms of the existing literature, however, cognitive and

behavioural control, as opposed to locus of control, come into play once the person is already aware of the presence of threat, i.e. they present means for controlling the aversive stimulus or for gaining information that ensures its effects as less debilitating. This suggests that cognitive and behavioural control are better conceived of as coping strategies, since the individual must evaluate control as a means for reducing threat, having already acknowledged that a threat exists. Consequently, cognitive and behavioural control are discussed in more detail in Section 3.

1.3.1 Locus of Control

Locus of control, generally conceived as a moderator or stress prevention resource, reflects the degree to which individuals believe environmental forces are under their control, or under the control of fate, luck, chance or other people (Dyal, 1980). In other words, individuals with an internal locus of control (internals) perceive themselves as in control of their life events, whereas individuals with an external locus of control (externals) perceive themselves as under the influence of external forces (Johansson & Lundberg, 1977).

In terms of this description internals believe they will overcome current failures or tragedies (Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987), and make active attempts to master their environment

(MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1986). In this sense, internals believe that they have at their disposal a response that can influence the aversiveness of an event (Thompson, 1981), and view themselves as both effective in their environment and able to cope (MacKenzie & Goodstein, 1986). Externals, on the other hand, feel they lack control over environmental forces, i.e. that they are helpless, incompetent, overwhelmed and without recourse when faced with life stressors (Thompson, 1981; Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987). As such, individuals with an external locus of control are more likely to view potential stressors as a threat, and to refrain from making active attempts to reduce the level of threat.

In terms of the discussion above, locus of control would seem to influence the individual's belief about his/her ability to control events. This suggests that internals would be less susceptible to viewing demands and events as a threat. Once threat has been acknowledged, however, they would be more likely to seek out and evaluate cognitive and behavioural control resources for the purposes of reducing threat. The latter observation suggests an intimate link between personality dispositions and the adoption of particular coping strategies.

2. SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Social support networks, which include the support offered by marriage, church membership, organisational affiliation, community cohesiveness and the presence of a confidant (Pilisuk & Parks, 1983) is a construct thought to both prevent and reduce the adverse effects of stress (Depue & Monroe, 1986). More specifically, it is hypothesized to interact with stressors such that the relationship between stress and strain is stronger for persons with low levels of social support than those with high levels of support (Ganster, et al, 1986). This is unsurprising, since typically, the human being is a social animal for whom the maintenance of satisfactory relationships with other human beings is critical (Hinkle & Wolff, 1957).

Research concerning social support networks has established that the experience of stress, coupled with low levels of social support, is associated with psychological distress. Individuals who are integrated into a social system, on the other hand, are better able to cope with stressful events (Caspi, et al, 1987).

Several problems serve to confound an unambiguous understanding of social support, however. Perhaps most important is the amorphous and multifaceted nature of the concept (Pilisuk & Parks, 1983), a factor that ensures lack of consensus

regarding its definition (Ganellen & Blaney, 1984).

2.1 Social Support as a Generic Factor

Social support has been investigated as a stressor, an intervening process and a stress outcome. More specifically, while Cohen, et al (1986) assert that social support partly protects people from the pathogenic effects of stress, Depue & Monroe (1986) regard the actual or threatened loss of social support as the main event associated with the onset of depression. At the same time, disturbed interpersonal relations are listed as both a stress-related behavioural outcome and stimulus. This implies social support as a generic factor within the stress equation.

2.2 Social Support as an Intervening Process

As an intervening process, social support is treated as both a moderator (Caspi, et al, 1987; Ganster, et al, 1986; Ganellen & Blaney, 1984) and mediator (Moerdyk, 1983; Crump, Cooper & Smith, 1980), and Blau (1981) and James & Brett (1984) note controversy as to which definition is more appropriate. For instance, while Hobfoll & Lieberman (1987) contend that social support aids initial adjustment, Caspi, et al (1987) contend that supportive relationships do not ensure against the immediate adverse effects of stressful daily events, but keep

enduring debilitation in check. In this sense, social support is deemed to have a direct or moderating effect, in that it promotes a sense of well-being at any stress level, and an indirect or mediating effect, in that it reduces the harmful effects of stress during high stress periods. Indeed, both Wilcox (1981) and Blau (1981) cite evidence to support both the direct and indirect effects of social support in the stress-disturbance relationship.

2.3 Social Support and Coping

Several researchers, such as Reis, Wheeler, Kernis, Spiegel & Nezlek (1985) and Leavy (cited in Ganster, et al, 1986), draw attention to the difference between social networks, or the objective availability of helping relationships, and individuals' ability to mobilise quality support when necessary. In other words, while an individual may possess an extensive social network, the availability of appropriate support will determine its usefulness in preventing or reducing stress-related disorders. Caspi, et al (1987), for instance, assert that the presence of supportive relationships in an individual's social network indicates an intervening potential. It does not, however, necessarily imply that social support is always and immediately available. At the same time, Cohen, et al (1986) assert that the belief that support is available may be sufficient to produce an intervening effect irrespective of

the individual's ability to mobilise support.

Kobasa & Pucetti (1983) appear to confirm the above observation by asserting that while social networks contribute little to executives' attempts to stay healthy, subjective perceptions of support play a significant role. The role of social support as an intervening process against stress-related disorders thus remains somewhat nebulous.

2.4 Social Support and Related Constructs

Cohen and Syme (1985) draw attention to the fact that the concept is in danger of being broadened to include all aspects of interpersonal relations, or essentially, broadened to the point of meaninglessness.

Firstly, various types of social support have been identified, each of which describes a category of social exchange that is assumed to have unique effects on well-being by facilitating adjustment to life stress (Rook, 1987; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). Briefly, the various types of social exchange may be listed as: tangible or instrumental support and assistance with meeting goals; self-esteem support or emotional reassurance; belonging support associated with feelings of solidarity, intimacy and companionship; appraisal or feedback support; and, informational support or advice (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Gannellen

& Blaney, 1984; Ganster, et al, 1986).

Secondly, several related concepts also appear to be important to an understanding of social support, i.e. social competence and social interest.

2.4.1 Companionship

While the effects of various types of social support on the stress-disturbance relationship remain relatively unexplored, intimacy or companionship, defined as closeness with an other who expresses affection, acceptance and shared thoughts and feelings, appears to provide more effective relief than do other forms of social support, particularly for those individuals who must contend with many relatively minor stressors (Rook, 1987). In essence then, intimacy or companionship appears to facilitate the individual's sense of being loved and valued by providing a stable person on whom the individual can depend during times of distress (Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987).

2.4.2 Social Competence

According to Cohen, et al (1986), the importance of social skills in the development of support perceptions cannot be underestimated. More specifically, they assert that the

apparent stress protective role of social support may be attributed to higher levels of social competence, since persons with certain social skills form more friendships and therefore have more available supporters. Indeed, on the basis of their research they established that an increase in social skills and/or competence, particularly where this competence resulted in the effective mobilisation of available social support, increased individuals' perceptions of the availability of such support.

2.4.3 Social Interest

While social interest appears to be a relatively unexplored area with respect to the stress field, Crandall (1984) asserts that social interest, defined as being interested in and/or caring about things that go beyond the self, provides some degree of immunity against the negative effects of stress, since it serves to reduce feelings of threat, hostility and jealousy. At the same time, social interest involves concern for the views, perspectives and needs of others as well as a willingness to share and co-operate, thus forestalling many unnecessary interpersonal problems and proving useful for coping with those problems that do arise. As such, he views it as an general factor important to adjustment.

2.5 Conclusions Concerning Social Support

The proliferation of research concerning social support and its relationship to stress is unsurprising in view of human beings' social nature. At the same time, and like personality, it is a generic and multifaceted concept, i.e. it may function as a stressor, outcome or intervening process. It is also unclear whether its effects are primarily direct or indirect, whether different types of support are more or less appropriate in different situations, and/or whether the objective or subjective availability of helping relationships is more effective for preventing and/or reducing stress symptoms. In addition, the development of social support networks would seem to depend, at least in part, upon an individual's level of social interest and competence.

3. STRESS AND COPING

Increasing attention has been given to the nature of coping responses employed by people to deal with stress (Kabanoff & O'Brien, 1986), and several schemes for the classification of coping strategies and behaviours are evident. Thus, while Chandler & Shermis (1985) admit considerable variation in the way people respond to stress, depending on social and cultural factors, the range of strategies is not infinite. Ultimately, say Chandler & Shermis (1985), human nature restricts the

options that are available to the person, and genetic factors and previous learning further restrict individuals to a rather fixed repertoire of responses. Consequently, response patterns are seen to follow a few basic themes, although there may be a number of variations on those themes.

3.1 The Classification of Options for Coping

Initially, Lazarus (1968) distinguished between adaptive strategies, or strategies that serve to directly alter threatening conditions, and defensive strategies, which ultimately seek to alter the initial appraisal of conditions as threatening. Defensive strategies appear to constitute two components, i.e. the individual can deny the existence of his/her needs within the situation (denial) or can reassess the perceived threat as unrealistic (reality-testing). Latack (1986), on the basis of a literature review of several existing classification schemes, posits control and escape strategies, as well as symptom management, as primary themes with respect to coping.

3.1.1 Control Strategies

Control strategies, also called confronting (Moerdyk, 1983), sensitising (Thompson, 1981), approach (Roth & Cohen, 1986) and problem focused (Folkman, et al, 1986), focus on the threat

and consist of both actions and cognitive reappraisals that are proactive and take-charge in tone (Latack, 1986). In other words, the stressed individual believes that the threat can be neutralised, and attempts to manage and/or alter the situation. Two types of control can be distinguished.

Behavioural control is defined as the opportunity to regulate or modify the administration of an aversive or threatening stimulus (Thompson, 1981). More often called controllability, it is described as the individual's ability to personally and directly influence the occurrence of an aversive event (Lucwick-Rosenthal & Nuefeld, 1988) or threat. For instance, by pushing the correct buttons in the right sequence the individual believes he/she is able to avoid the administration of a mild electrical shock.

Cognitive control, on the other hand, generally concerns information gain and appraisal, and usually takes the form of warning signals, information about the sensations to be experienced, the procedures an individual is about to undergo and the causes of an event (Thompson, 1981). More often called predictability (Ludwick-Rosenthal & Neufeld, 1988), it is used as a means for reducing cognitive overload (Thompson, 1981).

3.1.2 Escape Strategies

Escape strategies, on the other hand, also called avoidant (Thompson, 1981; Moos and Billings, 1982), withdrawing (Moerdyk, 1983), and repressed (Roth & Cohen, 1986; Davis, 1987) attempt to deny, ignore, disassociate or distract the individual from his or her perception of threat. In other words, the stressed individual feels powerless to neutralise the threat, and distorts reality in order to eliminate the impression that he or she is in danger or has been harmed (Lazarus, 1971). Escape and defence responses are generally categorised together, since the former implies behavioural or physical withdrawal and the latter psychological or cognitive withdrawal.

3.1.3 Symptom Management Strategies

Symptom management strategies are popularly believed to regulate stressful emotions and behaviour (Latack, 1986), i.e. they constitute a means for reducing the intensity of various stress-related symptoms.

Tension-control techniques, such as meditation, breathing exercises (Bailey, 1986) and progressive muscle relaxation (Ludwick-Rosenthal & Neufeld, 1988), for instance, are said to generate response patterns that compete with and diminish

ongoing anxiety, and therefore, according to Wolpe (1985), also diminish anxiety based symptoms such as headaches. In addition, while few studies look at leisure time pursuits, Kabanoff & O'Brien (1986) claim these as a significant form of coping behaviour.

The use of various tranquilising drugs, be these legal or illegal, as well as substances such as caffeine and alcohol, may be included as short-term strategies for reducing tension, although the long-term effects of such strategies may be maladaptive.

While the relief offered by these strategies is largely symptomatic, Ludwick-Rosenthal & Nuefeld (1988) cite evidence to suggest that relaxation strategies, and particularly tension-control techniques, result in anxiety reduction, improved adjustment, and to a lesser extent, lower levels of psychophysiological arousal. This suggests that symptom management strategies facilitate the mobilisation of resources for gaining control.

3.2 The Problem of Classification

Approach and avoidance, or control and escape, are short hand terms for cognitive and emotional activity that is orientated either towards or away from the threat (Roth & Cohen, 1986).

The classification of specific coping behaviours into these response sets is not simple, however.

Firstly, several behaviours appear to contain elements of both response sets. For instance, developing alternative rewards, or creating new sources of satisfaction in substitute pursuits (Moos & Billings, 1982), may be viewed as both an escape (from the frustrating situation) and control strategy, in the sense that the stressed individual takes responsibility for creating his or her own sense of fulfillment.

Secondly, while Israel, et al (1989) quotes evidence to suggest that individuals are relatively consistent in their use of coping strategies in the same role domain on different occasions, they tend to use different coping strategies across different role domains. People, therefore, cannot simply be characterised as approachers or avoiders. More specifically, most individuals use some strategies from each category (Chandler & Shermis, 1985), and in addition, alternate rapidly between confrontation and escape-avoidance in a pattern of engagement, disengagement and reengagement (Folkman, et al, 1986). This, according to Roth & Cohen (1986) is unsurprising, since in most situations some aspects of the threatening material can be avoided while other aspects can be approached. Consequently, Roth & Cohen (1986) express the ideal as the ability to utilise both approach and avoidance responses, with

the benefits of each maximised and the costs of each minimised. In this sense, it is a lack of flexibility with respect to the use of either response set that is viewed as maladaptive.

3.3 The Problem of Evaluation

The evaluation of coping strategies and behaviours as adaptive or maladaptive is also problematic. Firstly, while escape tends to be regarded as a maladaptive response and control as an adaptive response, either response set may be constructive or exacerbating for stress reduction (Moerdyk, 1983). For instance, an autistic retreat into a fantasy world represents an escape or maladaptive response. At the same time, however, Roth & Cohen (1986) note that fantasy can also serve a compensatory or constructive function and facilitate further coping with harsh environmental contingencies. The reduction of stress through defence mechanisms, such as denial and illusion, may thus be healthy in some instances (Lazarus, cited in Moerdyk, 1983), particularly during the initial period when emotional resources are limited, or where the person finds him/herself in an uncontrollable and/or unalterable situation.

At the same time, persevering in an attempt to change a situation that is essentially hopeless can be self-defeating (Baumeister and Scher, 1988). Confrontation or control responses, therefore, appear to be more adaptive in situations

deemed changeable (Roth & Cohen, 1986; Folkman, et al, 1986).

Secondly, measuring the effectiveness of coping is problematic (Latack, 1986). For instance, while effective coping responses may reduce psychological stress, they may have no effect on physiological stress (Lazarus, 1971). In other words, stress symptoms may continue to manifest for some time after the stressor has been removed or coped with effectively (Cohen, cited in Moerdyk, 1983). In this sense, it would be incorrect to assume the presence or absence of a disease as indicative of inappropriate coping responses (Benson & Allen, 1980).

Furthermore, while a particular response may be partially successful in meeting the demands of the primary stressor, in the process it may create a new set of secondary stressors with which the individual has to cope (Chandler & Shermis, 1985). For instance, a coping response adopted by an employee to address work-related stress (working longer hours) may create additional interpersonal stress because his/her families no longer see as much of them.

3.4 Conclusions Concerning Coping

While the essential difference between healthy and unhealthy responses depends on how stressful conditions are coped with (Lazarus, 1971), the problem of criteria for healthy or

effective coping as opposed to pathological ones remains an important and fairly controversial issue within the stress field (Lazarus, 1968).

The evidence presented above suggests that not only is the classification of specific coping responses ambiguous in terms of an approach-avoidance dichotomy, but that successful or adaptive coping requires flexibility with respect to the use of both response sets. In addition, the appropriateness of a particular coping response also appears to depend on the context in which the response is executed, as well as the short and long term effects of that response, since the response may itself constitute an additional and further source of stress.

5. CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS

The inclusion of intervening processes (or factors affecting appraisal and coping) within contemporary stress models in order to explain wide differences in individuals' ability to cope with threatening stimuli is not without problems. These problems, most of which affect the placement of constructs within the model, are discussed in more detail below.

5.1 Intervening Processes as Generic

It is clear in the discussion above concerning personality

factors that these dispositions affect not only which events and demands are perceived as a threat initially, but also the evaluation and choice of coping response to deal with threat. For instance, an individual with an internal locus of control, while apparently less susceptible to perceiving threat from the outset, would also be more likely to exert behavioural and cognitive control in order to reduce threat, and thus elicit approach rather than avoidance behaviour. The above observation implies personality as generic, i.e. a general factor important to adjustment.

A wealth of factors besides personality appear to affect the evaluation of coping resources for minimising threat. A fundamental difficulty concerning the development of a model incorporating these factors, however, is the literature's failure to clearly define and differentiate between moderators, i.e. measures of susceptibility or stress prevention resources, and mediators, i.e. stress reduction resources (Ganellen & Blaney, 1984). This serves to create substantial confusion as to whether specific factors have direct or indirect effects on stress-related outcomes, and ensures that the placement of these factors within the model is problematic.

5.2 Intervening Processes as Non-Unitary

Neither personality nor coping resources are unitary phenomena,

i.e. each factor constitutes a number of aspects, some of which appear to affect the relationship between stress and disease, and some of which apparently do not.

While further research often refines observations with respect to these aspects (e.g. the hostility component of the Type-A behaviour pattern) more often it serves to increase controversy concerning what does and does not affect appraisal, and proliferate the number of factors thought to affect appraisal.

The latter leads to apparent contradictions concerning the effects that these factors have for preventing and reducing stress. For example, attributing responsibility to oneself, or self-blaming, which according to Kobasa & Puccetti (1983) characterises those persons with an internal locus of control, is noted as an effective means for handling a variety of life stressors, since it presents a way of asserting and preserving one's sense of personal control (Wortman, cited in Thompson, 1981). Effective coping, therefore, is associated with victims blaming themselves for an aversive event (Thompson, 1981).

At the same time, however, individuals who continually blame themselves for the occurrence of aversive events may, in the end, reduce their self-esteem to a point that leaves them believing that they are incompetent, thus predisposing them to experiencing further stress. By implication, then, an internal

locus of control may serve to promote maladaptive stress outcomes in the long-term, rather than moderate against them.

5.3 Intervening Processes as Interactive

Many of the factors and aspects outlined above appear to overlap, as well as interact. For instance, Kobasa & Puccetti (1983) found that executives who were above the median in family support showed significantly lower illness scores than did executives high in hardiness but low in social support. Furthermore, social support has also been found to buffer the impact of critical events on depression and anxiety for persons with an internal locus of control, but not for persons with an external locus of control (Sandler & Lakey, cited in Ganster, et al, 1986). Despite recognition, therefore, that no single factor is free from the influence of other factors (Lazarus, 1968), and while theoretically related factors have often been incorporated into research designs in an effort to increase the amount of explained variance in disorder (Depue & Monroe, 1986), few studies have attempted to assess the influence of more than two variables simultaneously (Israel, et al, 1988). The relative importance of these many and often poorly defined factors for moderating and mediating stress reactions is thus contentious.

5.4 The Problem of Context and Meaning

Much of the research fails to recognise context and meaning as important for assessing the usefulness of factors for preventing and reducing threat. Indeed, Folkman, et al (1986) note a lack of information with respect to the contextual factors that influence appraisal and coping responses. For instance, while social support literature claims that individuals who are part of a socially supportive network of continuing interpersonal ties achieve some measure of protection or immunity from stress-related disorders (Pilisuk & Parks, 1983), Folkman, et al (1986) found that social support engenders shame and embarrassment in encounters where an individual's self-esteem was at stake.

Furthermore, the effect of locus of control within the stress equation is not unequivocal. More specifically, while Crandall (1984) asserts an internal locus of control as important for moderating the effects of stress for physiological and psychological symptoms, and Moerdyk (1983) that internals have lower levels of stress, Hobfoll & Lieberman (1987) note that a sense of mastery may actually cause frustration in situations where exerting control is inappropriate. In other words, while externals have trouble with and in environments that are essentially controllable, because of their inability to take advantage of available opportunities (MacKenzie & Goodstein,

1986), internals have trouble in environments that are essentially uncontrollable, such as prisons. These observations suggest that the contribution made by factors assumed to prevent and reduce threat is not absolute, but must be considered within each particular context, and in terms of the meaning and implications that these resources have for the individual.

At the same time, the evaluation of coping responses as appropriate and inappropriate is contentious. Firstly, the appropriateness of a response appears to be both subjective and contextual. For instance, a coping response that works for a particular person in one situation may not work for another person in the same situation, or for the same person in another situation. Furthermore, inappropriate coping responses are often inferred from a negative outcome, such as a heart attack or depressive episode. In this sense, the evaluation of coping responses is retropective. Finally, what constitutes an appropriate response for reducing the level of threat in the short-term, such as imbibing alcohol, may be counterproductive, or maladaptive, in the long-term.

