

Chapter 3

We created meaning of events by re-telling it as stories.
Interpretations of experiences are described and
developed in collaboration with “Co-researchers”

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.

3.1 Introduction

These words from Luke 6:27-28 (NIV) are very easy to read, yet almost as difficult to put into practice. How do we interpret our experiences, and how do others interpret our behaviour in turn? As a chaplain living and working within a Christian perspective, I am under no illusions regarding the difficulty presented in practice by these few words. It is often a shock to honestly evaluate your own actions and behaviour and to try and interpret why I behaved in a particular manner.

In this chapter, I will try to interpret the stories of caregivers’ experiences in relation to their originators and we will endeavour to develop these stories into new avenues of understanding. In the process we will try to understand how the authors of the stories experienced their own reality and not decide on their behalf what really happened, or what they really experienced during their deployment.

As peacekeepers, we are not supposed to be the “enemy”. We strive to treat everybody with equal regard as peacekeepers, although it is not always as easy in practice and even more difficult if the local population doubts one’s motives. This suspicion, hopefully, inspires peace-keepers to behave in such a manner that will place them in a position to win the trust of those who mistrust them, and in a worst case scenario, even hate them.

Hating the deployed peace-keeping soldiers for being where they are, while disregarding their efforts to enhance peace in that region, can be very detrimental to the peace-keeping exercise. This statement is obviously not applicable to all countries and all the people of countries involved in peace-keeping operations, but it is a valid generalisation to convey some of the difficulties peacekeepers may encounter. It is important to question their personal motivation and understand why the behaviour of others may trigger a hostile response in return. Caregivers’ task is an equally difficult one - to support people while they are struggling with their own lack of support.

In order to do research and to empower the co-researchers, all the conversations were recorded. As some of the initial conversations were in Afrikaans, I edited those conversations into story format. All those stories were first presented to the co-researchers before they were included in this chapter. This was done to ensure that the co-researchers agree with the content, and that the story version in the translated format is a just summary of their original intent.

All the original conversations will be added to the research as an addendum. Within this chapter, the abbreviated story versions of the conversations as approved by the co-researchers are included. With the assistance and feedback loops of the co-researchers, their experiences and interpretations of how they coped during and after their deployments are described and added in collaboration, or at least in alliance with the co-researchers.

3.2 Story Telling

Demasure and Müller (2006:415) clearly stated that social constructionism selects story telling rather than an argumentative discourse. Gergen (1999:158-159) gave the following reasons for this choice: it immediately sidesteps the possibility of considering the other as an opponent and focuses on the combined construction of meaning.

Furthermore, the perception that an individual is a coherent entity, as known from modernism, consequentiates that we manifest ourselves one-sidedly. This leads to an over simplified point of view if only one of the different voices in us is heard. Immediately, agreement becomes more difficult. Gergen (1999:158-159) is correct when stating that story telling avoids these disadvantages, and that people recognised themselves more easily in stories than in concepts. Humans have been telling stories as far back as even the legends can recall.

It can be assumed that every story told after the simple question of “how did you cope with deployment?” would be different. It is obvious that certain aspects may overlap such as the geographical area of deployment, but at the end of the story, every individual has a different understanding and response towards his or her experiences during deployment, even those who were in the same geographical area.

Burnham (1993:9) remarked that the way in which we describe our situations reflect our thoughts and influences our actions and responses toward those situations. Gregory Bateson stated in 1972 that people created meaning from events and ideas by re-telling it as stories. Jill Freedman, Gene Combs (1993:294), Michael White as well as David Epston, expanded on the idea by claiming that people can change their life stories by reinventing their life stories and thus gaining new perspectives in the process.

Thus, it is an ongoing process and not stagnant, implying that by looking differently at the past, we can alter our future - hopefully for the better. We can rethink and change our perceptions, we can change our original viewpoint to a new perspective in the present and we must also be aware that our current viewpoint may differ from alternative perspectives in the future.