The latter criticism suggests that stress is better conceived of as a syndrome if it is not to be strained beyond its usefulness as a construct (Heiman, 1985), and furthermore, suggests that it should be conceived of as an ongoing and

dynamic process from the outset.

6. CONCLUSIONS

A wide variety of stress-related constructs are discussed above, most of which appear to be both generic and non-unitary in nature, and as such, are themselves ill-defined. Furthermore, several of these constructs appear to interact. This implies that their placement within existing models is difficult, and that their predictive value is limited.

The proliferation of these constructs over the past decade can be attributed, in part, to the pressure on scholars to contribute something new to the existing knowledge base, and their consequent reluctance to make use of those constructs developed in previous research. Furthermore, many of these constructs have developed into distinct areas of enquiry, and the relation between these constructs and stress has become less clear.

The replication and refinement of research exacerbates, rather than resolves, this confusion. On the basis of the foregoing discussion, for instance, a relation between Type-A behaviour patterns, hostility and inadequate social support networks can be postulated. The latter contention still remains to be empirically investigated, however.

Finally, the evaluation of coping strategies and behaviours as adaptive or maladaptive also poses difficulties. Firstly, while their evaluation has been recognised as contextual, few researchers have attempted to evaluate coping within specific contexts. Secondly, and perhaps more important, maladaptive according to whose points of reference is an issue that has not been addressed. For example, while management may view absenteeism as a maladaptive behavioural outcome (since it affects productivity), if being absent from work for limited periods of time enables an individual to cope more effectively, then absenteeism may be considered adaptive (since it reduces tension for the individual concerned). Likewise, while many psychologists would regard imbibing tranquilising and stimulanting drugs as maladaptive, if the person is able to function more effectively within a given context as a result of such medication, the strategy may be viewed as adaptive. The evaluation of coping processes is thus contentious, and at this point, appears to depend on the values of those doing the evaluating.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

"Aggregations of musical notes do not correspond with our experience of music itself." (Biddiss, 1977:88)

The foregoing chapters reviewed contemporary stress-related literature, and traced the development of its models and constructs. Despite the many criticisms, the task proved worthwhile in the sense that it revealed the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation, and furthermore, alerted the investigator to some important features of stress.

The present chapter attempts to move towards conceptual synthesis, and in so doing, suspends the various criticisms evident in foregoing chapters. In this sense, it focuses upon the contribution that various models and constructs have made towards understanding the phenomenon, and in so doing, provides a degree of focus for the phenomenological explication that follows.

1. THE COGNITIVE CONTRIBUTION

Cognitive conceptualisations of stress confirmed phenomenological praxis as appropriate, i.e. conceptualisation suggested that the phenomenon is a product of how people structure their world, the possibilities that they are open to within their world and the way in which they make sense of their world.

Several important themes may be drawn from research and conceptualisation surrounding cognitive processes as related to stress. These are listed below:

- a) Life is inherently stressful, with even the most trivial event constituting a demand for adaptation or threat. As such, stimuli are a necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the experience of stress.
- b) The perception of threat is a necessary condition for the experience of stress.
- c) The perception of threat is the product of interaction between environmental demands (stimuli) and the individual's personality disposition.

2. THE COPING PROCESSES CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualisation on the basis of coping processes builds upon cognitive understandings of stress, and presents an

attempt to link or ground these processes with their more observable characteristics, such as behaviour and symptoms.

The literature surrounding coping suggests that the process is complex. More specifically, coping constitutes cognitive components (strategies and evaluations), an environmental component (resources) and a behavioural component (responses). The most important contribution is thus that it conceives of stress as a process. Phenomenological praxis appears appropriate for coming to grips with this complexity yet again, since it attends to the manner in which an experience unfolds.

Secondly, conceptualisation on the basis of coping processes makes a distinction between coping responses and stress-related symptoms, both of which manifest on a behavioural level, or in terms of a phenomenological view, characterise the embodied aspects of the phenomenon.

Several additional themes and definitions characterising the stress syndrome are highlighted:

a) The perception of threat is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the initiation of coping processes. While it is recognised that threat must be coped with, should the stimuli perceived as a threat change or the individual deny the existence of that threat, it is unlikely that coping process

would be initiated.

b) Coping is a series of attempts to adjust and readjust to the situation in such a way that the stimulus is no longer perceived as a threat.

c) Coping is a process that continues until such time as threat has been alleviated.

d) Coping strategies are the product of interaction between available environmental resources and the individual's personality disposition.

e) Coping responses are short term activities which may be evaluated as either adaptive or maladaptive depending on whether responses reduce or maintain the perception of threat.

f) Stress-related symptoms are the long-term effects of repeated maladaptive coping responses.

3. THE TRANSACTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

The most important contribution offered by transactional approaches to stress is their contextualisation of the stress phenomenon. In other words, they emphasize that stress is the product of an individual's relation to his/her world in terms of the extent to which: the individual can meet worldly demands; and, the world can meet the individual's needs. While the latter has, as yet, remained relatively uninvestigated, it offers an opportunity for making a

contribution with respect to the present investigation. More specifically, a phenomenological praxis, with its emphasis on the explication of situated phenomena, is ideally suited to exploring stressed individuals' relationship to their world.

Several additional themes can be drawn from transactional understandings of the stress syndrome:

- a) Stress is a damaging transaction between the person and his/her environment.
- b) The perception of damage is dependent upon the interaction between contextual demands and constraints and personal needs and resources.
- c) The appropriacy of particular coping responses is dependent upon contextual factors.

4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF STRESS-RELATED CONSTRUCTS

Several of the constructs explored in Chapter 4 serve to alert the investigator to features associated with the stress syndrome.

Firstly, stress is not necessarily a negative experience. More specifically, some people, about whom we know too little, manage to transform troubles into challenges that spur growth (Spring, 1986). Thus, while certain coping processes and stress-related symptoms themselves become a further stimulus

for stressful experiences (and in that sense may constitute stressors) it is important to remain open to possible positive feedback loops. In other words, the successful resolution of stressful experiences may promote personal growth in the sense that the person's sense of self-efficacy is boosted.

Secondly, it would seem useful to pay attention to the stressed individual's relationships to others in his/her world, in view of social support playing such a generic role within stress. This would include attending to and understanding the place of hostility and alienation as features of the experience. Feelings of powerlessness would also seem to be important in terms of the hypothesis that individuals with an external locus of control are more susceptible to viewing demands as a threat. Finally, the nature of coping responses as a further source of stress may also be elucidated.

5. A TENTATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF STRESS

No one model can incorporate the complexity of the information presented in previous chapters as well as the logical relations between each of the components as outlined above. More specifically, and as Depue & Monroe (1986) suggest, a single stress-disorder interaction model is

unlikely to capture all approaches equally well. As such, differential stress models, emphasising different sets of input and intervening processes may be necessary in view of the heterogeneity of coping responses and stress-related symptoms.

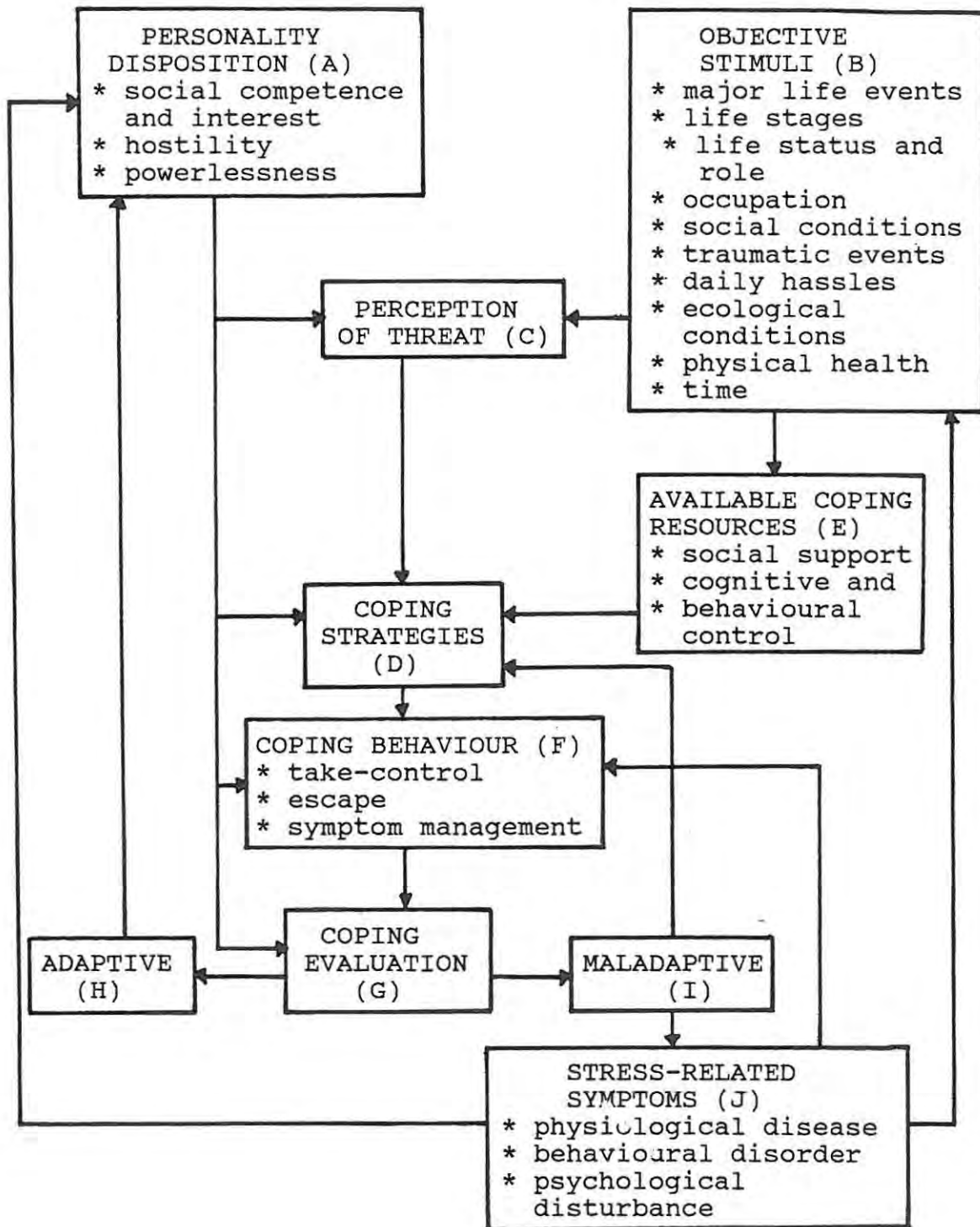
Nonetheless, a tentative psychological model of the stress syndrome (Figure 5) is presented below. This model builds upon the cybernetic model presented earlier (see p. 63), and attempts to incorporate and link various components and constructs in terms of their logical relations.

Two major modifications to the previous model were deemed necessary. Firstly, the generic role of personality for the stress syndrome suggested that this construct be understood as a complex interpretive scheme of dispositional factors (A), and be illustrated as a single component linked to several other components. Secondly, stress-related symptoms (J), as the product of repeated maladaptive coping responses, are distinguished from the evaluation of coping behaviour as maladaptive (I) since the latter constitutes a cognitive rather than embodied aspect.

5.1 The Model

Interaction between dispositional factors (A) and

Figure 5: A TENTATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF STRESS ILLUSTRATING THE COMPONENTS AND THEIR LOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS AS PER CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW



environmental stimuli (B) produce the perception of threat (C). Where threat must be coped with, the individual reflects upon various coping strategies (D), these being the product of interaction between available coping resources within the environment (E) and dispositional factors (A). The latter link suggests that the individual's awareness of particular coping resources is a product of his/her interpretative scheme or personality. For example, individuals with an external locus of control would be unlikely to view information about the stressor as a coping resource. The relation between environmental stimuli (B) and coping resources (E) is also included, and illustrates that changes in the nature of the stressor may themselves constitute an additional coping resource.

The individual, having reflected upon his/her available coping options, then responds (F) in the hope that such behaviour will reduce threat. Here again dispositional factors affect the coping process. For example, individuals with an internal locus of control would, where possible, attempt to alter demands, whereas individuals with an external locus of control would attempt to escape. As such, A and F are linked.

The individual then evaluates (G) his/her coping behaviour as either adaptive (H) or maladaptive (I). Dispositional factors

also affect coping evaluation. For example, individuals who proudly assert their independence would not regard behaviour that promoted dependence on others as adaptive, and would therefore institute further coping efforts. As such, A and G are linked.

Where considered adaptive, coping behaviour produces personal growth, i.e. adaptive responses contribute towards and/or reinforce individuals' existing repertoire of coping behaviours, and thus come to constitute internal resources for coping with further threat, or dispositional factors (A). More specifically, the individual's sense of self-efficacy or confidence is increased, thus promoting a greater sense of control and ensuring him/her as less susceptible to viewing further demands as threatening.

Where individuals evaluate their coping behaviour as maladaptive, however, they must reassess options for coping, and implement alternative coping strategies. The feedback loop between I and D illustrates the nature of coping as a series of efforts to reduce threat.

Stress-related symptoms (J) are the product of repeated maladaptive coping efforts (I). At the same time, several coping responses are also deemed stress-related symptoms. As such, F and J are linked. Furthermore, various stress-related

symptoms can themselves be construed as stimuli for further stressful encounters. As such, a feedback loop between J and B, is postulated. Finally, stress-related symptoms also constitute dispositional factors, i.e. ensure the individual as more or less susceptible to viewing particular demands for adjustment as a threat. As such, the model includes a feedback loop between J and A.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Stress is revealed as a highly complex phenomena on a conceptual level, which despite some seventy years of formal enquiry, and a great deal of research, remains relatively difficult to define as a result of the multitude of links postulated between its component processes, as well as the degree of overlap between these constructs. While Hetherington (cited in Garbarino, 1984) notes that researchers who study stress are coming to recognise the importance of subjective and phenomenological components for assisting clearer definition, few attempts have been made to ground the phenomenon in a lived or phenomenological sense.

The model outlined above, while certainly not exhaustive, does at least illustrate some of the complexity associated with contemporary conceptualisation of stress. More specifically, the model's ability to incorporate feedback

loops facilitates recognition of stress as both a positive and negative experience, as a series of coping efforts, and furthermore, suggests conceptual links between coping efforts, stress-related symptoms and dispositional factors.

The present thesis, whilst recognising that it can obviously not attend to all criticisms leveled at current conceptualisation presents an attempt to meet at least one of these the challenges, i.e. that of formally grounding the stress phenomenon in an experienced or lived sense.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS -
RESULTS

"(T)he anticipation of the global meaning of a text...becomes articulated through a process in which the meaning of the parts is determined by the whole and also determines the global meaning of the text... as a whole." (Radnitzky, 1968:23).

The primary aim of the phenomenological procedure outlined in Chapter 2 was that of developing a meaningful synthesis of lived stress. In order to achieve this end, transcribed interviews were transformed into case synopses. These were then explicated in terms of three analytic emphases, namely contextual relations, structural unfolding and essential meaning.

The present chapter demonstrates the application of this procedure by focussing on the data volunteered by Subject 1, and moves from the written protocol she submitted to her case synopsis. Case synopses for the remaining ten subjects

are included in Appendix 3. Thereafter, categories of meaning identified for each analytic emphasis are listed and the contribution of each towards a more global understanding of stress as a subjective phenomenon briefly reviewed. Finally, the meaningful synthesis of lived stress is disclosed.

1. INTRODUCING SUBJECT 1

Subject 1 is a woman of 29 years of age with no formal training in psychology, and some experience of psychotherapy. She reports that four months prior to her involvement in the study, she changed jobs. While still expected to practice skills with which she was familiar, she was also expected to practice unfamiliar skills. It is important to note that she emphasizes time constraints and uncooperative others, rather than task-related skills, as the source of her discomfort.

Subject 1 was interviewed in the comfort of her own home. At no time did she attempt to define or clarify her idea of stress: she launched into description immediately.

1.1 Written Protocol

My job causes me a lot of stress, mainly because of the lack of organisation on the part of the people I work with/1/. Sometimes when I am halfway through doing something, my boss

will come in and it will be 'Clapham Junction' - all change /2/. I feel a total sense of frustration, that I cannot do anything to change the situation /3/. I feel my blood pressure rising, my adrenalin rushes up /4/, and I want to explode, hit a hole in the wall /5/, and just rush outside, get into my car and disappear /6/. Instead, I get up and go through to the darkroom, where I pace up and down muttering to myself about the situation /7/. Finally, when I've told myself that unfortunately this is my lot in life /8/, I will go back to my office and try to get some order in the chaos /9/. When I'm under deadline pressure, which involves a lot of stress, I find that I hardly ever go to the toilet, and that I'll eat a lot at lunch time and supper /10/, and all the anger, frustration and food, etc. are all inside me, like I can't let go of all that energy because I know I'm going to be working flat out for the next eighteen hours /11/. It sort of drives me /12/. At times like these I'm also aware that I don't even want to communicate with the people I work with /13/. I feel like I'm in a bubble /14/ and if I lose concentration for just one minute, I'll fold up, the bubble will burst and I'll be useless /15/. I think ultimately all this bottling up of energies and frustrations causes me to get rather depressed /16/ because the quality of my life is not as it should be /17/. At night I have difficulty going to sleep because even then I cannot let go /18/.

1.2 Transcribed Interview

Explication of the written protocol in terms of steps one and two of the phenomenological procedure revealed 18 sense units. These were used in order to assist further clarification of Subject 1's experience of stress during the verbal interview. The verbal interview was transcribed, and together with the written protocol, was subjected to steps one and two of the phenomenological procedure.

#1: Can you describe the lack of organisation with respect to the people you work with in more detail?

"Well, we work to deadlines, and I normally have a hell of a lot of work to complete in a very short time /1/. And people only start moving when they realise there's a deadline. So the journalists only start getting their stories together then. And X (my boss) only starts getting the adverts together in the 11th hour /2/. And then they expect 32 pages to materialise out of one person in an instant /3/. It's quite a lot of work /1/."

#2: What does 'Clapham Junction' mean for you?

"Well, I've pasted up a story, or I've just finished a section, I've done a whole lot of pages and think everything is under control /1/. X will pitch suddenly with 25 adverts which I now have to squash into the remaining few pages /2/, and it's impossible /3/. I have to change what I have done /4/ and try

and get my house in order again /5/."

#3: Could you clarify your sense of frustration?

"Well, the business has been operating under the same chaotic kind of circumstances ever since it started /1/. And I keep getting told how other people were so fast /2/, and I'm trying to keep everything organised somehow. And I can't work in a shambles /3/, and they seem to function in a shambles. They don't even see it as a shambles, they just sort of go. They're used to it. X's been doing it for eleven years. It's his way of earning R8 000 a month. He doesn't mind working two nights a week 'til three in the morning, or a whole weekend. He never stops /1/. I'm used to things being a little more organised, and actual plan of action being done, before I set about making a magazine /4/ - I need to decide what's going into it and where the adverts must go. You don't just dive in and do as many pages as if it doesn't matter what story follows what or where the adverts are going to go. It's frustrating /3/. And you can talk to X, but its going in one ear and out the other, he's not even thinking about what I'm saying - he's already five miles ahead /5/."

#4: Could you expand on how your blood pressure and adrenalin levels rise?

"Well, in a situation that causes me a lot of stress, I feel my whole body tighten up completely. All my muscles, and my

fists - they clench. And I know about the adrenalin because I'm actually quite angry /1/."

#5: What does it feel like to want to explode?

"I'm really angry, I just don't know what to do with myself /1/, because if I lose my temper I know I'm just going to want to get out of this body, get out of the situation, dematerialise /2/. I feel like knocking a hole in the wall, just to put my energy somewhere /3/."

#7: What does the darkroom mean for you, and what are you muttering to yourself about while pacing up and down in there?

"Well, the darkroom is private. It's my domain, and nobody really goes in there except me, and you have to knock before you go in, in case I've got film out so it's a good place. And maybe I go in there for psychological reasons - because I'm then in the dark. It's a sanctuary /1/. I'm usually saying fuck this, fuck that while in there. I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm just going to get out of here, and the people can basically stuff themselves /2/."

#8: What do you mean by your 'lot in life'?

"Well, one has a degree of choice about where one works. One doesn't have to work in a situation like that. I actually chose to leave another job about four months ago and go there, so I should actually handle it until I get something else/1/."

#9: Describe what happens when you go back to your office.

"I go back there and try to solve the situation, to save the situation and get back to the bloody job. Rehash it /1/."

#10: Can you expand on your not going to the toilet and eating a lot while under deadline pressure? "I get very hyped up when I'm working flat out because I've got a certain amount of work to do, so I'm running at peak revs /1/. I eat quickly. I hardly taste the food, and it seems like I eat a lot /2/. I also put off going to the toilet - I'm just not aware of the pressure on my bladder /2/."

#11: Describe what you mean by 'it's all inside of you'.