The concept and idea that people can change their life stories are exactly what motivated me to try and understand how other caregivers have coped, as well as to improve my understanding of coping through their stories by listening to how they created meaning of the experiences and events that occurred during their deployment, and taking note of how it influenced their lives.

We share new understanding and interpretations of events with one another by receiving new inputs, thus allowing their stories to speak for themselves, and by listening to the process of how our perceptions and opinions of experiences can change over time and how similar we are in our uniqueness.

Roberts (2002:115) mentions how narrative portrayal of life has become a substantial area for analyses of life experiences and identity as connected to social groupings, situations and events. He (Roberts, 2002:116) argues that narratives relate both to a phenomenon and to a method. People tell stories of their lives, and narrative-researchers collect stories of such life experiences. This chapter is not only focused on gathering the stories, but also aimed at interpreting the experiences as related through the stories. These stories need to be described and developed in collaboration with the “Co-researchers” as far as possible. But before stories can be interpreted and studied, they must first be ‘caught’ and presented in such a manner that they can be shared - not only verbally on a once off basis - but more than once.

3.3 Catching the Butterfly - Writing Down Stories

David Epston (1994:31-32) recalls how some of his clients would tell him how they regularly re-read letters he (David Epston) sent them of what they had endured, how far they had advanced, and the extent to which they considered themselves to have changed. He often feels that as a therapist his job is similar to that of a scribe who writes down the conversations for posterity and capturing on paper the thoughts and understandings with which people in the current context make sense of their lives.

There are different advantages of writing down conversations/interviews. One of them is that it slows down the therapeutic, or alternatively in our situation, the research process, thus enabling both parties to think and re-interpret important aspects by either writing them down or reading them again. Re-reading contributes towards the important process of externalising issues and problems. In other words, to assist people to see that their problems are separate from whom they are as people. *They* are not the problem the *problem* is in fact the problem!

Another advantage of writing things down, is that letters don't fade away, and disappear the way normal conversations do. Written words have the ability to endure through time and thus bear witness of the thoughts, ideas, dreams or happenings that were captured. Words uttered only verbally can get lost due to bad memories or different interpretations.

Biblical scholars would clearly understand the difficulty in trying to interpret and recall the original meaning of words written down so long ago. However, the same scholars would be as quick to express their joy that those words

were indeed written down. If not recorded, the original purpose and meaning would most probably have been lost in the course of time.

Similarly by writing down the conversations of the co-researchers, it enables them and others to read, and re-read the words. Everyday language is full of metaphors. By using a metaphor or a phrase in order to describe a problem can be very helpful. What do we really understand, and how do we agree upon what should be understood in the first instance?

3.4 Questions Regarding Ties

Paulo Coelho (Coelho 2000:78) addresses in his book how Veronika decides to tie a critical question: “What is reality?” I will supply his answer after the following example of how different interpretations of the very same thing can lead to vastly different outcomes. He uses a tie to explain the concept:

“You see this thing I’ve got around my neck?”

“You mean your tie?”

“Exactly. Your answer is the logical, coherent answer an absolutely normal person would give: it’s a tie!”

A madman, however, would say that what I have around my neck is a ridiculous, useless bit of coloured cloth tied in a very complicated way, and which makes it harder to get air into your lungs and difficult to turn your neck. I have to be careful when I’m anywhere near a fan, or I could be strangled by this bit of cloth.

“If a mad person were to ask me what this tie is for, I would have to say absolutely nothing. It’s not even purely decorative, since nowadays it’s become the symbol of slavery, power and aloofness. The only real useful function a tie serves is the sense of relief when you get home and take it off; you feel as if you’ve freed yourself from something, thought quite what you don’t even know.

“But does that sense of relief justify the existence of ties?”

How do men interpret their experiences of wearing ties? Would it be fair to judge someone for either loving or hating his tie? What do women think about ties? Is it only “madmen” who feel strangled by this bit of cloth? For how much longer will ties survive? How does the one wearing the tie, really feels about their experience? Is it “just” habit, social practice, or a fashion statement? Stating professionalism and style, a status symbol or a protest against society - a tie might even be considered sexist!