"Well, I have to keep my lid on or I'll have a nervous breakdown /1/."

#12: How does it drive you?

"The pressure makes the energy, and I feel I've just got to do this and do that, and just keep going /1/. And when I come home at night I think I've got 16 pages to do by tomorrow /2/. I just keep going, I have too. That's what motivates me /3/. It's a heavy pressure situation /1/."

#13: Let's explore your not wanting to communicate with people you work with.

"Well, take Y for example. He'll come into my office /1/. And

I've given myself a certain amount of pages I have to do that day. And I'll have to get them to a certain stage /2/. And Y will come in there and start telling me jokes, or he'll come and winge about something. And just generally he talks and talks and talks. And I don't have time to listen. And it bugs me that he comes in there and wastes my time basically /1/."

#14: Describe what you mean by being in a bubble.

"Well, in terms of not wanting anything from outside to disturb me /1/. All that exists is what I am doing /2/, and no one must come and break my routine or get in my way, upset my equilibrium /1/. I need that bubble, I need that space /2/."

#15: What do you mean by fold up?

"The roof will cave in. It refers to that space. And if the roof caves in I will be useless, I'll crack up /1/."

#16: Tell me more about how stress relates to depression in this situation.

"It's a constant battle to complete any one magazine /1/. And because I'm working under such pressure and deadlines and whatever else, I don't really have time to explore what I am doing /2/. I'm just working on the superficial level of getting it finished, which is no sort of criteria for job satisfaction /3/. And obviously, over a long period of time I do tend to get depressed because all I am doing is being a machine /4/. I'm not really thinking creatively, or laterally,

or anything /2/. I'm just functioning on a certain level and that lowers my self-esteem /4/ because I'm looking for more out of a job /3/. It's depressing I've been depressed for a while /4/."

#17: What do you mean by quality of life?

"I'd like not to be preoccupied with how many pages I haven't done, which does actually weigh on my mind rather heavily. How many blank pages there are to fill - that's the main one at the moment /1/. I'd appreciate getting a job where I didn't have to work in quite so much of a rush, and take my time with things, and plan things properly, and go a little deeper into it /2/. Now I just throw things together /3/. And it upsets my life because sometimes I have to work weekends. I get pretty neurotic about my job, and obviously that rubs off in some areas /4/."

#18: Describe how you can't sleep at night.

"I lie in bed at night thinking - Oh my God, tomorrow I've got to do a million pages. And I haven't done this, and that hasn't arrived yet. And X is supposed to give me photographs, and what am I going to do because nothing is here yet, and I've got to fill those pages by tomorrow night /1/. It makes me feel very anxious that I'm not going to meet the printer's deadline /2/. And I lie awake, tossing and turning and worrying /1/. I suppose it's not very healthy /3/. I also drive my car very fast /4/. And my heart is going flat out in extremes of anger,

or whatever. I suppose that's related to the increase in my adrenalin /5/."

The sense units explicated in the course of the above exercise are listed below.

1.3 Sense Units

#1: Colleagues lack organisational abilities.

/1/ Project entails working to deadlines in which vast amounts of work must be completed in a short time.

/2/ Colleagues complete intial phase of the project at the last minute.

/3/ Perceives she has too little time to complete her part of the project (task) and her colleagues expectations of her as unrealistic.

#2: Employer demands change to final task.

/1/ Perceives completion of her task as under her control.

/2/ Employer demands the incorporation of additional material.

/3/ Perceives demand to alter task as impossible.

/4/ Feels compelled to accomodate employer's demands.

/5/ Attempts to reorganise task.

#3: Subject feels frustrated and helpless with respect to altering her situation.

/1/Organisation has a history of chaotic operations to which her colleagues are accustomed.

/2/ Unfavourable comparison with more efficient others by colleagues.

/3/ Regards careful planning of the project as essential and views herself as unable to function in an unorganised fashion.

/4/ Accustomed to prior organisation of project on the basis of her previous experience.

/5/ Attempts to gain the support, understanding and sympathy of her employer fails.

#4: Subject's anger is embodied as a rise in her blood pressure and adrenalin levels, contraction of her muscular system and clenched fists.

#5: Desire to explode and express her anger violently.

/1/ Experiences difficulty knowing what to do with herself when angry.

/2/ Imagines she will cease to exist (dematerialise) if she loses control of herself.

/3/ Desire to cathart intense arousal in a violent and destructive fashion.

#6: Intense desire to escape immediate situation.

#7: Subject compromises by withdrawing to a place of darkness

within the organisation where she paces up and down muttering to herself.

/1/ Regards this space as a sanctuary in which she can remain private and undisturbed by her colleagues.

/2/ Expresses distaste and protest towards the situation from which she wishes to withdraw.

#8: Perceives the situation as her 'lot in life'.

/1/ Fatalistically accepts her situation as one she chose.

#9: Returns to her work space and attempts to accomodate her employer's demands.

/1/ Attempts to organise the chaos.

#10: Subject ignores normal bodily needs for relieving waste products and appears to eat more than normal.

/1/ Functions at a maximum energy level.

/2/ Experiences little sensual awareness or pleasure while gulping her food down.

/3/ Expresses a lack of awareness with respect to her need to relieve herself.

#11: Perceives a heightened state of arousal as essential for completing her task.

/1/ Fears a nervous collapse should she lose control of herself.

#12: Feels driven.

/1/ Feels pressurised and compelled to complete her task.

/2/ Becomes obsessed with meeting the deadline even when physically removed from her task.

/3/ Perceives the pressure as motivating.

#13: Subject becomes aware that she does not want to communicate with her colleagues.

/1/ Perceives colleague who disturbs her as irritating and as wasting her time.

/2/ Sets goals in order to complete final task on time.

#14: Subject experiences herself as encapsulated in a bubble.

/1/ Demands that colleagues do not disturb her concentration and precarious equilibrium.

/2/ Becomes totally involved in and preoccupied with her task and views her preoccupation as essential for completing her task.

#15: Perceives the possibility of losing concentration as a threat to her ability to complete her task.

/1/ Fears that if her space is disturbed she will break down and collapse.

#16: Subject regards restricted expression of her frustrations as responsible for her depression.

- /1/ Perceives completing task as a constant battle.
- /2/ Pressure prevents deeper creative exploration of her task.
- /3/ Feels dissatisfied with her superficial treatment of the task and expresses desire for deeper involvement.
- /4/ Associates her current feelings of depression and lowered self-esteem with the dehumanising way in which she is called to perform her task.

#17: Subject regards her quality of life as inadequate.

- /1/ Task demands impinge on her private life in the sense that they weigh her down even when physically removed from the task context.
- /2/ Seeks an opportunity that would involve less pressure and greater creative involvement and planning.
- /3/ Feels she just throws things together presently.

#18: Subject's inability to let go of her task associated with insomnia.

- /1/ Experiences constant worry and restlessness about task even when given the opportunity to rest.
- /2/ Feels anxious about not meeting the given deadline.
- /3/ Views her preoccupation with her task as unhealthy.
- /4/ Notes reckless driving habits when under pressure.
- /5/ Anger associated with increased heart rate and adrenalin levels.

Using the sense units explicated above, a case synopsis was formulated. This contained the essence of what Subject 1's description revealed.

1.4 Case Synopsis

Subject 1's job is associated with the pressure of time constraints, or working to deadlines. While she views meeting these deadlines as impossible, and the expectation as unrealistic, she also feels compelled to achieve or conform to the set time limit. In essence then, she feels that she is expected to achieve the impossible.

As a means towards completing the task effectively, she attempts to organise and plan her work. She regards this as essential, since it enables her to control the task, and has also proved an effective means of getting the job done previously, i.e. it is something to which she is accustomed. Planning and organising the task is thus her primary means of coping with the pressure of time constraints.

Her need to plan and organise the task, however, is frustrated, thus further exacerbating the pressure she experiences. She provides several possible reasons for her frustration, all of which imply criticism of her colleagues and the way in which they function within the enterprise. As such, she holds her

colleagues responsible for her sense of frustration.

Subject 1 attempts to remedy her feelings of frustration by communicating her need for organisation to her boss. This attempt fails to have the desired effect when he compares her to more efficient colleagues.

She reacts spontaneously with intense and violent physical and emotional arousal. Her heart rate, blood pressure and adrenalin levels increase, her muscular system contracts, and her fists clench. Her desire to express her anger violently is inhibited however. She fears that she may explode, cease to exist, and lose control of herself if she expresses her anger. The conflict between her need and her fear leaves her feeling confused about what she should do.

She subsequently withdraws to a place of refuge and privacy. Here she is able to escape those she deems responsible for her frustration and anger. At the same time she is able to reduce her level of arousal by pacing up and down, and by reflecting upon her situation. She regains control of herself, and resigns herself to the situation on the basis of her own choice to change her place of employment.

She returns to the task and organises it according to specific goals. She considers her heightened state of arousal as

essential and functional in meeting the deadline. It is, however, a level of arousal associated with both risk and cost to herself.

Firstly, she recognises her equilibrium as precarious and easily disturbed, and fears losing the arousal necessary for meeting the deadline. In order to prevent her own collapse and breakdown, she isolates herself from her colleagues, and when disturbed by them, becomes irritable. As such, she views her colleagues as a threat to her equilibrium.

Secondly, she feels forced, driven and compelled to complete the task within the required time limits. She becomes totally preoccupied and obsessed with this goal, and ignores or is unaware of her normal bodily needs for healthy functioning. In addition, she becomes anxious and restless when not involved in the task, which weighs heavily on her mind, and about which she worries constantly. She also experiences difficulty sleeping, and takes increased risks when driving. As such, the general quality of her life is affected.

Thirdly, she feels dissatisfied with the quality of the product delivered, since the exacerbated time constraints prevent creative involvement in the task. She feels depressed, dehumanised and unfulfilled as a result.

Finally, she feels powerless to alter her situation, since each means used in her battle to cope with the demands made on her, is frustrated.

2. SECOND ORDER SENSE UNITS

Second order sense units were the product of repeating steps one and two of the data explication on the case synopses for each subject in terms of three analytic emphases, i.e. contextual relations, essential meaning and structural unfolding. The themes extracted with respect to each analytic emphasis are listed below.

2.1 Themes of Context

- a) Expectation that powerful others recognise and facilitate subject's personal needs (n=9)
- b) Demands challenge needs and existing self-image and appear as demands for self-abandonment and/or compromise (n=9)
- c) Pressure to meet contextual demands such as time constraints and responsibility for others (n=7)
- d) Movement into alternative context associated with exacerbated demands (n=7)
- e) Personal resources and capabilities revealed as inadequate for meeting demands (n=4)
- f) Involvement in task associated with the possibility of

non-being (n=4)

g) Alternative contexts offer possible fulfillment of needs (n=3).

h) Changes within specific context associated with demands for adaptation (n=3)

2.2 Themes of Structure

a) Compulsion to meet demands that challenge needs or imply personal cost (n=11)

b) Persistent and active exploration, assessment and adoption of coping behaviours that promise a less personally damaging self-world relationship (n=11)

c) Apparent inability to reconstitute the self-world relationship associated with episodes of intense arousal (n=9)

d) Sense of powerlessness associated with poor self-evaluation and an attitude of passivity with respect to altering the self-world relationship (n=8)

e) Attempts to shift focus associated with exacerbated demands (n=6)

f) Successful coping associated with relief (n=5)

2.3 Themes of Essence

a) A series of more and less intense and painful emotional

states suggesting a poor self-image, hostility towards the world, specific and unspecific threat, as well as extremes of passive and active arousal (n=11)

b) Embodiment as medical, physiological and behavioural symptoms (n=10)

c) Progressive alienation from others associated with mutual hostility between subject and world and holding others responsible for the poor self-world relationship (n=11)

d) Poor evaluation of the project in terms of its demands and nature (n=8).

e) Challenge to self-image in terms of level of self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy (n=8)

3. MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS

Lived stress is revealed as a disturbance in the individual's relationship with his/her world. The latter constitutes relations to projects and others. The experience is initiated when the individual becomes aware that that he/she can only meet these worldly demands at personal cost to him/herself, i.e. the individual is called to abandon personal needs and values in order to fulfill worldly demands. The individual is aware that these demands are beyond his/her control and that his/her resources and capabilities are inadequate for addressing these demands. As such, he/she is presented with a situation in which the self-world dialogue loses its

invitational character.

Moreover, demands appear to be based upon and motivated by the past, i.e. the individual is aware of the past as a limitation for the unfolding of his/her desired future, and that past choices and ways of relating are perpetuated into the present. Even where the individual is aware of more attractive possibilities for the future, the attainment of these is viewed as remote. In this sense, the individual appears trapped in a meaningless and exhausting present by his/her personal historicity.

Lived stress is characterised by persistent coping efforts for the purpose of minimising personal cost. In other words, the individual attempts to alter worldly demands and personal limitations by means of strategic possibilities which are assessed, implemented and evaluated in terms of their impact on the self-world relationship. Coping efforts suggest that the individual:

- a) negotiates with the world and others in order to elicit their support and understanding; and,
- b) moves away from the world by creating greater distance between him/herself and worldly demands.

Coping efforts are interspersed with episodes of intense arousal and/or passivity. These arise where efforts to alter

or escape worldly demands fail. Episodes of intense arousal are characterised by internal pressure to violently transform the self-world relationship. Fulfillment of the latter is inhibited by the fear of self-destruction and social disapproval.

Passivity is characterised by the individual's loss of faith in his/her ability to make an impact on the world such that his/her personal needs can be met or worldly demands altered. In other words, the individual feels helpless with respect to fulfilling his/her own needs and instead, moves away from him/herself by succumbing to worldly demands. As such, the individual gives up the struggle to assert his/her needs, and the likelihood of a more desirable self-world relationship recedes as a possibility.

Both intense arousal and passivity are associated with a poor self-image in terms of the individual:

- a) being irrational and hostile;
- b) losing faith in his/her ability to cope; and,
- c) undervaluing him/herself in comparison to others.

This view of the self is further confirmed by a series of unpleasant and sometimes painful emotional states that suggest the individual as socially subordinate, alienated, hostile and threatened. In this sense, lived stress challenges the

individual's idea of him/herself as worthwhile and able to make an impact on the world.

Lived stress is also characterised by progressive alienation from others. This takes the appearance of mutual hostility between the individual and others in his/her world. More specifically, powerful others from the past and in the present are revealed as unwilling to facilitate the fulfillment of individual needs, and as hostile towards the individual's efforts to alter the self-world relationship. Others who operate from a similar power base to that of the stressed individual are revealed as uncooperative and unsupportive. At the same time, however, the individual is revealed as critical of and hostile towards others, and holds them responsible for the poor self-world relationship. In this sense, lived stress challenges the individual's taken for granted view of others and the world as supportive.

Lived stress is subjectively and meaningfully embodied in symptoms which express the individual's attitude of self-abandonment for the sake of worldly demands. In other words, symptoms reveal the individual as preoccupied with project concerns in such a way that his/her field of awareness is restricted to a point that excludes, and even denies, his/her need for continued unfolding. At the same time, the individual appears unable to let go of the project. Symptoms also confirm

the individual as hostile towards, fearful of, and powerless with respect to, altering worldly demands.

Finally, lived stress is characterised by:

- a) continued coping efforts directed towards ensuring the fulfillment of personal needs following episodes of intense arousal and passivity;
- b) relief associated with successful efforts to resolve self-world incongruence; or,
- c) the cessation of worldly demands that imply personal cost.

It is important to note with respect to successful coping efforts, however, that these may later be revealed as grounds for further stressful encounters in the sense that they bring needs central to the individual's existence into competition.

4. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Before examining the central themes extracted from the above synthesis, and dialoguing these with existing stress-related literature (Chapters 7 to 9), several preliminary comments with respect to each analytic emphasis were deemed necessary.

4.1 Contextual Relations

A fundamental assumption of the phenomenological approach is that human beings are always involved and engaged in the world (Kruger, 1979). As such, human reality constitutes a self-world dialogue. Furthermore, the nature of this dialogue is already given, to some extent, as a result of the relatively enduring institutional and cultural frameworks available to the individual.

It was clear from the outset that lived stress was situated in a wide variety of contexts, i.e. subjects described task-related stress, intimate interpersonal stress, stress associated with problematic sexual and physical identities, as well as stressful socio-political conditions. Moreover, few descriptions were characterised by reference to only one context and no theme appeared unique to any one particular context. This implied lived stress as based upon something more fundamental than concrete physical locality. In other words, contextual analysis confirmed that stress cannot be adequately defined in terms of stress-related stimuli.

Furthermore, Spignesi's (1981) view of context as a relationship rather than a discrete and bounded entity was supported.

Analysis in terms of context did not prove futile, however. Indeed, one of the most interesting and pertinent themes extracted concerned the manner in which power actually operates within our society. More specifically, subjects revealed their expectations of power, namely, that powerful others should facilitate the fulfillment of their personal needs. The nature of this expectation is supported by research conducted by Schuitema (1987) who identified the facilitation of individual needs as the primary criterion by which the legitimacy of power is evaluated. This theme is discussed in more detail in the following chapter (Section 6.1).

4.2 Structural Unfolding

Lived stress appeared to unfold as a series of interrelated scenes over a period of time, i.e. it was characterised by a dynamic structure that revealed something of what subjects brought to the context, as well as how they moved through that experience. It is important to note that lived stress was continuous, i.e. the experience seldom came to an end, since even in those instances where subjects did achieve relief, the strategy responsible could later be revealed as grounds for further threat. Furthermore, shifts of focus towards alternative projects and areas of existence (as a means of avoiding stressful encounters) confronted subjects with additional threats to their well-being.

A further two structural observations deserve note. Firstly, the period of time over which scenes unfolded differed quite dramatically between subjects. For instance, Subject 2's experience lasted only a few weeks, whereas Subject 6's covered most of his 37 years. In this sense, the duration of lived stress, and the length of time covered by any one of its constituent scenes, was subjective.

Secondly, several of the scenes identified appeared several times for a single subject, thus suggesting the nature of lived stress as cyclical rather than linear. In other words, subjects adopted several coping strategies simultaneously, these efforts were interspersed with episodes of intense arousal and passivity, and subjects often repeated the same strategies at different times. Furthermore, scenes did not necessarily occur in the same order for each cycle or subject, thus suggesting several variations of structure in the unfolding of lived stress.

4.3 Essential Meaning

Fundamental to being human is its perspectival nature, i.e. human beings see from a particular perspective or point of view (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Romanyshyn, 1975; Murray, 1984).

The focus on essential meaning thus presented an attempt to climb inside subjects' world and view this world and their

relationship with it through their eyes.

The latter analytic emphasis highlighted several pervasive and consistent themes associated with lived stress. These confirmed that: subjects' relationship to the world was disturbed; and, lived stress as a mode of being characterised by both hostility towards the world and a poor sense of self-worth. The latter observation supported the direction of current research around the Type-A Behaviour Pattern (Price, 1982; O'Donnel, 1984; Van der Merwe, 1986; Williams, cited in Time Magazine, 1986), and furthermore, suggested stress as closely associated with certain features of the Paranoid Personality Disorder as described by Pretzer (1988). The latter feature is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS -
DIALOGUE

"(O)ne should first concentrate to the best degree possible on what is given or being experienced and only secondly ask more specific questions." (Giorgi, 1971:10)

A secondary, but equally important, aim of the investigation was that of relating insights gained by means of phenomenological explication to contemporary stress-related constructs and models, such that conceptual integration within the field could be achieved.

Using the meaningful synthesis presented in the previous chapter as a basis for discussion, the present chapter explores some of the more salient themes revealed. In order to prevent reinvention of the wheel, these themes, where possible, are immediately dialogued with existing conceptualisation in the field.

1. LIVED STRESS AS THE PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL COST

The nature of subjects' projects were revealed as incongruent with their existing skills and personal needs, and they generally expressed extreme negativity towards their projects in terms of: the demands made on them; and, the lack of personal satisfaction the project offered.

1.1 Pressure to Meet Contextual Demands

The most common pressures described were those associated with: unrealistic time constraints; responsibility for others (both subordinates and children); and, competition between the demands of concurrent projects. In terms of Baruch, et al (1987), these demands could be defined as role overload, role burden and role conflict respectively.

Role overload could be further distinguished by the terms quantitative and qualitative overload. In the first instance, subjects possessed the necessary skills for task completion but were unable to implement them. Subject 1, for example, possessed organisational skills, but experienced difficulty planning the timeous completion of her task in the face of her colleagues' lack of co-operation.

Qualitative overload, associated with the lack of relevant

skills, was also evident. Subject 2, for instance, did not possess the technical skills required for completing his building operations, while Subject 5 admitted that his difficulties with respect to intimacy were associated with his lack of interpersonal skills. The presence of qualitative overload provided support for the transactional model of stress in the sense that subjects' personal resources and capabilities were revealed as inadequate for addressing contextual demands.

Role conflict was evident where subjects became aware that demands associated with tasks central to their existence existed in competition. For example, Subject 7's roles as a professional woman and mother were brought into conflict in terms of the dual and concurrent demands that each project made on her time and energy resources. Similarly Subject 4 felt 'torn apart' by concurrent demands.

Finally, and of critical importance, was that subjects felt compelled to meet these demands. Indeed, even where the demand was initially a choice, for instance Subject 9, structural changes precipitated a situation in which she felt she must 'run like crazy' in order to complete the project timeously. In this sense, subjects' invitation for dialogue with their world became tantamount to a demand, and subjects revealed themselves as driven, rather than willing, to meet these demands. In this sense, subjects' locus of control was

external.

1.2 Call to Abandon Personal Needs

The nature of subjects' demands revealed lived stress as a challenge to their existing needs. This, when interpreted, suggested that subjects were expected to abandon their personal needs for the sake of demands, and emphasized the relationship between self and world as one of opposition.

Subject 8, for instance, was called to abandon her need for a more fulfilling people-orientated project in order to ensure the material well-being of her dependent. Furthermore, subjects were expected to express conduct contrary to their own personal values. Subjects 3 and 4, for instance, both of whom regarded themselves as fundamentally honest, were expected to be dishonest, Subject 3 in terms of acting contrary to her own code of ethics, and Subject 4 in terms of being civil towards colleagues whom she despised.

Subjects were also called to adopt roles that jeopardised the possibility of personal fulfillment. For example, Subject 7 associated her role as mother with deteriorating mental alertness. In this sense, subjects were not only pressured to do something, but were as often pressured to be something by their world. It is important to note that 'world' and 'worldly'

as used in the present investigation reflects subjects' personal world, or the world to which they are in relationship, rather than the objective world.

The above findings confirmed subjects' internal needs and values as an essential component of lived stress, thus providing further support for the transactional model of stress. In view of the critique directed towards this approach, namely that it provides little empirical support for the above notion, it was thought pertinent to list the various needs identified. These were revealed as needs for: creative involvement in the task; acknowledgement; recognition; a sense of achievement; perfection; financial security; facilitation; guidance; personal development; situational control; stimulation; a meaningful relationship; more appropriate tasks; a sense of self-worth; and, the right to express joy.

1.3 Dialogue

Besides confirming Baruch, et al's (1987) definitions of various types of role demand as useful, the nature of lived stress as the perception of personal cost, in terms of the individual being pressured to abandon his/her personal needs and values for the sake of demands, confirmed stress as a perceived threat to the phenomenological self.

In addition, explication confirmed various components of the transactional model, and furthermore, suggested the self-world dualism inherent to this approach as an accurate reflection of lived stress, rather than a methodological artifact. More specifically, lived stress revealed incongruence between that which the individual desired or needed to be and that which his/her world demanded or pressured him/her to be.

2. LIVED STRESS AS A SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT

The nature of the relationship between subjects and their world was apparent when they compared their present projects with those projects they considered more appropriate for themselves. In order to fully explicate this theme it is necessary to explore the temporal nature of lived stress, i.e. subjects' views of their past, present and future, and the relationship between them.

2.1 The Past as a Limitation

Subjects described their formative years and/or more recent past as responsible for incongruence between their own needs and demands. In this sense, each subject became aware of his/her situation not as a tabula rasa, but as a past that was both shared and uniquely his/her own.

Subject 6, for example, was forced to follow a particular vocation by his parents, and even when free to follow his chosen vocation, discovered he was over-qualified. The lack of relevant skills with which to address present projects expressed a similar theme, namely subjects' awareness of the past as a limitation for the unfolding of an attractive and desirable future. This awareness echoed that of the young Karl Marx, namely that "we cannot always choose the vocation to which we believe we are called. Our social relations, to some extent, have already commenced before we are in a position to determine them" (cited in Adams, 1940:15).

Furthermore, subjects described how patterns of relating to others in the past were perpetuated into the present, even when these patterns were experienced as painful. For instance, Subject 9's unfulfilled need to win her father's approval during her childhood was expressed as a powerful need to achieve and gain approval as an adult. The past as grounds for an uncomfortable present was also evident for Subject 6. More specifically, as a child he experienced difficulty relating to his father. At the same time however, he realised that his mother could relate to his father, and therefore adopted her as a role model. Subsequently, this effort to cope led to further difficulties, i.e. transvestite behaviour and impotence. Subject 1 expressed a similar theme, but with respect to the more recent past, i.e. having grown accustomed

to more organised activity, she was unable to cope with her colleagues' lack of organisation.

2.2 The Present as Uncomfortable

Subjects expressed extreme negativity towards their present tasks and described their tasks as: lacking meaningful or real rewards; unfulfilling; dehumanising; demeaning; and, boring. Furthermore, project demands were viewed as unrealistic, and as dangerous to subjects' health and survival in the long term.

Firstly, projects were seen to prevent subjects' desired direction of personal development. Subject 5, for instance, felt that his work situation thwarted his needs for achievement. Secondly, demands appeared to confront subjects with the possibility of physical non-existence. For Subjects 4 and 7, concurrent demands on their time and energy resources were associated with exhaustion and the threat of physical collapse, while Subjects 1 and 9 ignored their needs for replenishment in their efforts to meet exacerbated time constraints. Subject 2 was faced with a more extreme threat in the sense of falling to his death from an unstable scaffold while attempting to address his task demands. As such, Spielberger's (cited in Hobfoll, 1989) notion of stress as a threat to both the phenomenological and physical self was confirmed.

2.3 The Desired Future as Untenable

Several subjects expressed awareness of contexts and projects in which their needs could be actualised. Awareness of these possibilities was based either upon past experience, or upon movement towards these alternative contexts. Subjects 1, 8 and 11, for instance, evaluated their present tasks as meaningless in terms of more meaningful involvement in the past, while Subjects 4, 5 and 7 considered their movement towards alternative contexts as promising them an opportunity to actualise needs that had not been met in the past.

Even in cases where the desired alternative was present, however, subjects were prevented from taking advantage of the opportunity by personal limitations and needs. Subject 8, for instance, was unable to pursue a people-orientated career because she was both unqualified and responsible for the welfare of her child. In this sense, her past and present limitations trapped her within the uncomfortable present.

Subjects' attempts to move away from previous stressful encounters, by including more meaningful projects or by excluding the stressful project also provided grounds for viewing a more comfortable self-world relationship as impossible. A case in point was Subject 4 who moved towards a more meaningful project on a part time basis, but was unable

to do so permanently for financial reasons. Similarly, Subject 10 divorced the husband who abused her, only to experience difficulties coping as a divorcee. In this sense, shifts of focus towards alternative contexts suggested not only that subjects' present discomfort was based upon the past, but attempts to attain a more desirable future as motivated by the need for self-world harmony.

2.4 Dialogue

The temporal nature of lived stress suggested subjects as trapped within a meaningless and exhausting present on the basis of past limitations without hope for the unfolding of their desired future. More specifically, the uncomfortable present, where subjects arrived through coercion rather than choice, suggested their existential freedom as limited on the basis of their personal historicity.

Furthermore, the critical role played by the past appeared to support the role of personality as a moderator. More specifically, past ways of relating in world (or the subject's life script) frustrated his/her desired unfolding, and in this sense, suggested him/her as more susceptible to stressful encounters.

3. LIVED STRESS AS PERSISTENT COPING EFFORTS

Subjects did not, however, accept the status quo. Indeed, they implemented a variety of coping strategies for the purpose of ensuring their self-world relationship as more comfortable. This suggested subjects as actively engaged in resolving their self-world incongruence.

3.1 Coping as a Reflective Activity

It is important to note that subjects reflected upon the implications of a strategy before employing it. Subject 5, for instance, considered his options for coping when an other cheated him out of a prize, while Subject 2 reflected upon task-related problems. Furthermore, coping efforts were directed towards particular ends. Subject 1, for instance, attempted to organise her task so as to meet a deadline, while Subject 7 invested intensive effort in her task in order to achieve financial recognition. As such, coping efforts were intentional, i.e. motivated by the need for self-world congruence.

Reflection was also evident in subjects' assessment of the success or failure of specific coping efforts. Subjects 3, 8 and 9, for example, felt that they had earned the reputation of 'trouble-makers' among powerful others following attempts

to assert their needs, while Subject 10 doubted that her lover would ever trust her again.

3.2 Coping Efforts as Negotiation with the World

Initially subjects attempted to negotiate with the world by: making others aware of their needs: and, trying to mobilise like-minded support. Subjects 1, 3 and 8, for instance, described attempts to mobilise the support of their supervisors and/or colleagues, while Subject 5 won support for his intended action from a sympathetic associate. Subjects also moved towards others who could offer them a deeper understanding of contextual demands and personal needs, such as Subject 6 who attempted to seek professional help and the company of others with similar problems as himself.

Efforts to negotiate with the world concerning its demands were also evident where subjects attempted to create a situation in which both themselves and the world could benefit. Subject 7, for instance, intended achieving a compromise between her professional and parental status with her employer, while Subjects 3 and 8 invested intensive effort in their tasks in the hope of earning personal and financial rewards. In this sense, subjects asserted their needs and attempted to elicit the understanding and/or support of others.

3.3 Coping Efforts as Movement Away from the World

Subjects also attempted to escape contextual demands by withdrawing completely or partially from the context, and/or by shifting their focus towards other potentially more fulfilling areas of their existence. Subject 3, for instance, directed her attention away from work-related concerns by becoming involved in an intimate relationship, while Subjects 4, 5 and 7 became involved in alternative projects that promised fulfillment of their needs for meaningful activity. As such, subjects used distraction as a means for resolving incongruence between their own needs and demands.

Subjects also attempted to avoid awareness of persons or projects deemed responsible for the poor self-world relationship. Subject 4, for instance, avoided an employer to whom she felt ambivalent, and both Subjects 1 and 2 attempted to isolate themselves from colleagues. Furthermore, Subject 10 divorced her husband, thus removing herself from an abusive relationship.

In this sense, subjects attempted to improve the self-world relationship by creating greater distance between themselves and worldly demands.

3.4 Coping Efforts as Movement Against the World

Movement against their world generally occurred during episodes of intense arousal. These occurred as spontaneous and non-rational responses where attempts to negotiate and move away from the world failed to have their desired impact, i.e. they failed to improve subjects' relationship with the world.

Episodes of intense arousal were characterised by intense and violent anger and hostility towards their world. Subject 1, for instance, experienced an uncontrollable desire to put her fist through the wall of her office, and Subject 11 to throw objects around the room. Furthermore, both Subjects 8 and 10 fantasized about shooting those deemed responsible for their discomfort. A strong desire to attack was also evident for Subject 5 who debated the benefits of attacking or withdrawing from the person he deemed responsible for his lack of recognition.

The nature and intensity of subjects' hostility suggested that they felt considerable internal pressure to transform their relation to the world by violently destroying that world and those associated with it. In most instances this desire was not enacted, primarily because it confronted subjects with loss of self-control and possible self-destruction. Subject 1, for instance, feared she would explode, cease to exist and dematerialise if she expressed her anger. Subjects also

inhibited their expression of violence for fear of social disapproval. Here subjects withdrew in order to reduce their arousal. Subject 11, for example, escaped the confines of her home in order to identify the source of her agitation, and Subject 1 to prevent violent action she might later regret. Moreover, both Subject 1 and 11 attempted to cathart their arousal by pacing up and down.

In other instances, subjects expressed their hostility, but with reduced intensity. Subjects 3, 5 and 8, for example, verbally attacked others after they failed to achieve recognition for their efforts, and Subject 9 transgressed organisational norms in an impulsive fashion. Hostility towards others was also expressed as irritation, resentment, criticism and rejection of others.

Movement against the world was not always viewed as dysfunctional, particularly where the subject was able to reduce arousal to tolerable levels. Subject 1, for instance, regarded a certain degree of opposition to the world essential for managing her task, in that it facilitated her preoccupation with its completion.

3.5 Coping Efforts as Movement Away from the Self

Movement away from the self as a means of coping suggested that

subjects gave up the struggle to assert their own needs and conformed to contextual demands. This sense of passivity, or self-abandonment, could also be termed movement towards the world, since subjects allowed the world to control their present, and as such, deny them access to the desired future.

Partial or complete denial of personal needs for the sake of contextual demands generally occurred where persistent efforts to alter demands failed, and subjects lost hope of meeting their needs or of escaping that context. Subject 4, for instance, maintained a facade of civility towards those with whom she worked, despite the fact that doing so nauseated her, while subjects who were able to focus on limited duration projects, became so obsessed with meeting their time constraints that they ignored very basic needs for healthy functioning, such as going to the toilet and eating.

Resignation to contextual demands expressed a similar theme. For instance, Subjects 8 and 9 gave up hope of ever enjoying a more rewarding occupation, and Subjects 10 and 11 of ever enjoying an intimate relationship.

Movement away from the self was also expressed as a sense of helplessness in the face of worldly demands. Subjects 1 and 3, for instance, regarded further attempts to alter contextual demands as pointless.

3.6 Dialogue

Coping as a reflective activity confirmed both Lazarus' (1966) and Cox & Mackay's (1981) understandings of secondary appraisal, i.e. that subjects assess coping resources as possibilities that promise improvement prior to their implementation (Lazarus, 1966) and then evaluate the impact of these implemented strategies (Cox & Mackay, 1981) for the self-world relationship. This has important implications for the explication of the structural unfolding of lived stress (Chapter 8).

The precise nature of coping efforts, however, confirmed their classification as highly problematic, and indeed, Horney's (1945; 1951) classification of neurotic coping styles appeared more appropriate than those systems more common within the stress-related literature. More specifically, Horney (1945; 1951) identified three primary means by which the individual defends him/herself against threat, i.e. movement away from the world (detachment), movement against the world (aggression), and movement towards the world (affiliation). In the context of the present investigation the latter conformed to subjects' movement away from themselves. It is important to note, however, that subjects' initial attempts to negotiate with the world are not included in Horney's (1945; 1951) scheme, thus suggesting negotiation as an authentic, rather

than neurotic, means of coping.

Despite this observation, several links to the existing stress-related could be established. More specifically, Folkman & Lazarus' (1980) view of problem-focused coping, most prevalent in situations where the individual believes something constructive can be done to alter worldly demands (Carver, et al, 1989), adequately captured subjects' attempts to negotiate with the world. Furthermore, Latack's (1986) distinction between take-control (negotiation) and escape (movement away from the world) strategies was supported.

Movement against the world, or hostility towards the world and others, was most evident during episodes of intense arousal, and generally occurred when subjects realised that they would have to endure worldly demands. This conformed to Folkman & Lazarus' (1980) definition of emotion-focused coping and suggested violent attempts to transform the self-world relationship as a type of coping effort.

Moving away from the self, or self-abandonment, appeared congruent with what Lazarus (1968) termed 'defensive action'. It must be noted, however, that while subjects denied their needs, they did not do so without protest. Nor did they forget the sacrifice they made. In this sense, defensive action is better understood as foregoing the fulfillment of personal

needs, rather denying the existence of these personal needs.

Finally, and of critical importance, is that while Ford & Neale (1985) note a lack of empirical evidence with respect to the role and development of learned helplessness, or a subjects' inference of the basis of past experience that all further action is pointless (Baumeister & Scher, 1988), explication confirmed the hypothesis. More specifically, subjects' passivity suggested that they viewed the desired future as permanently 'out of reach' (to quote Subject 8), and as such, gave up the struggle for a more attractive future. In this sense, the meaningful future receded as a possibility.

4. LIVED STRESS AS LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

A sense of helplessness was evident in subject's poor self-evaluations, both whilst moving against the world and during moments of passivity.

4.1 Challenge to the Desired-Self

The challenge to subjects' desired self was implicit with respect to their being pressurised to forgo the fulfillment of their personal needs for the sake of their worldly demands. The challenge was also more explicit, however.

Subject 3's movement from a heterosexual to homosexual relationship, for instance, implied the loss of established fantasies about herself, while her movement from being single to being in relation to an other implied the initial exclusion of less significant others and the inhibition of her more gregarious nature. As such, she felt she was acting contrary to her character. Furthermore, Subject 6 claimed to living out his father's sense of alienation and inappropriate career unfoldment rather than his own story and Subject 8 to have strayed from her destiny in the sense that she had not found her rightful place in the world.

A challenge to subjects' desired self was also evident during episodes of intense arousal when subjects felt vulnerable and out of control, and expressed doubts about being able to control their agitated response to the world. In short, the intensity of their emotion threatened to overwhelm them, and in addition, threatened their idea of themselves as rational beings. Subject 9, for instance, was unable to identify with herself when angry, aggressive and out of control. In this sense, she implied her behaviour as incongruent with her desired self.

This feature implied lived stress as a mode of being in which the subject's idea of him/herself (as in control, ethical, reasonable, special, etc.) was challenged.

4.2 Loss of Faith in Coping Ability

An attitude of passivity was generally associated with subjects losing faith in their ability to cope, i.e. subjects felt helpless with respect to altering worldly demands. Subject 1, for instance, described how she felt powerless to alter her situation after consistent attempts to cope failed, while Subject 3 felt the same with respect to organisational norms. Potentially unfavourable social comparisons contributed to subjects' loss of faith in themselves. Subject 8, for instance, viewed herself as unqualified to perform real activities when compared to her colleagues, while Subject 7, doubted her decision to return to work because of what her non-working peers would think.

Loss of faith also appeared as self-doubt and lowered self-esteem. Subject 2, for instance, doubted his ability to solve the problems which confronted him and Subject 10 seriously questioned her ability to enjoy a long-term committed relationship. Subject 3, on the other hand, described how her self-respect was undermined by her weight problem, the latter being exacerbated by stress in other areas of her life, while Subject 9 emphasized how her poor self-esteem motivated her need for achievement, i.e. achievement offered a means by which she could improve her sense of self-worth in both her own and others' eyes. As such, she confirmed the relation between low

self-esteem and Type-A behaviour patterns as noted by Price (1982) and Van der Merwe (1986).

4.3 Dialogue

Subjects' sense of helplessness was based upon the realisation that they were powerless to alter or resist worldly demands that called them to abandon their desired self. As such, mutual co-existence between subject and world was brought into question, in the sense that they lost faith in their ability to assert themselves and thus verify their existence as worthwhile (Fromm, 1973).

Secondly, conflict between the desire to express violent agitation and the equally strong threat that this action posed for their continued unfoldment suggested that subjects were overwhelmed by contradictory desires to destroy and preserve their world.

In both instances subjects were confronted by the possibility of non-being, i.e. destruction of their world implied that there would be no grounds for further self development, whilst conforming to worldly demands implied abandonment of the desired self. Either response option therefore implied non-being, albeit on qualitatively different levels, i.e. phenomenologically and physically.

5. LIVED STRESS AS EMBODIED

Subjects described a wide variety of medical, physiological and behavioural conditions. These conditions (or symptoms) present what Arcaya (1979) terms the embodied aspects of human experience, and are frequently used as objective criteria for the identification of stress in individuals (cf. Cooper, Cooper & Eaker, 1988).

5.1 Medical Symptoms

Medical symptoms were those bodily conditions that would come to the attention of a medical practitioner, and while idiosyncratic, were nonetheless subjectively meaningful. Headaches, for instance, occurred when resolving difficult task-related problems (Subject 2), a churning and heaving stomach when interacting with colleagues whom the subject despised (Subject 4) and a hardened gall bladder after long standing bitterness towards a current employer (Subject 8).

It is interesting to note that Subjects 4 and 8 were the most concerned about their colleagues/employer finding out about their true feelings, thus confirming the symptom as a metaphor for that which could not be openly articulated to the world (Romanyshyn, 1990).

5.2 Physiological Symptoms

Physiological symptoms refer to the response of various internal bodily systems. Subjects 1, 8 and 9 experienced endocrinal changes associated with hostility towards the world (increased adrenalin levels and acidic body fluids), whereas Subject 2's changes were exocrinal and associated with the fear of falling to his death (sweaty palms). Some subjects also noted increases in their heart rates and blood pressure levels whilst intensely aroused.

5.3 Behavioural Symptoms

Explication of behavioural symptoms was more complex, since these embodied a variety of both a passive and active coping efforts, including stress management strategies.

In terms of passive behavioural symptoms, subjects described both mental and physical exhaustion. Moreover, feeling 'drained and worn-out' (to quote Subject 4), was a prevalent outcome following repeated failure to reconstitute the self-world relationship. In this sense, passive behavioural symptoms excluded action and expressed subjects' feelings of helplessness in the face of contextual demands.

Active behavioural symptoms, on the other hand, suggested

subjects as mobilised for action. Firstly, preoccupation with the context and its problems both expressed and informed subjects of the compelling nature of worldly demands and their mode of self-abandonment in the face of these demands. More specifically, subjects narrowed or restricted their openness within that context to such an extent that the possibility of an attractive future was jeopardised. Subject 8, for instance, claimed that her preoccupation with the problematic work context reduced her openness to more meaningful possibilities and prevented her from choosing a more purposeful direction. Furthermore, subjects ignored their own needs in the face of contextual demands, and were unable to disengage from their tasks even when physically removed from the project context.