Paulo Coelho’s (Coelho 2000:78) answer to the question of what reality is, is as follows: “It’s whatever the majority deems it to be. It’s not necessarily the best or the most logical, but it’s the one that has become adapted to the desires of society as a whole”. Reality in this sense is clearly socially constructed.

His story provides social commentary on the world and on our own interpretations of sometimes casually accepted realities. Whenever we are forced out of our boundaries into the unknown, we are often confronted with similar questions. How we interpret, respond and especially how we cope

with these experiences may differ vastly from one person to the other or from one madman to the next madwoman! Even to ask questions, especially to question the unquestionable, is not as easy as this story from Paulo Coelho may imply. We often don't ask the questions because we don't even consider the option that a question can be there to ask.

3.5 Maintaining Subjective Integrity

To claim that I have no pre-conceived ideas or no knowledge (the not-knowing position), is not true. In fact, I should be aware of my own position and admit my own subjectivity. Then I must determine my own context, my own background and decide who I am going to listen to, and why I am listening to them. Therefore, I am not convinced that I do not have some "pre-determined" interpretations of other caregivers' experiences of coping during deployment.

Anderson & Goolishian (1992:28) stated that the researcher should always position him/herself in a "not knowing" position, rather than demand specific answers to questions. They felt that the skill of the researcher is the expertise to participate in creating new meaning. Through this new meaning, new understanding is created with mutual participation between the co-researcher and the researcher. The question could be asked if a participant in the research - not a co-researcher - have not found new meaning and understanding, does that imply that no research was done?

These interpretations follow from my own experiences of coping during deployment on the Namibian border, Antarctica and in Lesotho. To claim that I have no pre-conceived ideas or no knowledge (the not-knowing position) is not true. In fact, I should be aware of my own position, my own subjectivity. Being aware of these, I must then determine my own code of conduct, ethical behaviour and operate within that framework. As a researcher, it is important to me not to speak from a detached, or even worse, morally superior position.

White (1995:158) said that moral superiority may cause the researcher to avoid challenging structures of oppression. In fact, I am in essence part of the group and although I have not yet been deployed to Burundi, Sudan or the DRC, I was deployed in other remote areas. I am basically part of the caregiver group in terms of my profession and vocation. Even more importantly, I am able to understand how they coped with their deployment when I listen to their stories of coping.

Without being aware of my own subjectivity and admitting my position, there would be no possibility of subjective integrity. My subjective integrity is hopefully improved by being previously part of the situation but currently not enmeshed in the same society. The advantage of being previously deployed in three vastly different circumstances and living for almost seven years on an outlying base, gives me at least a new and fresh look at my own story and reflecting from a different angle, back at my own story, as well as listening to my co-researchers' accounts of their coping stories. It also enables me to better understand some of the feelings and emotions they experienced during their deployment.

In qualitative research there is the assumption of inter-subjectivity between participants and researchers as well as the mutual creation of data. It is quite possible to state that co-researchers are constantly 'doing' research, because

in re-telling their experiences as stories to researchers they automatically interpret or reconstruct the original meaning, thus creating the 'data' for the researcher's interpretations to utilise in the research process.

The fact that I am relatively well known amongst some of the SANDF members assisted me in finding willing co-researchers. It must be noted that people apparently prefer a verbal commitment and a handshake. Some were immediately suspicious if you mentioned the option of a written contract. However, all were willing to provide me with verbal consent on a tape recorder.

As a chaplain, I have often made the comment that probably 80% (not scientifically proven) of all the day-to-day problems that I have encountered in the community, were self-inflicted due to bad decisions by either the individuals themselves or someone close to them. Gerkin (1991:67) said that ordinary life tends to be governed more by the imagination than by reason, and to the extent that practical reasoning is involved, it seems more often to be governed by common sense wisdom rather than rational principles or logical rules of ethics.

What we as individuals are prepared to accept as common sense may differ vastly. The reasoning we may accept as perfectly valid may prove to be flawed, without us even being aware of the fact that our reasoning is inconsistent. As in discourses, we accept our common sense as an unquestionable truth.

One must be aware of one's own subjectivity and not be over-confident in terms of one's own perspectives and interpretations of these stories! Without being aware of my own subjectivity and admitting my own position, there would be no possibility of subjective integrity. My subjective integrity is hopefully improved by being part of the military institution while doing the research. On the other hand, while writing this chapter, it is an advantage not to be enmeshed in a deployment situation, thus having the advantage of being previously deployed in three vastly different circumstances and living for almost seven years on an outlying base, but simultaneously to be removed from the deployment situation. It provided me with a new and fresh look at my own as well as the co-researchers stories.

I am aware of my own subjectiveness and am vigilant not to be too quick to jump to conclusions. However, it definitely enables me to have a better grasp and ability to understand the experiences that my co-researchers are referring to in their interviews. Therefore, on the one hand to have prior experience and, on the other, to be removed from the actual situation is definitely an advantage and assisted me in reflecting subjective integrity on the stories from different angles.

I will make use of narrative theory as explained by Michael White (1995:159). Narrative conversations take place when dominant discourses are deconstructed, with the possibility that new or preferred knowledge may emerge. Knowledge can be very subjective and be enmeshed within the dominant social structures. Papps and Olssen (1997:21) stated that knowledge, although possible, is still difficult to untangle in terms of its relations to social structures, as it is inseparable from power, both in its effects and production.

Words and knowledge have power in the way that these are used and in the effect that remains. The power of certain words or phrases can reflect accepted or unaccepted values and norms in society. Thinking about isolation led me to wonder about our experiences as humans and why so many people will verbalise their feelings of isolation amongst people. I am personally convinced that we are often more isolated emotionally while surrounded by people than we may be emotionally isolated in the middle of a desert. The geographical distance between people might not be the only reason for feeling isolated from others. One can be dreadfully alone in the midst of a crowd. The stories of coping may provide new insight into how my co-researchers coped with their feelings of isolation during their deployment.

I was inspired by the phrase used by David Epston and will strive to gauge the meaning of my co-researchers with their assistance and help. Epston (1994:32) is world renowned for the following metaphor:

“I am like a butterfly catcher, waiting for the metaphor to rise up so I can net it and display it to clients, who if not gratified by the first attempt to have a concrete way to describe the concerns that are plaguing them, usually satisfy themselves with some revision”.

I do not claim to catch all their emotions, all their wisdom, all their pain and anguish. Even less so, do I claim to catch all the meanings and intentions they tried to explain to me and although they re-share their own thoughts and own interpretations of ideas with me, I still run the risk of missing their true meaning and intent. Habermas (1978:310) emphasises the constitutive role of pre-understanding in addition to the understanding of the interpreter’s own world. He then expands on the idea by adding that in addition to the aim of understanding, there is also the aim to attain consensus amongst the different role-players in the field. Habermas wrote: “...the preservation and expansion of the inter-subjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding.” Before we can even begin to try to interpret the stories, we need to strive towards mutual understanding, or at least a shared understanding.

Michael White (1989: 95) and David Epston (White & Epston 1990) argue for a “therapy of literary merit”. They compare a person’s life story with a literary transcript and argue the concept that in reading any ‘actual’ text a reader constructs a ‘virtual’ text. The reader fills in the gaps and implications with details, events as well as meanings, which are unique to the reader as the story emerges.

Gregory Bateson (1972) believed that people could create new meaning and understanding by placing events, incidents and ideas in stories. Freedman and Combs (1993:294) explored the notion that to “read” a text is actually to ‘write’ it and that each re-reading offers a context for re-writing. Freedman and Combs (1993:295) wrote the following about the narrative metaphor:

“... by asserting that people can change the stories they tell themselves about their lives by recovering events at odds with the dominant story and performing meaning on those events as a way of authoring new stories. These new stories can then change people’s ideas about themselves and about what is possible for them”.