Secondly, much of the behavioural activity noted, i.e. excessive sleep, smoking, over-eating, relaxation techniques, drugs and physical exercise, were described as short-term solutions for reducing and minimising discomfort. Congruence between these symptoms and Latack's (1986) definition of symptom management strategies suggested distinctions between stress-related symptoms and coping efforts as problematic. More specifically, Subject 6's cross-dressing could be construed as a behavioural symptom or as an attempt to integrate his dominant and submissive tendencies. Pacing up and down restlessly was also described as a means for reducing arousal, rather than just an expression of arousal.

Subjects' violent opposition to their world was also embodied. Subject 1, for example, clenched her fists in rage, while Subject 6 attempted suicide. The latter confirmed the importance of research relating stress to self-destructive and self-defeating patterns of behaviour (Baumeister & Scher, 1988).

5.4 Sleep Disturbances

Subjects described problematic sleep patterns such as an inability to sleep (insomnia) and disturbing dreams about worldly demands (nightmares). Subject 2, for instance, dreamed of falling to his death, Subject 8 of emotional entanglement with her immediate supervisor, and Subject 4 of being torn apart by wild animals. In this sense, subjects' dreams offered insight into their relationship with the world, i.e. their dreams were metaphors that whispered something of the work to be done (Romanyshyn, 1990), and in this sense, alerted subjects to the possibilities inherent in their context. Furthermore, both insomnia and nightmares confirmed subjects' difficulties in letting go of the concerns that preoccupied them.

5.5 Dialogue

Explication of the various stress-related symptoms confirmed the human body as a meaning-giving and meaning-receiving

existence (Arcaya, 1979), in the the sense that subjects' embodiment both expressed and informed them of their situation, i.e. that the world posed a threat to their desired unfolding. At the same time, similarity between these symptoms and coping behaviour implied distinctions between the two as exceedingly difficult.

6. LIVED STRESS AS POOR SOCIAL RELATIONS

Subjects' relations with others in their world was one of the most interesting and pervasive of categories, i.e. subjects held others from the past and in the present responsible for their present discomfort, experienced pressure to conform to worldly demands and socially accepted standards of behaviour, and were both hostile towards, and alienated from, others.

It is important to note that subjects' negativity towards the social world was progressive. Initially, others were viewed as a means towards reconstituting the self-world relationship. Others' failure to co-operate, or facilitate the meeting of subjects' needs, however, was accompanied by growing sense of disappointment.

6.1 Holding Others Responsible

Holding others responsible for the present discomfort and subjects' criticism of others were closely related.

With respect to the formative past subjects held their parents (or care-givers) responsible for their present situation, in the sense that their parents did not affirm their needs and promoted the pursuit of inappropriate life projects. Subject 8, for instance, was encouraged to acquire commercial skills, despite her interest in people, while Subject 6's interest in nature conservation was actively discouraged by his parents. Furthermore, Subject 6 held his relationship to his father responsible for his difficulties with respect to integrating his submissive and dominant needs. Powerful others in the past were thus revealed as unsympathetic with respect to affirming subjects' needs.

Subjects also held present others responsible for their discomfort, in the sense that they were expected to conform to others' demands while at the same time others failed to fulfill subjects' needs. Subjects 1 and 8, for instance, clearly expected powerful others to alleviate the pressure, or be sympathetic, and became angry when these others were revealed as unsympathetic. Several subjects also described those with the power to alter their situation as unjust, unfair, unethical and insensitive.

6.2 Others as Hostile and Disapproving

Worldly demands suggested subjects as pressured to be or do

something by the world. Pressure to not do or be something, i.e. out of control, was also evident, however. Subject 11, for instance, controlled her desire to be aggressive on the grounds of what others would think. It is important to note that no one was actually present to see her throw a glass against the wall - the mere idea of an other was enough to inhibit her more anti-social desires.

In this sense, lived stress was associated with social pressure that inhibited subjects' expression of themselves by expecting them to conform to ways of being that were uncomfortable. Furthermore, subjects' failure to conform implied a loss of social worth and standing, and others' behaviour towards subjects following their non-conformity confirmed this possibility. Subject 9, for instance, felt that her colleagues and the world had 'turned against her' when she openly rejected organisational norms, while both Subjects 3 and 8 felt they had been labelled 'trouble-makers'. In this sense, subjects became aware of others and the world as hostile and disapproving of their efforts to transform the self-world relationship.

6.3 Alienation and Distance from Others

Distance between subjects and others, or a sense of alienation, was most apparent where subjects: failed to mobilise the support of others; failed to identify with others; were hostile

towards others; and, became aware of their helplessness and relative powerlessness as compared to others. The latter revealed that subjects had given up the struggle to win the support of others for an attractive future, and furthermore, viewed themselves to be the mercy of more powerful others.

Furthermore, subjects experienced difficulty communicating their needs to others with the power to make a difference. Subject 1, for instance, failed to convince her boss of the need for organisation, and Subjects 3 and 8 failed in their attempts to mobilise the support of others.

Subjects' inability to identify with others also suggested social distance. Subject 4, for instance, described how the lack of common ground between herself and her colleagues alienated her, while Subject 3's criticism of her employers and colleagues, in terms of the disparity between their and her ethics, expressed the same fundamental theme.

Subjects' withdrawal from and avoidance of others confirmed their hostility, and suggested concerted attempts to maintain distance between themselves and others. Subject 1, for instance, withdrew from others in order to get a grip on herself, and then remained withdrawn so as to protect her precarious equilibrium. When others threatened to disturb this equilibrium she became irritated with them. Likewise, Subject

2 became snappy with his family when encouraged to relax and take a break from his building operations, and Subject 5 was rude to clients following the loss of a prize.

6.4 Dialogue

A great deal of the stress-related literature conceives of social support as a powerful coping resource. This was confirmed by the present investigation, i.e. while attempts to elicit the support of others were most often unsuccessful, where subjects did mobilise the support of others (for instance Subject 5) discomfort abated to some extent. Furthermore, it is important to note that subjects were not always critical of others. Subject 7, for instance, was grateful to her parents for having taught her how to organise her time, and thankful that she had a husband who supported her decision to go out and work. As such, both the moderating and mediating functions of social support were confirmed.

Subjects, however, more often described the social world as a stressor or exacerbating factor. For instance, Subject 7 described how her excessive demands for stimulation were associated with disharmony between herself and her family. Secondly, subjects' views of others highlighted their disappointed expectations of power. More specifically, powerful others (parents, supervisors, bosses) were revealed as

unsympathetic and unwilling to facilitate the fulfillment of subjects' needs. In addition, others with equal power appeared to either exacerbate existing demands (role burden) or failed to express loyalty towards subjects. In this sense, subjects' expectations of mutual support and empathic understanding were challenged. This confirmed Depue & Monroe's (1986) view of the actual or threatened loss of social support as the main event associated with the onset of stress-related depression.

Finally, others were held responsible for worldly demands that implied personal cost. This feature suggested subjects' locus of control as external rather than internal.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Explication revealed lived stress as a highly complex phenomenon. More specifically, it was characterised by: a relationship of opposition between self and world; a sense of entrapment and helplessness in the face of worldly demands to abandon the desired self; and, persistent attempts to resist these demands. Furthermore, a great many central and more peripheral aspects of contemporary conceptualisation were confirmed.

Explication also shed light on several more specific questions posed by the investigation. These pertain to: the nature of

threat; the classification of coping efforts; and, the role of both personality and social support. Finally, questions concerning the appropriacy and limitations of causal approaches for understanding stress could be addressed.

7.1 Lived Stress and the Nature of Threat

While the cognitive approach defines stress as the perception of threat, the nature of threat has seldom been explored in terms of its meaning. Furthermore, the multiplicity of role demands and unmet needs identified, while useful, confirms attempts to understand stress in terms of these factors as fruitless. More helpful, and a feature that supported transactional approaches to stress, was the relationship between role demands and the individual's needs. More specifically, role demands were seen to jeopardise possibilities for actualising the desired self, in the sense that they called the individual to abandon his/her personal needs.

The nature of the individual's relationship to the world was thus revealed as one of opposition, and the nature of threat as a confrontation with the possibility of non-being. Firstly, the individual's desired self was frustrated, i.e. the world was seen to demand adjustment or adaptation in the individual's desired direction of development.

Efforts to remedy this imbalance confirmed subjects' relationship to their world as one of opposition. More specifically, attempts to assert the desired self were resisted by the world, i.e. the world was revealed as unsympathetic and even hostile towards these efforts. The latter observation suggested the individual as engaged in battle with his/her world. This interpretation was confirmed by Subject 1 who experienced stress as 'battle to cope', Subject 3 who attempted to do 'battle against system' and Subject 9 who felt she had 'lost the battle'.

Secondly, the individual's attempts to either violently transform his/her relationship to the world by aggressively asserting the desired self, or conform to worldly demands by abandoning the desired self, suggested lived stress as a more fundamental confrontation with non-being, i.e. a threat to the individual's continued physical existence. More specifically, violent aggression was associated with destruction of the individual's world, inhibition of this impulse with fears of self-destruction, and conformity to demands with fears of depleting existing energy resources and physical collapse.

Finally, individual's sense of helplessness and passivity following repeated failure to assert the desired self provided thematic support for the role and development of learned

helplessness. The latter suggested that not only was an individual's sense of self-worth undermined, in terms of his/her ability to make an impact on the world, but also emphasized that the individual abandoned his/her desired self for the sake of worldly demands.

7.2 Lived Stress and the Classification of Coping Efforts

The reflective nature of coping, in the sense that coping efforts demonstrated an intentional character, and furthermore, were evaluated both in terms of their potential and actual outcome, confirmed an intimate relationship between cognitive appraisal and coping behaviour.

At the same time, however, the nature and classification of these efforts suggested Hobfoll's (1989) concern about the lack of distinction between stress responding and neurotic symptoms as justified, i.e. the nature of individuals' coping efforts appeared congruent with Karen Horney's (1945; 1951) classification of neurotic coping styles. The one possible exception was individual's initial attempts to negotiate with the world, i.e. to actualise the desired self by creating a situation of mutual benefit to themselves and their world. In this sense, negotiation presented an authentic attempt to assert the desired self. i.e. recognise mutual co-existence of self and world.

Subsequent coping behaviour, however, differed from neurotic defences in at least one important respect. Namely, while the neurotic would normally employ only one coping style rigidly, indiscriminately and compulsively (Horney, 1945), stressed individuals employed a variety of coping styles in a pattern of engagement, disengagement and reengagement. The latter confirmed Chandler & Shermis' (1985) observation that individuals could not be simply classified as approachers or avoiders.

7.3 Lived Stress and The Role of Personality Factors

A particular problem noted in the literature review was that concerning the role of personality factors in lived stress. While most traditional research confines personality to a moderating or mediating role, explication suggested personality, if understood as habitual ways of relating to the world, as both a moderator, mediator and a stress-related outcome.

Firstly, the incorporation of coping outcomes into the individual's life script appeared to increase his/her susceptibility to threat, i.e. past coping efforts provided grounds for further stressful encounters. Subject 9, for instance, developed a high achievement orientation in response to lack of acknowledgement from her father during her childhood.

This suggested her Type-A behaviour pattern as a stress-related outcome. During adulthood, however, this outcome proved self-defeating in that it provided grounds for perceiving threat in the face of structural changes that frustrated the timely completion of her task. In a similar fashion, Subject 6's transvestite tendencies, developed in response to a difficult relationship to his father, became problematic when he reached adolescence.

Secondly, explication confirmed individuals' locus of control as external. More specifically, the world was not seen to invite adjustment, but to demand it. Holding others responsible for worldly demands and individuals' sense of powerlessness in the face of worldly demands further confirmed their locus of control as external. At the same time, however, it was unclear if this feature was present prior to the stressful encounter, i.e. increased the individual's susceptibility to perceiving threat, or if it developed after repeated failure to assert the desired self, i.e. as a stress-related outcome.

7.4 Lived Stress and the Role of Social Support

The role of social support as a coping resource was confirmed in the sense that individuals attempted to negotiate and mobilise the support of sympathetic others. Moreover, reduction in tension was achieved where these efforts were successful.

At the same time, however, explication suggested hostility as more fundamental, not only in the sense that unpleasant emotions entail a feeling of intrusion by a hostile world (Hall & Cobey, 1976), but also in terms of the expression of mutual hostility between the individual and his/her world.

More specifically, the subjects' taken for granted view of others as supportive was thrown into question when others were revealed as unsympathetic towards the individual's attempts to assert the desired self.

7.5 Lived Stress and Causal Models

It is important to note that while worldly demands were grounded on the past, in the sense that individual's personal historicity demonstrated the existence of self-defeating life scripts, coping efforts were also motivated by the need to actualise the desired self.

A criticism of traditional stress models that arose on the basis of explication, therefore, was that while these models are accurate in their conceptualisation of stress as the product of the past, this is but half the story. More specifically, these models fail to accommodate the future as future (Kruger, 1979), i.e. to understand coping as an attempt to assert the desired self in the face of worldly opposition.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SYNTHESIS -

A MODEL

"We may very well be so caught in trying to understand what is before us, that we do not pay attention to the way in which it takes place." (Hollnagel, 1978:215)

The aim of the present chapter is that of developing a systemic model that accurately captures the unfolding of lived stress for each subject, i.e. of understanding the content of lived stress (what was revealed) in terms of its process, or how subjects' come to be stressed, how they move through the experience, and how the experience comes to an end, if at all. In order to achieve this aim several preliminary comments are necessary.

Firstly, the usefulness of distinguishing between the assessment of coping resources and the evaluation of coping efforts was confirmed by explication in the previous chapter. Secondly, and of critical importance for the development of a more adequate model of lived stress, was that traditional

causal models ignore the primacy of the future, i.e. they fail to acknowledge stress as motivated by the individual's need to actualise his/her desired self. Finally, and a critical feature, was that lived stress appeared as persistent attempts to resolve self-world incongruence. The contribution of the latter theme for understanding the manner in which stress unfolds is explored in more detail below.

1. LIVED STRESS AS CONTINUOUS

Explication suggested that few subjects were able to reconstitute their self-world relationship such that their desired self could be actualised. Indeed, those few subjects who did resolve self-world incongruence were either involved in limited duration projects, such as Subject 2, or were otherwise able to avoid that arena of existence associated with worldly demands. For the most part then, subjects were engaged in the ongoing task of attempting to actualise the desired self in the face of worldly opposition.

Firstly, coping efforts in one relational context frequently provided grounds for stressful encounters in alternative relational contexts. Subject 3, for instance, experienced difficulty coming to terms with her obesity, and claimed that stress in other areas of her existence exacerbated her desire to eat. The latter observation suggested a feedback loop

between relational contexts in the sense that an individual's means of coping in one relational context exacerbated demands in other relational contexts.

Subjects' efforts to move towards more desirable relational contexts in the hope of actualising their needs while still maintaining their involvement in the initial context demonstrated the same dynamic, i.e. shifts of focus from one relational context to another were associated with life threatening competition between the demands of each context.

Secondly, even where subjects were reduced to a state of passivity in the face of worldly demands this outcome did not constitute the final scene of their stressful experience. More specifically, Subject 11 described how she resigned herself to a state of social isolation only until such times as she met an attractive other who could fulfill her intimate needs. In addition, follow-up studies suggested that Subjects 1, 3, 5 and 6 found alternative and more fulfilling projects some time after their interviews, while Subject 11 met and married someone who was prepared to make a relational commitment.

Thirdly, even where subjects were able to resolve stress in one area of their existence, alternative arenas remained problematic. Subject 5, for instance, was able to resolve

being stressed in his private arena by exposing another's manipulation. Stress with respect to his interpersonal arena, however, remained unresolved, and continued to affect and limit his personal growth. Likewise Subject 6, while managing to address and resolve discomfort between himself and his parents, and thereby come to terms with his sadness, still struggled with his gender identity. In this sense, while the initial source of discomfort was resolved, his learned response, or the strategy he adopted during childhood, provided grounds for further and continued discomfort.

In summary, explication suggested that attempts to manage demands could themselves become the source of further demands that needed to be addressed. Furthermore, lived stress was only resolved until such times as further threats to the physical and phenomenological self were revealed.

2. LIVED STRESS AS VARIATIONS OF STRUCTURE

Using the understandings gained thus far, the following section attends more closely to the structural unfolding of lived stress, i.e. it attempts to map the themes explicated in the previous chapter and section by means of a schematic model (Figure 6 below).

While criticised on a number of counts by Hollnagel (1978),

cybernetic information processing models are the kind of representation which emphasize the temporal aspects of phenomena, and capture the content of experiences as a series of consecutive states, and thus an unfolding or process.

Several important variations of structure need to be born in mind. Firstly, the sequence of scenes differed between subjects, even initially. More specifically, Subject 2 and 11 described episodes of intense arousal prior to the implementation of coping efforts, whereas remaining subjects described episodes of intense arousal as a response to unsuccessful coping efforts. In order to remain true to the experience as it appeared, both variations were included in the model. More specifically, where subjects became aware that demands implied personal cost (B) and that their existing coping resources were inadequate (C) they became intensely aroused (E), i.e. attempted to violently transform worldly demands. Alternatively, where existing coping resources were assessed as adequate, coping efforts were implemented (D).

Secondly, while some coping efforts were successful, thus giving subjects some respite, others were only partially successful, and several demonstrated no impact at all. In order to reflect these variations, implemented coping efforts were seen to have two outcomes. In the first instance, where

coping efforts were evaluated (F) as successful (G) they came to constitute part of subject's personality repertoire or historicity (A) until such times as worldly demands again implied personal cost (B).

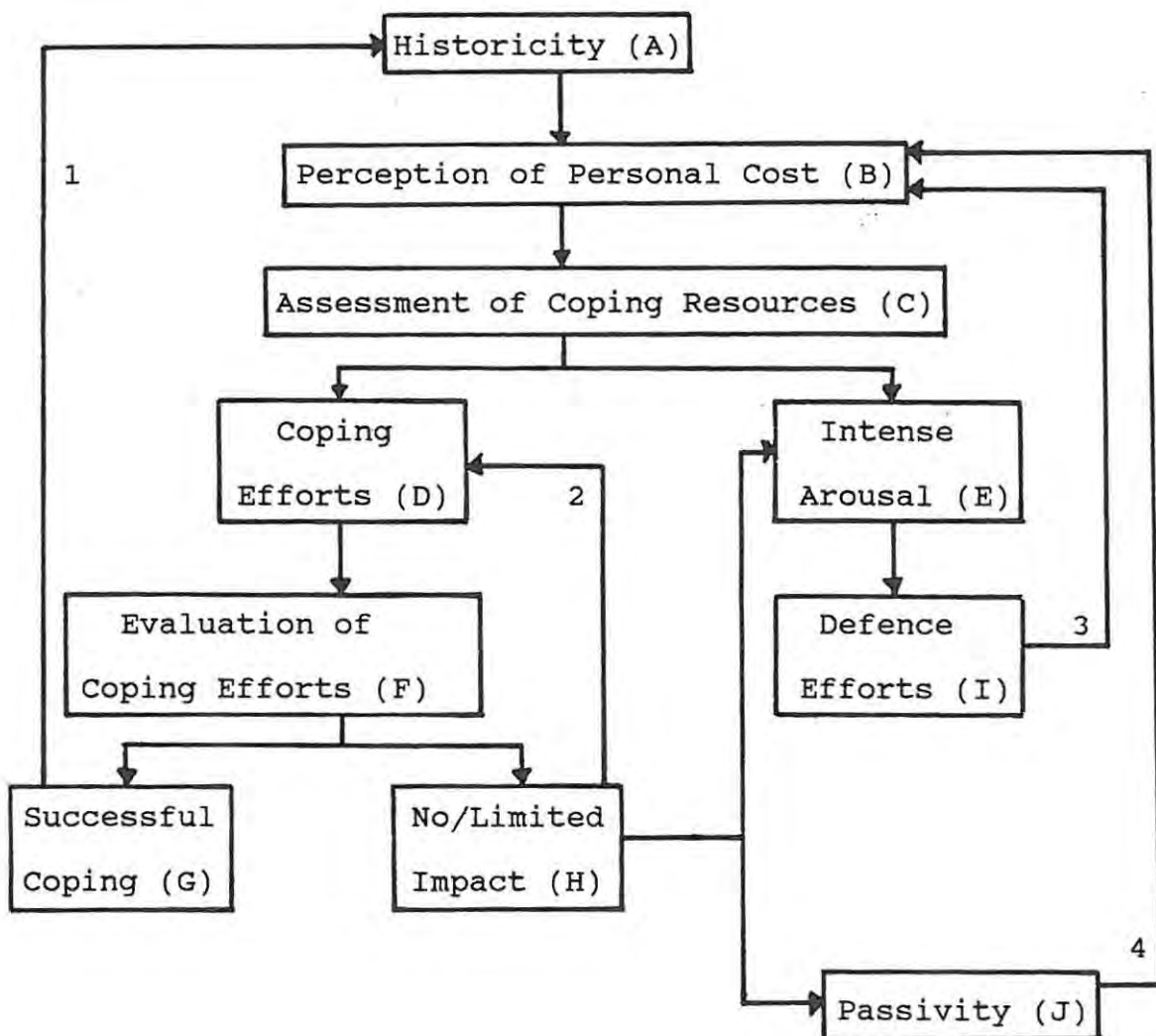
Where coping efforts were evaluated as having no or limited impact (H), however, subjects demonstrated three possible courses of action. Firstly, further coping efforts were implemented. The simultaneous use of several coping efforts is reflected by the feedback loop between H and D.

Secondly, subjects responded with intense arousal (E). This option was also associated with the institution of defence efforts for the purposes of maintaining self-control (I). Since defence efforts did not alter demands, subjects were still faced with demands that implied personal cost, thus implying a third feedback loop between I and B. Moreover, regardless of whether intense arousal was a response to worldly demands or a response to unsuccessful coping efforts, self-control had to be maintained if worldly demands were to be addressed.

Thirdly, subjects became passive (J) when continued coping efforts demonstrated little or no impact with respect to altering worldly demands. It was evident, however, that passivity was not necessarily the final outcome of lived

stress, since self-world incongruence remained, and the subject was again called upon to institute further coping efforts. This sequence of events is illustrated by a fourth feedback loop between J and B. It is important to note that this option generally occurred only after subjects had exhausted their available coping resources.

Figure 6: LIVED STRESS AS AN UNFOLDING PROCESS



Finally, the number of times any particular subject repeated any one of the four feedback loops reflected, or the order in which these feedback loops occurred for each subject, was highly subjective. In this sense, the model is able to contain considerable variation in the unfolding of scenes for each individual.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Explication of the structural meaning of lived stress confirmed several important points about the unfolding nature of the phenomenon. Firstly, lived stress demonstrated a cyclic nature characterised by feedback loops between constituent scenes. Furthermore, coping efforts often exacerbated rather than alleviated the perception of threat, i.e. efforts to resolve threat themselves became the source of further threat. These observations confirmed stress as a continuous process of adjustment rather than an easily identifiable and bounded phenomenon, and confirmed contemporary cybernetic representations as more appropriate than traditional linear models.

At the same time, however, the criticism directed towards more traditional causal models, i.e. that they fail to accommodate the future as future, could also be directed towards the above model, unless the understanding of

historicity was broadened to incorporate the desired self. Licence to include the desired self as an aspect of the individual's historicity is confirmed by Kruger's (1979) observation that an accessible future is only possible on the basis of a well ordered past. This suggested that the chaotic nature of unresolved self-world opposition frustrated the individual's desired direction of development, whereas successful coping, i.e. resolution of self-world opposition, facilitated his/her ability to actualise the desired self.

Furthermore, this understanding of historicity was useful in that it confirmed learned resourcefulness (Rosenbaum, 1988) as an important aspect of an individual's personality repertoire, i.e. as a constellation of complex skills that provide a basis for additional learning and development. More specifically, successful coping increased the individual's perception of his/her ability to cope. In contrast, unsuccessful coping was associated with learned helplessness, i.e. it undermined the individual's belief he/she could actualise the desired self, and was thus associated with the presence of continued personal cost.

The latter confirmed distinctions between stress-related symptoms, coping efforts and personality factors as difficult, since both learned resourcefulness and learned helplessness embodied and expressed subjects efforts to

reconstitute the self-world relationship such that the desired self could be actualised.

Finally, the model was able to incorporate intense arousal as the individual's response to the perception that he/she did not possess adequate coping resources, i.e. that worldly demands would have to be endured unless violently transformed.

A fundamental limitation with respect to the model proposed, however, was its two dimensionality. More specifically, while the model could accurately map scenes in the phenomenon's unfolding, it was unable to accommodate more pervasive themes, such as the individual's deepening hostility towards others, loss of faith in his/her self-efficacy, and sense of powerlessness in the face of worldly demands.

CHAPTER NINE

TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL TERMS

"Emotion...sets up the best possible world given the situation. In negative emotions, this is done by the narrowing of consciousness and the elimination of extraneous factors - thus simplifying the experience and rivetting attention upon the 'object.'" (Hall & Cobey, 1976: 183).

In total, subjects used some 134 emotional terms whilst describing their experience of being stressed. This suggested that lived stress could be understood as a series of more and less intense and unpleasant emotional states. In order to explicate the the meaning of this theme, emotional terms were listed and classified according to Storm & Storm's (1987) taxonomy (cf. p 20-1). In other words, those terms with similar psychological or subjective meaning were grouped.

1. THE TAXONOMY AS APPLIED TO LIVED STRESS

Several adaptations to Storm & Storms' (1987) original taxonomy were deemed necessary. Firstly, not all of the

groups identified by Storm & Storm (1987) were present for lived stress. This was particularly true with respect to positive emotional terms.

Secondly, several terms not listed in Storm & Storm's (1987) taxonomy appeared in subject's descriptions of lived stress. The latter were generally placed in the most appropriate group and category.

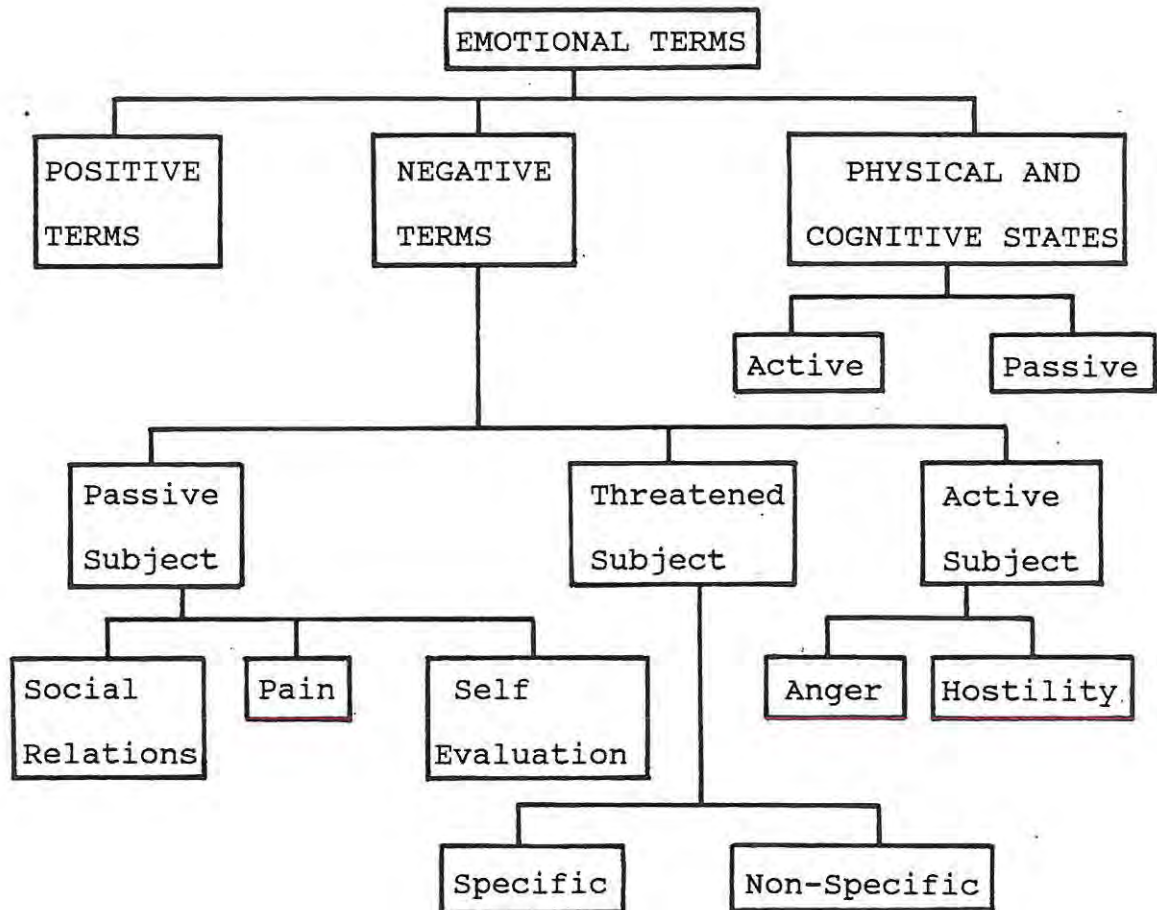
Thirdly, Storm & Storm (1987) classify 'irritation' as a less intense form of anger, whereas subjects described it as a form of hostility. In addition, 'preoccupation' in Storm & Storm's (1987) scheme is viewed as a passive state closely akin to contemplation. Subjects, however, implied it as an active attempt to manage their task, and associated it with compulsivity and obsession. On the basis of thematic considerations, therefore, several terms were reclassified.

These modifications serve to strengthen Storm & Storm's (1987) taxonomy, rather than weaken it, however, since even they admit judgments of similarity between emotional terms as relative, and therefore sensitive to contextual considerations.

Figure 7 (below) provides a broad schematic view of the taxonomy as applied to the emotional terms associated with

lived stress.

Figure 7: STORM AND STORM'S (1987) TAXONOMY OF EMOTIONAL TERMS AS APPLIED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF STRESS



1.1 Lived Stress as a Series of Unpleasant Emotions

Most of the emotional terms used by subjects were terms associated with unpleasantness, and were therefore negative. Congruent with the taxonomy, these terms fell into three categories, namely passive, threatened and active subjects.

categories: passive; threatened; and, active.

1.1.1 Passive Subject

Terms denoting a passive subject constituted three groups (Table 8 below). Terms in group 1 suggested that subjects had a poor view of themselves in terms of being socially disadvantaged and subordinate. Furthermore, subjects implied that others' behaviour towards them confirmed their socially subordinate status. Terms in group 2, suggested greater and lesser degrees of psychological pain, i.e. subjects felt traumatised, distressed and anguished. Terms in group 3 reflected subjects' self-evaluation, in terms of the absence of others to whom they could relate meaningfully, as well as the absence of more desirable psychological conditions.

Table 8: EMOTIONAL TERMS INDICATING A PASSIVE SUBJECT
ASSOCIATED WITH LIVED STRESS

GROUP 1: SOCIAL RELATIONS	
Disadvantaged Subordinate	embarrassed, shamed, inferior, oppressed, subservient, compelled, forced, restricted, confined
Behaviour of Others	unappreciated, scorned, dehumanised, let down, demeaned, rebuked, rejected, ignored, cheated, deprived, betrayed, insulted

TABLE 8: Continued

GROUP 2: PAIN	anguished, distressed, freaked out, disharmony, traumatised
GROUP 3: SELF-EVALUATION	
Absence of Others	lonely, alone, isolated, different, alienated, unique, strange
General	unfulfilled, sad, depressed, lost, loss, empty, regretful, hopeless, disappointed, unhappy, resigned, unconfident, self- pitious, insecure, dishonest, vulnerable

1.1.2 Threatened Subject

Terms denoting a threatened subject constituted two groups (Table 9 below). Terms in group 1 indicate specific threats, and terms in group 2 non-specific or vague threats. The groups could thus be distinguished adequately by the terms fear and anxiety. With regard to the latter, it is important to note that only Subject 1 described herself as 'anxious'.

1.1.3 Active Subject

Terms denoting an active subject constituted two groups (Table 10 below). Terms in group 1 indicated active and

intense arousal, and could be adequately described by the term 'anger'. Terms in group 2 suggested hostility towards others, and reflected subjects' rejection of others. Feelings of disgust towards others were included in this group.

Table 9: EMOTIONAL TERMS INDICATING A THREATENED SUBJECT ASSOCIATED WITH LIVED STRESS

GROUP 1: SPECIFIC	fear, terror, panic, scared, frightened
GROUP 2: NON-SPECIFIC	anxious, pressurised, worried, tense, uncomfortable, agitated, uptight, strained, emotional, pent-up, neurotic

Table 10: EMOTIONAL TERMS INDICATING AN ACTIVE SUBJECT ASSOCIATED WITH LIVED STRESS

GROUP 1: ANGER	indignant, angry, frustrated, fed-up, upset, dissatisfied
GROUP 2: HOSTILITY	envious, resentful, bitter, violent, malicious, insulting, aggressive, revengeful, critical, rejecting, despising; contemptuous

1.2 Positive Emotional Terms

Emotional terms indicating pleasantness were referred to

relatively infrequently (Table 11 below), and then only to describe emotional states associated with the partial or complete cessation of stressful demands. This confirmed lived stress as an unpleasant experience.

Table 11: POSITIVE EMOTIONAL TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH LIVED STRESS

GROUP 1: PERSONAL	organised, proud, stimulated, motivated, calm, comfortable, confident, controlled, involved, thriving, dynamic, creative, joyful, relieved, harmonious; independent
GROUP 2: INTER- PERSONAL	grateful, surprised, sympathetic

1.3 Physical and Cognitive Arousal

The final category of terms described reflect degrees of physical and cognitive arousal (Table 12 below), rather than emotional states per se. Passive terms (group 1) indicated reduced energy and motivation, while terms in group 2 reflected more active physical and cognitive states. It is important to note that physical and cognitive arousal were embodied.

Table 12: PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE STATES ASSOCIATED WITH
LIVED STRESS

GROUP 1: PASSIVE	drained, worn-out, listless, unenthusiastic, worn down, exhausted, tired, lazy, bored, unstimulated, disaffected, uninterested
GROUP 2: ACTIVE	torn apart, preoccupied, restless, fixated, treading water, conflict ridden, doubtful, confused, uncertain, irrational, obsessed

2. CONTRIBUTIONS

The taxonomic analysis of emotional terms proved extremely worthwhile from a methodological point of view. Firstly, the exercise was helpful as a test of inter-subjective validity. In other words, themes extracted by means of the taxonomy confirmed and were confirmed by those themes extracted using a phenomenological procedure. More specifically, lived stress was characterised by feelings of social subordination, inferiority and disadvantage; and, the presence of anger and hostility towards others. The latter theme suggested that while anxiety (or non-specific fear) played an important role in lived stress, hostility was at least as important.

Secondly, the range of emotional states associated with lived

stress suggested that the phenomenon is not an emotion per se, but a mode of being that involves a variety of negative emotional experiences. In this sense, lived stress embodies a particular way of relating to the world that can be inferred with the presence of a variety of negative emotional states.

The latter feature has implications for those approaches which rely on emotion measures for assessing the presence or absence of stressful conditions. More specifically, findings suggested that lived stress was embodied as extremes of both active and passive physical and cognitive arousal. This finding confirmed that states of exhaustion were at least as important as intense arousal. In addition, lived stress demonstrated the presence of both specific (fear) and non-specific (anxiety) threat. As such, approaches to stress that rely on emotion measures would need to include a variety of negative emotional states such as feelings of hostility, anxiety and alienation from others, as well as extremes of activity and passivity.

CHAPTER TEN

MEANINGFUL CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS -
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

"In no field or time is there such a thing as a last word." (Murray, 1984:193)

The emphasis in the present investigation was that of revealing the meaning of lived stress such that the understanding achieved by the triangulation of qualitative methods could be dialogued with existing conceptualisation, and meaningful conceptual synthesis reached. In other words, the project aimed to put different representations together and grasp that which was manifold in each of them in a single act of knowledge (Kant, 1929).

To some extent, this aim was achieved. Explication of descriptive data in terms of phenomenological praxis both confirmed and contributed towards existing conceptualisation. Furthermore, it assisted the task of distinguishing stress

from related fields of enquiry such as burnout, anxiety and fatigue, as well as more positive phenomena such as challenge and subjective well-being.

Methodological reflection, however, suggested that the praxis also demonstrated limitations. These highlight some important areas for future research.

1. STRESS AND THE SELF-WORLD SPLIT

While Boss (1979) regards it as impossible to ascertain that human being in the world is factually divided into internal and external realms, explication confirmed the self-world split of transactional approaches as legitimate.

More specifically, explication revealed that the stressed individual stood in opposition to his/her world, and was engaged in battle with the world for the purposes of maintaining the desired self's unfolding. In other words, the stressed individual was engaged in the task of resisting worldly demands that pressured him/her to become the inauthentic self.

At the same time, however, the desired self was not necessarily an authentic self, since authentic modes of being imply recognition of the mutual co-existence between self and world. Actualisation of the authentic self would thus demand transcendence, rather than acknowledgement, of a self-world

split. While the distinction between an authentic, inauthentic and desired self requires further investigation, the perceptual presence of a self-world split suggests lived stress as an inauthentic mode of being, or mode of being in which the individual feels compelled to struggle against the world rather than with the world.

2. STRESS AND THE PRIMACY OF COGNITION

The primary role of cognition was confirmed by the nature of threat, as well as the individual's assessment of various coping possibilities and the evaluation of these strategies following their execution.

Firstly, the nature of threat suggested stress as the product of how an individual structured his/her world. More specifically, the meaning of threat was not located within the individual or within the environment in which he/she resided, but in the dialectical relationship between the two, i.e. in the demand for self-abandonment and associated attempts to resist this demand.

In addition, the reflective nature of stress-related coping efforts suggested that they were motivated by the need to actualise the desired self, in the sense that a motive "springs from an intuitive estimate of something as good for me here and

now, and from an appraisal of suitable actions to achieve it" (Arnold, 1971: 190). Moreover, the continuous nature of coping efforts confirmed Arnold's (1971:192) observation that "every appraisal initiates an action tendency which is appraised also and may lead to an impulse to explore the situation further, either actually or in the imagination." As such, the 'cause' of lived stress lay in the individual's motives, rather than in the impingement of stimuli upon his/her brain. This may explain the apparent success of cognitive restructuring programmes for the prevention of stress reactions.

3. STRESS AND PERSONALITY FACTORS

The relation between lived stress and various personality factors posited by the literature will, it seems, remain a thorny problem until such times as personality is formally reconceptualised as an individual's life script. More specifically, a range of these factors were revealed as important for understanding initial susceptibility to threat. Furthermore, many of the factors identified could also be construed as both coping efforts and coping outcomes, or stress-related behavioural symptoms.

Several of these factors deserve special mention. Firstly, stressed individuals' hostility to the world, sense of time urgency and poor sense of self-worth confirmed established

components of the Type-A behaviour pattern. Secondly, individuals' locus of control was external, in the sense that they felt compelled to meet worldly demands, and furthermore, blamed others for these demands and their discomfort. Finally, explication provided support for the role and development of learned helplessness.

4. STRESS AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

While lived stress could not be regarded as pathological per se, i.e. stressed individuals could still function in the social world (hold down a job and meet their primary responsibilities), it nonetheless appeared as grounds for the development of pathological conditions in at least two respects.

Firstly, the nature of the individual's coping efforts suggested a link between lived stress and neurosis, in the sense that the primary means of coping with stress conformed to Horney's (1945; 1951) description of neurotic coping styles. More specifically, the failure of authentic coping efforts, i.e. negotiation with the world concerning its demands, stimulated the execution of self-defeating modes of action, such as movement away from the world, movement away from the self and movement against the world. Moreover, the latter coping style demonstrated substantial conflict between

individual's desire to destroy a world perceived as unsympathetic to their needs and simultaneous need to preserve this world. It must be noted, however, that the world that the individual wished to destroy was not necessarily the objective world, but the world to which the stressed individual was in relationship.

Secondly, stressed individual's hostility towards the world and others suggested a link between lived stress and certain features of Paranoid Personality Disorders as described by Pretzer (1988). More specifically, individuals' blamed others for the source of their distress. This feature was confirmed with a more detailed examination of Subject 9's case synopses which suggested that her hostile attitude towards others promoted interaction that facilitated her perception that she was being treated badly by others. This, in turn, supported her hostile stance. Furthermore, her view of her world as having 'turned against' her after she violently rejected others suggested that she was caught in a spiral of mutual hostility.

While the link between stress and more psychopathological conditions remains tentative in terms of the present investigation, it presents a critically important and interesting area for future research, particularly in terms of establishing why some individuals continue to use a variety of efforts for coping with stressful circumstances and others

adopt a particular style indiscriminately and compulsively.

5. STRESS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

The role of social support for lived stress was clarified, and suggested that further research should be directed towards understanding the absence of social support as an exacerbating factor, as well as the presence of social support as an intervening process. More specifically, explication suggested the availability of social support as taken for granted, or expected, i.e. powerful others are expected to facilitate the actualisation of the desired self and its unfolding. As such, the individual's unfulfilled expectations of the social world appeared crucial for understanding lived stress.