Using this metaphor, we can look forward to the co-researcher stories and determine if they were able to re-author their own stories and thus gain new insight and understanding in the process.

3.6 Interpretations of Experiences: Co-researcher A

3.6.1 Background

My first co-researcher was an Afrikaans-speaking social worker in her thirties. She had just over five years of experience in the Defence Force as social worker at the time of her deployment. She is perceived to be a capable social worker and someone with a strong personality. Her self-assertiveness enables her to maintain healthy relationships with her clients, colleagues and seniors. She is in a permanent relationship with a life partner. She volunteered her services as co-researcher and was very enthusiastic about the research. She also referred Co-researcher D to me as a possible participant. Co-researcher A was deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3.6.2 A Summary of Co-researcher A's Interview in Story Format

The fact that external deployment is still voluntarily, motivated her to get it over and done with. She decided to deploy on her own terms before deployment became compulsory for SANDF members. (Although it is not UN policy and deployment is still officially voluntary, the internal pressure from the organisation to deploy is noticeable. Some members are convinced that it might become compulsory in future due to the difficulty in finding enough deployable volunteers.) The mere possibility of being forced into deployment is not a positive option for her at all. An additional motivation that contributed towards her decision to deploy was the willingness to assist the SANDF in their role in bringing peace to Africa.

Personally, she was motivated by a dream to experience new things in a new country; the additional income played a small role in her initial motivation to deploy. Unfortunately, due to different reasons but predominantly due to bad management (not her own), the pre-deployment phase was extenuated over an eighteen-month period. She and her family experienced the long pre-deployment phase very negatively. Nevertheless, co-researcher A and her partner were up to date with the process of deployment and understood fully what was happening to them. A pre-deployment holiday proved to be of great value for the couple to prepare themselves mentally for the expected oncoming separation. It is difficult to continue in a "normal" routine if the mental preparation to separate was already completed.

Notwithstanding their preparation, the day of departure was very traumatic; numerous small things went wrong at home and it created high stress levels. Lots of tears were shed. Only a determined decision by co-researcher A enabled her to board the plane.

This decision to board was related to the certainty that she was not able to do anything about “it” (problems at home) any more, as well as trust in her partner’s ability to cope with the day-to-day demands of life, and all problems that may arise in due course. In fact, she made a decision to put her whole life on hold for the duration of the deployment and focus on her “new” life during deployment.

A very practical approach enabled her to cope with this new environment. For instance, the habit of making notes of events enabled her to bring such events in perspective. Similarly, by listening to music of her choice and being offered the opportunity to communicate with her loved ones at home, kept her spirit up. These tools in her kit enabled her to cope.

She uses the metaphor of a triangle to explain God’s position as the centrepiece and the two humans as the two bottom pillars. She deliberately separated her personal relationship with God from the practical day-to-day worship in the operational sector. Her personal faith remained a strong point in her inner stability. Her faith is built on the certainty of God’s presence in her life and the fact that He remains in control no matter what may happen. Attending church during her deployment was not part of her personal faith practice. She developed a massive personal issue with the chaplain, which was related to his actions that she perceived to be unethical and morally unacceptable, and not behaviour that is normally associated with a man of the cloth.

The relationship between herself and the chaplain started to deteriorate. It was partially due to the emotional approach in which he conducted his sermons (inter-denominational sermons in the operational theatre). His style was foreign to her conservative approach towards sermons. Secondly, the fact that the chaplain was married to a South African woman (she remained in South Africa) and at the same time was in a relationship with a Congolese woman during his deployment bothered her deeply. Apparently, according to “rumours”, he was married by traditional Congolese law to this Congolese woman. Co-researcher A was uncertain if the two women were even aware of the existence of the other “wife”. There was strong evidence that he impregnated the “second” wife. According to Co-researcher A, chaplains should not behave in that way! The apparent refusal of management to even investigate the issue, created feelings of unease and the question of double standards was raised.