Furthermore, the nature of individuals' relations to the social world, in the sense that they initially looked to others for support and when disappointed became progressively more hostile and alienated from others, suggested disturbed social relations as a fundamental aspect of lived stress. As such, research designs which exclude the social dimension should be regarded as suspect.

6. STRESS AND RELATED FIELDS OF ENQUIRY

A range of more specific questions asked in the introduction

to this investigation could also be answered, i.e. questions pertaining to the relation between lived stress and similar phenomena, such as burnout, fatigue and anxiety. In order to discuss these links, a visual arts metaphor will be invoked. More specifically, anxiety appeared as the 'snapshot', stress as the 'movie' or process, and burnout the 'Oscar Awards', or the reward for repeated failure to cope.

6.1 Anxiety as the Snapshot

Within the literature a great deal of confusion exists with respect to the difference between stress and anxiety (Pichot, 1971). Moreover, the terms are often used interchangeably. Explication confirmed this confusion as a product of the experience itself. More specifically, while anxiety appeared to enjoy an implicit, rather than explicit, status within lived stress, i.e. only one subject described herself as 'anxious', taxonomic analysis of the emotional terms used by subjects suggested non-specific fear as fundamental, thus linking stress and anxiety.

At the same time, however, explication also suggested stress and anxiety as qualitatively different, particularly with respect to their temporal nature. More specifically, Lingis (1976: 154) describes anxiety as "being adrift in emptiness that anticipates death." In other words, the anxious individual

is confronted by the future as a void, or the possibility of no future. While lived stress contained anxious moments, in that it also demonstrated a threat to subjects' continued physical existence in the world (e.g. complete physical collapse, or death), a more primary feature was a threat to the desired self, and furthermore, the individual's perception of the future as a continuous repetition of the uncomfortable present.

6.2 Stress as the Movie

The nature of lived stress as a series of unpleasant emotional experiences suggested that it was not an easily identifiable or static state of being, but a way of relating to the world. Furthermore, the continuous and persistent nature of coping efforts, even in the face of exhaustion and helplessness, suggested that it was a series of attempts to transform an uncomfortable self-world relationship. As such, lived stress is not a moment in time, but an experience that unfolds over a period of time.

This feature suggested that traditional measurement approaches, which tend to capture the individual's state of being for only one moment in time, are inadequate for understanding stress. Future research designs using the measurement approach would thus need to develop means for mapping the unfolding nature of lived stress.

6.3 Burnout as the Oscar Award

The nature of subjects' preoccupation with task demands suggested a link between stress, burnout and fatigue. More specifically, Freudenberger & Richelson (1980: 13) view the individual suffering from burnout as "someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward". As such, they describe burnout as the product of repeated and persistent failure to reach expectations that are dramatically opposed to reality. Furthermore, burnout sufferers, like stressed individuals, deny their contribution to a bad situation (or hold others responsible), exhibit signs of paranoia, and are unwilling to admit defeat. Burnout, fatigue and exhaustion can thus be construed as the reward for persistent failure to actualise the desired self in the face of worldly opposition, i.e. burnout and fatigue present the final outcome of unresolved self-world opposition.

The individual's preoccupation with project concerns also provided insight into how resources with a potentially buffering effect seemingly fail to mediate against the manifestation of such outcomes. More specifically, whilst preoccupied the individual's alternative interests recede into the background, and to quote Subject 2, are considered trivial in comparison. In this sense, these interests no longer provide

a source of distraction or meaning.

7. STRESS AND MORE POSITIVE MODES OF BEING

The nature of lived stress as a situation in which the individual feels compelled, rather than invited, to dialogue with the world in a particular way provides insight into the manner in which being stressed differs from more positive ways of being.

More specifically, phenomenological understandings suggest the primary, or authentic, nature of human being in the world to consist of an open realm of responsiveness and perception, i.e. a realm in which whatever reveals itself to a person can address him/her. In this sense, the human being always finds himself engaged in some situation or other, and is therefore always under some burden (Boss, 1979). The latter observation suggests stress, if defined as burdensome engagement in the world (Boss, 1979), as healthy to some extent, i.e. as motivated by the urge for self-development. At the same time however, while creative development invites the individual to develop, stressful situations compel the individual to develop in a direction dictated by worldly demands rather than a direction of his/her choice. Lived stress therefore differs from creative modes of being in that while creative work calls for a liberated mind, i.e. free thinking that respects rules

and demands but will not be coerced by them (Murray, 1984), stressed modes of being imply limitations on the individual's existential freedom.

Furthermore, while Schulte (cited in: Boss, 1979) states that the measure of a person's health rests upon his/her capacity to be burdened, and more specifically, upon his/her ability to accept and relinquish burdens, the compulsive nature of the stressed individual's preoccupation with demands suggested him/her as unable to relinquish his/her burden, i.e. as trapped by these worldly demands.

Finally, lived stress can be contrasted to happiness, in the sense that the meaning of happiness, as used in everyday discourse, denotes a preponderance of positive affect over negative affect (Bradburn, 1969). Taxonomic analysis of the emotional terms associated with lived stress, however, suggested the opposite, i.e. lived stress was characterised by a preponderance of negative affect over positive affect.

8. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Van Maanen (1983) criticises the use of qualitative and interpretative approaches in social science research in terms of the apparent absence of reflection concerning the precise methods employed. The current section attempts to address this

criticism by pointing out some of the more fundamental limitations for the present investigation.

Firstly, phenomenological praxis requires the researcher to bracket his/her preconceptions. This criterion proved problematic, however, since every understanding must be based on some kind of preunderstanding of already existing understanding (Hollnagel, 1978), i.e. it is not possible to get back to the original experience or an absolute beginning (Radnitzky, 1968). Furthermore, the literature review was itself revealed as a hermeneutic method, i.e. the literature required interpretation in order to facilitate sensible organisation.

Secondly, qualitative methods, as Van Maanen (1983) suggests are cumbersome, firstly because there is no established way of presenting results, and secondly, because they demand a great deal of writing and rewriting of the results. Writing up the results was further complicated by the matrix of themes that emerged, since, as Boss (1979) observes, whenever the fulfillment of one essential trait was disturbed, every other trait appeared to be affected to some extent. A fundamental problem encountered was thus that of prioritising themes for explication such that the degree of repetition could be minimised. More specifically, while quantitative findings can be prioritised in terms of their statistical significance, no

such means exists for more qualitative methods.

The present chapter, however, would suggest the effort invested as worthwhile. More specifically, the author's own understanding of stress was enriched. Furthermore, explication was able to confirm and contribute towards the task of conceptual integration, as well as suggest refinements and areas of importance for future research.

Finally, the triangulation of phenomenological praxis and taxonomic analysis proved useful for validating interpretation of the data. At the same time, however, it was recognised that between method triangulation (i.e. a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods) would have been more useful with respect to establishing more precise links between personality factors and lived stress. For instance, formal measurement of subjects in terms of the prevalence of Type-A Behaviour Patterns would have assisted stronger generalisation on the basis of this personality dimension.

In conclusion, it is essential to bear in mind that in the employment of qualitative methods their very strengths, i.e. rich data and generation of meaningful explanations (Marsh, 1982), often constitute their most frustrating weaknesses, i.e. a wealth of individual detail and difficulties prioritising themes for discussion.

NOTES

1. Selye (1976), for instance, had counted some 110 000 studies concerning stress by 1976, and a literature search of files compiled by the American Psychological Association revealed that some 2 200 papers about psychological and social stress were published during 1986 alone. In addition, at least thirteen theses and dissertations concerning stress were registered at various South African universities between 1983 and 1987.

2. This finding is particularly relevant with respect to current attempts to understand and predict the manifestation of AIDS-related diseases. More specifically, while the author does not deny the nature of AIDS as a viral infection contracted through the transmission of blood and sexual fluids, she does, on the basis of her personal observations of homosexual communities, wish to point out that members of these communities suffer a potentially high degree of stress due to their non-acceptance by the wider community and their emphasis on work (as opposed to relationships) as a central source of meaning. Furthermore, the life style adopted by these groups, in terms of their concern for physical attractiveness (often associated with continual dieting), socialising until the early hours of the morning, as well as the prevalence of drug use

(marijuana and amyl nitrate), serve to further deplete the immune system. As such, it is the authors contention that human beings' susceptibility to contracting and manifesting the AIDS syndrome could be more profitably investigated if based upon a broader range of life style factors than sexual orientation alone.

3. To some extent, it is has become fashionable to have a stressful job. Cooper (cited in Kendall, 1987) for instance, ranked 250 jobs in terms of their relative stressfulness and published this list in a London Newspaper. Susequently, he received a flood of letters from people in low stress jobs who clearly linked stress to job importance.

APPENDIX 1: Choice of Subjects According to Criteria Listed by
Stones (1979)

1. LANGUAGE

The author is an English speaking South African, but is fluent in both English and Afrikaans. The choice of subjects was therefore limited to white persons living in Southern Africa.

While several subjects' mother tongue was Afrikaans, all subjects chose to be interviewed in English. Problems pertaining to translation were thus circumvented for the most part, except in isolated instances where subjects used Afrikaans emotional terms. In these instances, both dictionaries and the subject him/herself were consulted in order to achieve the most meaningful translation. Subject 9, for instance, used the term 'moedeloos'. After consulting both a dictionary and the subject herself the English term defeated appeared to be the most appropriate translation.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

The emphasis in phenomenological praxis is the explication of original experience. It is critical, therefore, that the descriptions used are not contaminated by the assumptions and

jargon of psychological theory. The popularisation of stress by the mass media, however, ensured this as a difficult condition to fulfill. Indeed, most subjects who participated in the investigation appeared to have some formal (training) or informal (therapy) knowledge of psychological theory.

While this may be viewed as a limitation, comparison between descriptions revealed no meaningful differences in terms of the amount of psychological jargon present in descriptions, or in the quality or richness of the information delivered.

3. DEGREE OF RAPPORT

The free-flowing nature of the interviews facilitated the establishment of genuine rapport with subjects. Indeed, the investigator was sometimes overwhelmed by the degree of openness expressed by subjects, and the highly personal nature of the information volunteered. Moreover, interviews seldom lasted less than an hour, and several subjects volunteered further information at a later date. In addition, the positive nature of comments about the interview itself pointed to the authentic nature of interviewer-interviewee interaction.

4. PLACE OF INTERVIEW

Subjects chose both the time and place of their interview. In

most instances they were interviewed either at home or at the office. In both locations interruptions were experienced. In such instances the investigator replayed the tape for a few minutes so as to regain track of the conversation and ensure continuity of description.

APPENDIX 2: Categories of Stress-Related Stimuli

1. MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

An abundance of literature has established the existence of a strong positive relationship between major life events, or events that disrupt or threaten to disrupt subjects' usual activities (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1969), and a variety of stress-related symptoms (Thoits, 1981). More specifically, Holmes & Rahe (1967) listed some 43 positive and negative major life events that occur most frequently in the lives of American executives (Meluhish, 1986).

Initially, these studies assumed that major life events and changes, regardless of their desirability, were associated with uncertainty, ambiguity and readjustment by the subject, thus adding to the general 'wear and tear' on the organism, and increasing the risk of physical and psychological illness (Johansson & Lundberg, 1977).

More recent research in this area, however, suggests that the manifestation of stress symptoms is more strongly related to undesirable life change, rather than desirable or total life change per se (Sarason, et al, 1978), or even that there is no significant relationship between undesirable life change and

psychological disturbance if health events (such a diagnosis of cancer and coronary heart disease) are kept analytically separate (Thoits, 1981). Regardless of these later refinements, major life events are clearly considered an important class of stimuli.

2. LIFE STAGES

Various life stages, from foetal development to old age have been identified as a cause of stress (Kisker, 1977). For instance, maternal exposure to stressors, while still largely unexplored, has been linked to low birth weight and premature birth (Istavan, 1986). The experience of birth itself is also recognised to have implications for persons' later psychological and emotional development and while infants cannot verbalise it, they are often the victims of considerable stress (Kisker, 1977).

Adolescence has been deemed a particularly stressful period in human development, primarily due to parental domination in the face of a growing need for autonomy and independence. Adulthood proves no exception as a result of marriage, commitment, pregnancy, problems associated with earning a living and the menopause (Kisker, 1977).

Finally, old age and the process of aging are also deemed

stressful. Not only do the elderly placed in institutions show more psychological and physiological problems than do those who remain with their families, but according to Kisker (1977), the ability to resist stress appears to decline with increasing age.

The latter contention, however, is challenged by other research findings. For instance, Motowidlo, et al (1986) argues that the longer a subject remains within an organisation the more stress resistant traits he or she develops. This implies older employees as less likely to be stressed than their younger counterparts. Studies conducted among holocaust survivors also suggest that those with more developed personalities i.e. older persons, as better equipped to withstand the negative effects of their experience.

It would seem then that each phase of human development is associated with its own set of 'noxious agents' or stressful stimuli. This is unsurprising in view of Erikson's (1963) theory of human development which postulates eight crises and conflicts that must be resolved and mastered in life, from birth to death. Indeed, this category of stimuli would seem to suggest the process of human development as inherently stressful.

3. LIFE STATUS

A large number of the potential stressors identified in stress research may be categorised as noxious agents associated with subjects' status or role in life. Here researchers have focussed on particular groups of people, or populations, usually defined in terms of their marginal status, and have attempted to identify specific stressors for these specific groups.

Baruch, et al (1987), for instance, while lamenting the paucity of research concerning women, established interpersonal problems, especially marital conflict and dissatisfaction, as a major source of stress for this population.

4. OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Stress-related research focussing on people in particular occupations is so prolific that it may well be regarded as a separate field of enquiry. Not only are there a great many occupations that have been investigated, but within each a long list of organisational and job stressors have been identified. These include factors that relate to the specific job context, various work activities, supervisory styles, interpersonal patterns, and the structure of the job itself (Cooper & Marshall, 1978).

Research in the area of work-related stress is not conclusive, however. Indeed, findings appear to suggest that researchers are still unsure about the relative stressfulness of the various occupations investigated. More specifically, while Sheridan (1987) claims poor status and highly controlled jobs as the most stressful, Marshall & Cooper (1979) claim middle management as the most vulnerable to stress.

5. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Authorities appear to agree that stress elicited by aspects of the socio-cultural environment is widespread, and probably the predominant type of stress in modern societies (Dodge & Martin, 1970). Indeed, while the city is seen as the solution to many social, cultural and economic needs, at the same time it gives rise to many social and medical problems.

Various aspects of the urban environment have been investigated. La Rocco (1985), for instance, draws attention to the interpersonal implications of crowding, Carlestam (1971) to the link between frequent contact with strangers and aggressive behaviour towards others, while Kagan (1971) explores the effects of rapid urbanisation, and links stress symptoms to the demand for adaptation, social incongruity, incomplete integration into a community and the encounter with a variety of traditions.

Arguably, formal concern about stress first arose out of the crowded conditions of urban living, since for the first time in history researchers had access to the medical records of large populations.

6. TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Natural and man-made disasters have also been focussed upon, generally under the heading of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), which describes the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event outside the normal range of human experience (Stretch, 1986). While what phenomena, exactly, are considered to be outside the normal range of human experience remains a contentious issue, these events are usually regarded as unexpected, and according to Kisker (1977), their residual emotional impact on the human being may be long lasting and far reaching.

In addition, while Kelly (1985) and Baum (1988) note substantial and observable differences in the effects of social as opposed to natural disasters, war, if considered a man-made or social disaster, may also be included under the PTS heading. Indeed, both survivors of the holocaust (Kisker, 1977) and Vietnam war veterans (Stretch, 1986) have been investigated in these terms.

7. DAILY HASSLES

Daily hassles, or irritating and frustrating daily events (Lazarus, 1968) have also been investigated. Indeed, Caspi, et al (1987) claims that daily stressors appear so ordinary and mundane that their critical contribution to psychological distress and illness have been under-emphasized, and DeLongis Croyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus (1982) assert that micro-stressors, acting cumulatively and in the absence of compensatory experiences are better predictors of health outcomes than are major life events.

Holahan & Holahan (1987) refine these observations still further by stating that it is the frequency of these hassles that appear to be more important. These studies emphasize that even the smallest and most trivial event may constitute a demand for adaptation, or stimulus.

8. ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Ecological conditions constitute another important category of stimuli (Kisker, 1977). Changes in temperature, for instance, have been studied in relation to subjects' performance and attention span, and Hancock (1986) demonstrates that dynamic changes in deep body temperature tend to degrade performance.

Likewise, noise has been investigated in relation to the manifestation of stress symptoms, and Johansson & Lundberg (1977) assert that under conditions of extreme noise subjects are forced to increase their efforts if they wish to maintain their normal levels of performance.

9. PHYSICAL HEALTH

Poor physical health, while deemed a stress symptom in the symptom orientated approach, has been investigated as a source of stress within the stimulus orientated approach. For instance, Kisker (1977) views the therapeutic removal of the uterus as a particularly stressful situation for women because the uterus is regarded as one of the most important symbols of femininity.

10. TIME

Time is deemed a source of stress in at least two ways. The first concerns linear time, where the subject feels that he or she has too little time to do what needs or must be done (Albrecht, 1979). This may also be classified as role overload, since it is specifically concerned with time constraints.

The second source of time-related stress concerns the finitude of life, or the imminence of death (Lazarus, 1968). While this

source is usually discussed under life stage stress, due to its relevance for the elderly, Holahan & Holahan (1987) claim that death is more stressful for those left behind than for those who are dying. In addition, Heidegger (1962) poses the finitude of life as an essential aspect of experienced anxiety. The obvious confusion between stress and anxiety in the literature (Pichot, 1971), suggests that the idea of dying, be it the subject him or herself or a significant other, also be classified a source of stress.

APPENDIX 3: Case Synopses: Subject 2 to 11

SUBJECT 2

Subject 2 is involved in completing building operations which he considers crucial for his own and his family's well-being. At the same time, the task has to be completed within time constraints dictated by others.

Completing the task requires that he confront his fear of heights, or agrophobia, and that he learn and apply unfamiliar skills. The terror and panic associated with falling to his death from an unstable scaffold is embodied in a thickness of the mouth, sweaty palms, and cold hands. He reduces his fear by smoking, and by concentrating on the task immediately at hand.

He becomes fixated and engrossed in the task, and restricts his awareness to the problems that beset it. As such, his other interests seem trivial in comparison. Furthermore, the problems threaten the possibility of completing the task, and he begins to doubt his ability to finish the task.

He suffers from headaches, and experiences difficulty turning his head from side to side without moving his whole body. In

addition, his fear of falling to his death is frequently actualised in his dreams.

Even when physically removed from the building site, he feels trapped by it, and is constantly aware of the problems he must solve in order to complete the task timeously. At the same time, he rejects contact with others, and becomes snappy and irritated by their attempts to draw him away from the situation.

SUBJECT 3

Subject 3 initiates a work project that involves managerial responsibility and the pressure of urgent time constraints, both of which she takes seriously. Her efforts, however, go unnoticed. This leaves her with a sense of non-achievement and fear about the future of the project.

She realises that in order to complete the project efficiently she must conform to organisational norms she views as immoral, dishonest and unacceptable. At the same time she fears losing her subordinates' trust and respect if she fails to complete the project, and ensure their future employment.

She conforms, and manipulates the system, in order to achieve her goals, but views her own actions as underhand, dirty and

contrary to her own code of ethics. She views the organisation's expectations as unrealistic, and her failure to conform to their ethics as the reason for her previous non-achievement.

She experiences difficulty dismissing the ethical issue, and attempts to 'do battle' against the system by making her colleagues aware of the dishonesty promoted by the organisation. Her colleagues, however, do not appear to be interested, and her superiors view her as a trouble-maker.

She feels she can no longer trust her colleagues or the organisation, and becomes increasingly frustrated. She feels unable to cope, powerless to change the organisation's ethics to those more congruent with her own, and that she is being driven insane. This is accompanied by her feeling drained, worn out, listless and unenthusiatic about her job. Moreover, she seeks medical attention for a recurring allergy.

Subject 3 becomes involved in a long distance homosexual relationship. She becomes preoccupied by the desire to be with her lover, and organises her world around attempts to be with her lover. She views their time together as essential if the relationship is to succeed in the long term. This serves to reduce the importance of her work responsibilities, and she no longer regards work as her central purpose. Moreover, she feels

frustrated and resentful when her work responsibilities demand additional effort and limit the amount of time she can spend with her lover.

Several additional problems are associated with her new relationship. Firstly, she feels the need to exclude others from the relationship, but views this as contrary to her normally gregarious character. Secondly, she begins to feel lonely and distressed when not with her lover, for her own home has now become an empty shell. Loneliness, she claims, is a new experience for her. Thirdly, she feels that her relationship, while logical to pursue, must be kept secret from her colleagues, for fear that they will misunderstand and misjudge her. She feels dishonest about deceiving her colleagues and that she is behaving contrary to her own character. At the same time, her shame about the nature of the relationship inhibits her expression of joy about the relationship. Finally, she experiences a sense of loss with regard to her heterosexual fantasies, since these no longer have any possibility of fulfillment.