Thirdly, she experienced his sermons as politically motivated, and felt that the chaplain’s sermons added towards racial divide and created unnecessary racial tension and not as if he was trying to defuse the situation. These feelings contributed to her scepticism of the chaplain’s spiritual fibre and her eventual refusal to attend any further church services. Sadly, the attendance of these sermons was divided on racial lines. Apparently most whites just stopped going to these sermons. Nevertheless, she remained convinced of the importance of the role of religion and a personal relationship with God in assisting people with the necessary ability to cope with the stresses of deployment.

As a specialised caregiver (social worker), she used the metaphor “I was like a mother to them” to explain the relationship between herself and the deployed troops. Notwithstanding the metaphor of strength and caring for others, she was still grateful to find some familiar faces at the base - people

she had met during her pre-deployment phase. Relationships and friendship bonds with people are important.

Her personal philosophy is inter-linked with the comment “you just have to be fine”! You especially need to be fine if you suddenly, after disembarking, found yourself not in an ant nest, but in a beehive. The camp was full of tension and intrigue, resulting in twelve persons visiting her before her first day was completed, keeping her busy till late at night. All were trying to share their side of the “story” with her, trying to influence her position as soon as possible. In fact, she was so busy that it simply allowed no time to worry or reminisce about her own situation.

The conflict was related to happenings within the deployment area - decisions made at previous deployments that spilled over onto the current deployment. This resulted in a build-up of anger and resentment coming from previous deployments that simply reached boiling point. This anger even led to the point that a whole group stood up against a specific person in management stating: “We will show you what we can do”! The severity of the threats led to a decision to withdraw weapons in an effort to ensure that no loss of life occurs due to the high tempers and possible rash, hasty and unthinking action in a moment of anger.

A positive point during her deployment was the incredible telecommunications systems, from phoning a Pretoria number in South Africa and going directly to a telephone in central Africa, to affordable cell phones, and cheap SMS messages. Internet options were also available. The other strong point for her was the certainty that a specific end was in sight! “You will go home” was always a very encouraging and positive fact.

To have a specific target in mind as far as a possible return date was concerned, created a sense of control. Uncertainty regarding the return date or unplanned postponements did not help to create a sense of stability and control! To stand under the wings of the aeroplane named “Saartjie”, waiting and praying that the rain must stop, because then we are going home, is a sweet feeling full of great joy and anticipation.

But reality predicts that one must not celebrate and pop the champagne before you are certain that the plane really takes off. It is good advice not to plan big parties and celebrations at home because the anticipated return date can change very rapidly, and then laughter can change quickly into tears. Unpredictability is part of any deployment, and it will remain unpredictable right up to the last moment.

One of the highlights was the friendship with Uruguayan soldiers, watching DVD’s, sharing stories and especially their shared love for “braaivleis” (barbeque) every Saturday evening. The South Africans enjoyed the Uruguayan’s lekker (nice) residential quarters. There they sat under colourful lights in an island atmosphere, enclosed under palm leaves. The Uruguayan hospitality was amazing. The South Africans were happy to be able to return the compliment by assisting them in turn with medical care at 1 Military hospital for one of the Uruguayan soldiers. This care included direct telephone calls to the patient’s ward from a base in the Congo!

The Uruguayan soldiers managed to convey to her the true meaning of what military discipline, respect and professionalism is supposed to be in a soldier.

It made her sad that the South African soldiers lacked that same purpose of conviction, especially their lack of basic military discipline.

She felt that we are an undisciplined nation. This encouraged her to ask the following questions:

1. Why do we deploy?
2. What does it really mean to be a soldier deployed in a foreign country?
3. What are our real motivations to be deployed?