Subject 3 also views the political and environmental situation as an enormous problem, and one which leaves her feeling frustrated, angry, depressed and powerless. She views attempts to achieve meaningful change as pointless, and avoids thinking about this issue as far as possible.

Subject 3 also considers herself overweight, and is embarrassed about her size. She becomes preoccupied with dieting and battles to find the will-power required to lose weight. Stress in other areas of her life, however, exacerbates the problem because she eats when unhappy in order to comfort herself. Consequently, she views herself as trapped in a vicious circle that undermines her self-respect. Moreover, she feels weak, and that she lacks both self-control and strength of will.

SUBJECT 4

Subject 4 appeals to the past for an understanding of her present situation at work. She feels misled by her parents, in terms of their vision of what the future would hold for her, and holds them responsible for her failure to obtain a desired qualification and inability to pursue her chosen career. She resents her parents, and blames them for their lack of foresight.

Various factors subsequently prevent her from obtaining the desired qualification, including the loss of a meaningful relationship and constant relocation. She has been settled for some six years since.

Subject 4's present vocation entails constant awareness of other peoples' work situations, and offering them more

lucrative positions. It is associated with continual uninteresting and repetitive demands that leave her feeling drained. She views the task as boring, monotonous, and pointless, and as having no intrinsic value or purpose. It offers her little sense of achievement, independent of effort invested, and no opportunity for personal growth or fulfillment. She feels dissatisfied and frustrated by her task, towards which she expresses intense dislike.

She views the daily work routine as contrary to her own needs, and experiences difficulty conforming to these expectations. She views herself as unsuited and alien to the work environment, and is unable to communicate her discomfort and needs. At the same time she has difficulty identifying, and finding common ground, with her colleagues. She is critical and contemptuous of them, and is nauseated by her contact with them. Her attempts to retain a facade of civility towards her colleagues are accompanied by feelings of being drained and worn-out.

She also experiences an ambivalent relationship with her employer, who is also a friend. She experiences great difficulty remaining detached from the associated conflict, and avoids contact with her employer. In instances where she cannot avoid contact, she becomes irritable, aggressive and angry towards her employer.

She resents the discomfort associated with her anger, and holds the organisation responsible. She experiences a 'churning and heaving' stomach when in contact with her colleagues, and is unable to identify with herself in an aggressive state. She feels hopeless and depressed about her work situation, and can see no way out of it.

She attempts to pursue a vocation with which she feels more comfortable and confident. She views this activity as marketable, valuable, worthwhile and rewarding. At the same time it requires enormous energy resources. Serious involvement in the activity, however, is prevented by her limited energy and time resources. Furthermore, concurrent involvement in her job and activity threaten to deplete her energy resources completely, and she fears total collapse. She feels torn-apart by the demands on her time, and dreams of herself as a 'caged tiger', and as being 'torn apart by wild animals'.

She feels that she cannot cope with the current demands on her time, but lacks the energy to leave her job, on which she is financially dependent. At the same time, abandoning her more rewarding activity appears impossible, since she fears being reduced to nothing if she does so. She views her situation as unique and absurd, and feels bitter towards, and hopeless about, her situation.

She pursues and achieves a somewhat calmer disposition through meditation, and views herself as more detached and accepting of her situation as a result. In addition, she feels she does not move in such a 'knee-jerk' fashion. She feels emotionally wrecked, however, by her attempts to sustain this acceptance, and views her situation as irresolvable. Her tension is embodied in backache, exhaustion, and bronchial irritation associated with smoking cigarettes.

SUBJECT 5

Subject 5 expresses uncertainty concerning the benefits of his particular career choice. He views his present work situation as unfavourable and uncomfortable for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, his job entails working to the pressure of time constraints. This pressure thwarts his personally desired standards of achievement, or the criteria by which he measures his success. As such, he views his particular talents as wasted in his present job and feels fed-up, angry, unfulfilled and empty. Secondly, his attempts to plan a career path are thwarted by the lack of clear criteria for career progress within the organisation. He feels frustrated, and views his future as controlled by others rather than himself.

He becomes malicious, irritated and unintentionally insulting

towards others, and is critical of their criteria for success. He views his career choice as unwise and a mistake, particularly when compared to alternative career choices that do offer a sense of achievement and the acquisition of additional skills. At the same time he experiences difficulty choosing an alternative, and becomes depressed, insecure and uncertain about his future.

He reverts to his private interests in order to defend himself against those who thwart his career progress. Here he is able to meet his desired standards of perfection through concerted effort, and achieve external recognition for his efforts.

Subject 5's attempt to achieve recognition through his private interests fails. He feels cheated, and becomes convinced that the rules were incorrectly applied by a competing other. He views his integrity as threatened, and experiences difficulty understanding the other's actions. As such, he holds the other responsible for his lack of recognition.

He responds with intense emotional arousal, in which he experiences himself as emotional, irrational and vulnerable. He is tempted to express his anger towards the other, but attempts to maintain control. At the same time, he is confronted by a choice of action, and experiences difficulty making a decision. Either option implies cost to himself.

Firstly, attacking and exposing the other publicly risks making a permanent enemy of her, as well as provoking possible social disapproval. Secondly, withdrawing from or ignoring the injustice implies increased emotional arousal, and the possibility of repeated injustice. He refuses to make an immediate choice and becomes abrupt and short with others.

After reflecting upon his options, and weighing up the consequences of each, he decides to attack the other publicly and to accept the possible unpleasantness that may ensue. At the same time he discovers the other is unpopular socially, and thus that he has wide support for his actions. He attacks the other, and consequently experiences a relief of tension because he has prevented further manipulation by the other.

Subject 5's commitments to his private interests and an intimate other conflict. This conflict lowers his quality of life and results in a negative change in the relationship. He feels upset by the change, since he dislikes being on bad terms with the other, and so withdraws from the relationship by resorting to his private interests. At the same time, he fears that the other may misunderstand his actions, and lose interest in the relationship. As such, he fears losing the relationship, although he acknowledges it as imperfect.

He feels that he failed to meet the other's expectations of

himself, and that he has let the other down. This leaves him feeling vulnerable. He refuses to express his vulnerability, however, and as such, feels he has arrested his personal growth.

SUBJECT 6

Subject 6's parents come from different socio-linguistic backgrounds. His mother is English speaking and his father Afrikaans speaking. He experiences his father as cold and aloof, and feels disliked by him. As such, he views his relationship with his father as fundamentally disturbed.

He sees, however, that his mother is able to relate to his father. Consequently, he tries to be like his mother in order to establish a more comfortable relationship with his father. He fantasises about being female at an early age, and attempts to achieve sexual neutrality by means of cross-dressing.

He subsequently attends a co-educational Afrikaans boarding school, and experiences great difficulty identifying with Afrikaans traditions. He becomes confused by the evident antagonism between his English and Afrikaans speaking peers, and feels confused by human relationships in general. He begins to view himself as different and strange, and withdraws from interaction with others. This is accompanied by feelings of

alienation. At the same time, he recognises that his father failed to fit into an English speaking community.

His parents provide no career guidance and violently reject his initial career choices due to its low social standing. They insist that he complete an aptitude test, and follow the career indicated by this test. He views the indicated career choice as boring, irrational and inappropriate, and feels oppressed by his parents' decision. He criticizes his parents for their 'monumental stupidity' and feels that they do not understand him. At the same time, he realises his father was forced to follow an inappropriate career, and as such, is perpetuating his own maladaptive socialisation pattern.

He subsequently withdraws from interaction with his parents, and attends a university away from home where he completes his studies. Here he feels suicidal, like he is going off his head, frightened, vulnerable, unconfident, and at the mercy of those with power. His experiences lead to a desire to understand human relationships and achieve harmony in relationship to himself, the world and others. In order to do so, he forces himself to confront and understand the disharmony. He seeks professional help but views this as a failure, since he is unable to express what is going on in his head. As a result, he decides it is up to him to resolve his own problems.

He feels drawn to people like himself, with disharmonious sexual identities. He becomes freaked out, however, by homosexual contacts, and experiences difficulty and frequent impotence in his heterosexual contacts. Furthermore, he experiences conflict and tension associated with his male dominance, since his more submissive tendencies are then denied. His transvestite tendencies, however, allow him to be both dominant and submissive, and to act out his sexual fantasies with both men and women. In this way he can escape the tension. He pursues a transvestite identity, and in so doing, meets other transvestites, comes to understand his condition, and experiences reduced tension.

Subject 6 follows a varied career path but is bored with his present job, and frustrated by unsuccessful attempts to follow his initial career choice, for which he is now over-qualified.

He feels sad about his childhood since his parents failed to provide him with appropriate role models. As such, he feels trapped and torn by 'contradictory and evil parental forcés'. He subsequently confronts his parents who react with shock, and are convinced they did the right thing for him.

Consequently, he feels he cannot blame his parents, and instead feels sorry for them. At the same time, he realises that he cannot do anything for them, and in so doing comes to terms with his sadness.

SUBJECT 7

Subject 7 is temporarily a housewife following the birth of her two children. During this period she feels bored, lazy, neurotic, unstimulated, irritable with others, out of control and unorganised. She views her life as meaningless and notices a deterioration in her mental alertness. She finds herself making excessive demands on her husband for stimulation, and experiences disharmony between herself and her husband as a result. Consequently, she decides she needs a stimulating environment and career. Her husband, whom she views as caring and understanding, supports her decision to go back to work.

She becomes involved in a stimulating career in which she feels independent, controlled and organised. Her relationships with others and herself are more harmonious, and she is satisfied with the quality of time she spends with her children and their quality of life.

Both her home and career, however, demand a high degree of self-investment. She regards both as of equal priority, and takes pride in her achievements in both areas. She attempts to meet the core expectations of both areas, and experiences internal pressure to satisfy these demands perfectly. The concurrent demands of both situations, however, result in a conflict between responsibilities that 'get on top of her',

wear her down, and leave her feeling tired and exhausted.

She attempts to plan and organise her priorities, as well as relax and conserve energy. She views her skills at organising as an essential means of coping with stress, and is grateful to her parents in this regard. At the same time she feels she belongs to a minority group among her peers, and that she is more aware of the choices open to her than are her peers. She feels, however, that her peers disapprove and are critical of her decision to work, and she becomes angry with them. She begins to doubt her decision to work and feels guilty about not doing enough for her children, since her career involvement does result in her spending less time with them. As such, she fears her children may be losing out.

She views half-day employment as an ideal compromise between the responsibilities of her home and career, but a recent promotion and additional work responsibilities prevent her from achieving this ideal. In addition, she fears her colleagues may disapprove and resent her should she achieve her ideal.

At the same time, she feels that she takes her dual responsibilities associated with work and the home more seriously than do her male colleagues, since the woman is generally viewed as responsible for resolving her childrens' crises. As such, she is angry with men, because fewer demands

are made on them, and they seldom share the primary responsibilities of parenthood. She also feels the organisation itself should make allowances for her dual role, since she is effectively running two jobs. The organisation's failure to respond to her needs leads her to think about withdrawing from the organisation.

SUBJECT 8

Subject 8 describes her formative years as important for an understanding of her present discomfort. She views her development as unbalanced because it focussed on physical activities, or hero-worship. Furthermore, although acknowledged as a leader and teacher, her physical pursuits lead to academic failure, and the acquisition of commercial skills she regards as inappropriate.

She subsequently avoids practising her commercial skills in favour of a people-orientated occupation, which she views as more active, fulfilling, deed-orientated, and facilitative of her personal growth. She experiences difficulty coping financially as a single mother, however, and moves to an institution offering greater financial security. Here she is expected to practice her commercial skills.

She views her present occupation as futile, meaningless

demeaning, menial and unreal. She feels her essential self cannot be expressed at work, that she is 'treading water', subservient to others, and unqualified to perform real activities.

She requests more meaningful tasks from her supervisor and invests intensive effort in the task delegated. Her efforts, however, while acknowledged by her supervisor, go unrewarded financially. She feels unappreciated, demeaned, agitated and unable to control her indignation. She views herself as unjustly treated and oppressed by the organisation, and experiences a violent desire to shoot people in cold blood, but refrains from this action due to fear of social disapproval. She also loses respect for her supervisor.

She feels compelled to make the organisation aware of the injustice, and confronts her superiors. They, however, refuse to listen, and begin to view her in an unfavourable light. She feels misunderstood and rejected by her superiors, and alone in her treatment. She feels resentful and irritable towards towards the situation. Her bitterness, however, she directs towards herself. As a result, she manifests a hardened gall bladder and acidic body fluids.

At the same time, others appear to ignore her, and imply that she is stupid. This leaves her feeling lost, inferior and

alienated from them. She views others' and the organisation's criteria for success as superficial, and criticises the personal attributes of others in the organisation. She attempts to escape the situation by excessive sleep and desires to be rescued from a situation that ensures financial independence as impossible.

A more powerful other takes an interest in her situation and she invests intensive effort in helping this person. In return, she expects the other to represent her to her superiors. She regards this as essential, but the other refuses to help her, and regards such an attempt as pointless. Subject 8 feels disappointed and betrayed by the other, and that she has lost the only opportunity to make her superiors aware of her contribution. She consequently ignores the other, but experiences their estrangement as uncomfortable. At the same time, she feels insecure about approaching the other, since they have lost their common ground.

Her attempts to communicate with the other via a third party fail when the other becomes angry and upset, and accuses her of causing the unpleasantness. She feels guilty, and begins to view their friendship as irretrievable. As such, her and the other remain estranged, but civil. In addition, she dreams of two fish entangled in each other, and interprets this as referring to her emotional entanglement with the other.

She becomes agitated by her lack of future prospects both within and without the organisation. While the acquisition of alternative and preferably people-orientated skills promises her a much needed financial independence, the possibility appears to be out of reach due to her age, her poor physical and psychological condition, and her responsibilities as a single mother. She already experiences guilt concerning her inability to provide for the psychological and material needs of her child.

She regrets her formative years and their lack of guidance, and views herself as having strayed from her destiny, and as not having found her true place, identity and purpose in the world. In addition, she views her anger, frustration and fight against the system as restricting her openness to more meaningful possibilities, and as preventing her from choosing a more purposeful direction.

She views herself as imprisoned, blocked and trapped in her present situation, since leaving the organisation demands overwhelming effort. Consequently she decides to remain in her present position until her retirement, and confront her negativity towards her commercial skills. In addition, she feels she can take revenge on the organisation by making full use of the various perks offered to her. Although she regards the latter action as immoral, she views it as justified in the

light of her present circumstances.

SUBJECT 9

Subject 9 views her formative years, and particularly her relationship with her father, as important in understanding her experience of stress. She feels her father failed to encourage her, reprimanded her, and judged her inferior. As a result, she attempts to prove her worth to her father by trying to achieve his standards of perfection. In addition, she fears failure, and views it as a 'demon that will catch up and destroy' her if she stands still too long. Her fear of failure constitutes her driving force.

The nature of her profession demands planned action according to self-defined time constraints. Achieving her goal timeously implies increased worth in others' eyes, and involvement in the task implies that it will increase in complexity. At this stage she feels stimulated, motivated, energetically involved and that she is thriving.

Structural changes in the organisation, however, result in her losing an assistant in whom she invested time and energy. The loss implies that she will be unable to meet the time constraints, and that she must 'run like crazy' in order to meet her standards of perfection. She feels insulted and let

down by her superiors, and betrayed by her assistant whose loyalty and friendship she valued. She is also forced to realise that she is not totally independent.

She ignores her basic human needs and is hard on herself in an attempt to meet her standards timeously, but the pressure of time constraints causes mistakes, and thus frustrates the achievement of her standards. She reacts impulsively and ignores the organisation's norms. This makes her unpopular with her colleagues. She feels rebuked, scorned, rejected and misunderstood by her colleagues, and criticises them for denying her her humanness and a fair chance. She views the situation as unjust, and feels that the world has turned against her.

Impulsively she rejects her colleagues and superiors in a state of hyperactivity in which she feels violent, aggressive and out of control. She experiences increased adrenalin levels, and feels she is losing grips with herself and the world. She has difficulty identifying with herself in this state, and becomes unreasonable and traumatised. She feels that she is breaking down, unable to cope, and fighting herself. She imagines herself as a card house folding in upon itself. She feels she has lost the battle, and views her relation to others in the organisation as irreparably damaged. She withdraws from them in a state of guilt to rebuke herself.

She views herself as a failure and becomes anguished and self-destructive. She sees herself as limited by the organisation, and desires to prove herself elsewhere. Opportunities, however, appear to be limited, and her previous achievements in the organisation irrelevant. She also feels a need for guidance, but this need conflicts with her need for independence.

SUBJECT 10

Subject 10 spends 18 years in a marriage with a man she despises. Her husband frequently humiliates her in public, and thus prevents her from maintaining meaningful social relationships. During this period she feels bored, lonely, uptight, unfulfilled and unloved, but feels she must remain in the relationship until her two children are reasonably independent.

She is sometimes tempted to shoot her husband, and to commit suicide, but her responsibilities towards her children prevent such an escape. Instead, she finds temporary relief in drugs promoting calmness until her responsibilities towards her children are fulfilled. She finally divorces her husband, and is amazed at her ability to endure the situation for so long. In addition, she feels she should be rewarded for her personal sacrifice.

Subsequent to her divorce she attempts to become socially involved, but is inhibited by fears for her security as a woman alone, and is further discouraged by actual experiences. She resigns herself to a life of isolation, during which she feels lonely, sorry for herself, depressed, fed-up and bored, as well as envious of others who do enjoy an intimate relationship. She views her life goal as the establishment of a meaningful relationship, but begins to doubt her own ability to form such a relationship.

She meets an other whom she describes as charming, and is surprised and scared by the mutual attraction. They spend time learning to trust each other, but possible violent social disapproval implies they cannot live a normal life together. In addition, she experiences difficulty deceiving others about their relationship, and feels she is living two separate lives. This is accompanied by feelings of tiredness and strain.

She fears the relationship will fail as a result of its associated difficulties, and becomes intimately involved with a socially acceptable other. The relationship, however, is unfulfilling. Her rejection of the relationship is accompanied by feelings of relief.

She returns to her socially disapproved lover, but fears he might never trust her again. She feels the relationship is

restricted by social disapproval, and considers buying property in an area where her lover and herself could live freely. She views this as a means towards resolving her loneliness.

SUBJECT 11

Subject 11 is involved in meaningful and hectic social activity for a prolonged period of time. This is followed by a period in which she has nothing to do, and is unable to think of something to do. During the latter period she feels restless, and decides she needs movement in order to express her pent up energy.

She paces up and down purposelessly, but feels confined and restricted in her home. She begins to feel out of control, angry and uptight. She imagines herself throwing objects around the room, but her desire to be violently aggressive is frustrated by her fears of social disapproval.

She feels confused about the source of her emotional and physical arousal, and experiences difficulty identifying with her confused self. She decides she needs to be alone in order to isolate the source of her stress. She leaves the confines of her home and walks vigorously. By a process of elimination she isolates three primary sources for her present discomfort. Firstly, she experiences her present job as frustrating in

comparison to her previous job in which she felt creative, actively involved and dynamic. Specific life events such as her divorce, a temporarily debilitating car accident, and her economic circumstances, however, demand a safe, settled and secure work environment. Her present life circumstances thus demand that she remain in her present job, despite the lack of opportunities for fulfillment. Secondly, she experiences financial difficulties associated with helping her child through university. Thirdly, she is distressed and unhappy about an intimate relationship that frustrates her need for commitment. She views the other as ambivalent towards the relationship, and feels that her needs cannot be fulfilled by the other.

Having isolated the sources of her emotional and physical arousal, she attempts to resolve each problem. She decides to become involved in meaningful activities outside of the work environment, and to take a second job in order to relieve her financial burden. She realises, however, that she is unable to alter the feelings of her lover towards the relationship, and resigns herself to the present status quo of the relationship. She begins to feel calmer as a result, but is still angry with respect to the relationship.

Table 1: MOTHER-TONGUE OF SUBJECTS

Language	No. of Subjects
English	9
Afrikaans	2
Total	11

Table 2: PLACE OF INTERVIEW

Location	No. of Subjects
Home	6
Office	3
Other	2
Total	11

Table 3: KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

Degree of Knowledge	No. of Subjects
None	4
Informal	4
Formal	3
Total	11

Table 4: AGE OF SUBJECTS

Age Bands (in years)	No. of Subjects
25 - 30	3
31 - 35	2
36 - 43	6
Total	11

Table 5: BIOLOGICAL SEX

Biological Sex	No. of Subjects
Male	3
Female	8
Total	11

Table 6: NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT ORGANISATION

Nature of Employer	No. of Subjects
Small Business	2
Bureaucratic	8
Not Applicable	1
Total	11

Table 7: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Standard of Education	No. of Subjects
Std. 8	1
Matric	3
Tertiary/ Academic	7
Total	11

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