According to Co-researcher A, unfortunately most of our soldiers' motives are not so impressive but are mainly focused on their own financial gain; some may even be running away from an unpleasant situation at home. Others think they can do what they want in the mission area! For others, drinking and promiscuity are rampant, and that motivate them to deploy. Drinking and promiscuity are definitely a problem during deployments and are not limited to South African soldiers.

Poverty remains a huge problem in Africa and its impact is also present during deployments. Due to the fact that soldiers are paid a part of their salary in cash during deployment, an amount is made available in US dollars to enable soldiers to pay for some basic needs while they are on deployment. For a soldier deployed in a war-torn country \$4.00 is simultaneously an insignificant amount as well as a fortune!

A soldier can buy a lot of 'pleasure' and by the same token, if not more, a lot of problems with \$4.00! The local women are not making it easy for the men; in fact, they are trying to seduce the soldiers intentionally by dressing and acting provocatively. For most of the local women \$4.00 is a lot of money. Unfortunately, notwithstanding numerous efforts from the SANDF to address the risks involved, not all of the soldiers were able to resist the temptation!

Answering her own questions on why do people deploy externally on a peace-keeping mission, Co-researcher A said:

"You need to deploy for the right reasons, trying to change people is not the right motive - to support them is! Learn as much as you possibly can from different cultures, and from the country, enjoy the scenery, and nature, but especially enjoy the experience!"

3.6.3 Interpretation of Co-researcher A's experiences

According to this chapter's purpose and in line with the narrative research process, interpretations of the experiences as described by the Co-researchers must be made, described and developed in collaboration with the Co-researchers who shared the initial story. The original interview was recorded and typed verbatim. To condense it to a workable format, the summary of the 'story' was done with permission, agreement and assistance of all Co-researchers. All the verbatim scripts will be added to the addendum. Please note that the original interview was conducted in Afrikaans which is Co-researcher A's preferred language of choice.

The interpretation was divided according to headings that naturally developed during the interview. The interpretation and headings were done in collaboration with Co-researcher A. The pre-deployment phase includes everything from being informed of the deployment to the moment of departure just prior to the actual deployment.

Headings include aspects such as motivation, where emotional preparation of family and the member his/herself as well as financial and practical preparation must be considered. The length of the pre-deployment phase, whether it depends on either the urgency of the deployment, very short notice, or a prolonged process due to administrative and organisational glitches, must be considered.

The actual day of departure, the settling-in phase, as well as highlights and negative experiences, were all addressed under these headings. Special attention was given to the role that faith played in coping, as well as questions regarding coping as understood by the co-researcher in order to interpret the story in depth.

3.6.4 Co-researcher A: Motivation

Questioning regarding motivation (D4/A1), indicated a volunteering motive to get the deployment done before it became compulsory. To get it done with, implied that it was not a dream come true to be able to deploy, but rather a realistic expectation that, as a soldier, she needed to do her bit in the light of the bigger picture of the SANDF's current strategy and policy on peace-keeping operations in Africa.

The mere possibility that, in time, deployment might not be voluntary, was definitely a negative threat hanging over her. The prospect of being forced to deploy is a frightening thought for her. She, therefore, perceived the fact that she was able to give an indication of what time frame was preferable for her own deployment very positively. This choice created some feeling of partial control over an area in the military that normally allows very little room for personal control.

In answering her own questions on why do people deploy, co-researcher A openly shares her own feelings and motivation towards deployment. According to her, it is not right to force your point of view on people. Trying to forcibly change people is not the right motive for a caregiver in a peace-keeping operation, but to support them is, enabling them to grow and make their own choices in the process. In terms of one's own life, one needs to learn as much as possible from the different cultures and from the deployed country to enrich one's own existence. It is a personal decision and choice to enjoy the scenery, to enjoy nature, but one must especially enjoy the experience in its entirety!

3.6.5 Co-researcher A: Pre-deployment Phase

The general management of the process was well planned and they were well prepared and informed on an academic level of what to expect regarding the

deployment experience. Question O6/A1 refers to the Co-researcher's personal preference in terms of the length of time between preparations and the actual moment of departure. The big gap between the initial operational readiness preparations in March the previous year, until mobilisation in April the following year, led to an eventual deployment in August.

This prolonged period of almost eighteen months was not a positive experience for Co-researcher A. She mentioned that her family experienced difficulty in coping with the drawn-out time frame while waiting to say goodbye. They experienced the very long waiting period almost as if "you are putting your whole life on hold" during the interim.

The deployment grows gradually in one's mind to the extent that one wishes to get it done with. Emotions ranging from frustration, anger and even feelings of resentment and helplessness build up during the waiting period. It is quite possible that the long preparation phase and postponement of departure could have contributed to her extreme stress experienced during the actual day of departure. She was adamant that the very drawn-out waiting time was detrimental to proper preparations and she is currently in favour of a one-month pre-deployment phase. She mentioned that a positive spin-off from the pre-deployment training was that she already knew some members' faces. Just the mere fact that some faces were familiar made the settling in process in the operational area much easier.

Getting to know people before the actual departure date contributed to a sense of not being totally alone and knowing at least somebody there enabled her to feel more "at home". This emotion is closely linked with our human need of social acceptance.

3.6.6 Co-researcher A: Phases of Deployment

She (D8/A1-D14/A1) comments positively on the benefits experienced from going on a special vacation without any disturbances prior to her deployment. During this vacation, they were focusing on their relationship and deliberately tried to prepare themselves for the time of absence and loneliness. Both of them regarded this special break as very successful, and a special place in their hearts and memories were associated with this vacation. This time spent together eventually played an important part in their ability to cope later on during her deployment.

These comments on the importance of proper pre-deployment preparation are in line with pre-deployment advice given to members to prepare them emotionally for the experience. The purpose is to deliberately create strong positive memories in order to sustain and enable them to last through the separation period during deployment.

The power of good positive memories of home and one's loved ones is very important. If the situation at home is unpleasant, it can easily lead towards a situation where a soldier prefers to be deployed because in his/her deployment life there is no bickering, fights and tension as experienced continuously at home. The risk is that the person prefers his/her new adopted "military family", were they are accepted, and feel totally at home and is not very keen on going home. Therefore, positive memories from home are vital.

A second positive aspect was Co-researcher A's ability to identify her position in terms of the expected process and cycles of deployment (D11/A1). This ability eventually proved to be very beneficial in her efforts to cope with deployment. Likewise, she is convinced that the necessary knowledge of the various phases will greatly enhance members' ability to cope with the stress of deployment. The mental preparation of what could be expected enabled her to anticipate certain reactions and responses.

This knowledge of the different phases is currently included in the preparation training of the pre-deployment phase. Knowledge of the emotional processes during the total deployment phase proved to be one of the ways of coping with deployment. Co-researcher A felt that more could be done to strengthen this knowledge amongst deployed soldiers to enable them and their families to understand where they are in the process and what to expect in the future. This information should be in everyone's bathroom or fridge door to enable them to access it frequently.

The Military Psychological Institute compiled information released at a seminar in May 2002 under the title "Deployment Resilience". The Deployment Resilience Seminar (DRS, 2002:1-4) was largely based on research done by the Institute for Maritime Medicine and supported by numerous articles from the United States and Britain. A combined effort from the Church Centre at Simons Town Naval Base (Chaplains service), social workers and support groups started off with the question of how local naval families experienced deployments. This initial study was done in 1993.

The key findings of this study were reported in the Navy News (Van Breda, May 1995) and Milmed (June 1995). This was followed by a study conducted with couples on the SAS Drakensberg in 1995, asking them "what do you think makes deployments easier to cope with?" Combined with a third study, these findings were converted into seminar form. Some of the key factors related to ways of coping successfully with deployment were developed further.

These principles were compiled from advice on how to cope with the situation by deployed members and their families. The seminar referred to the fact that more and more women are being deployed, and that according to its findings, supported by overseas studies, shows that the issues of women being deployed are almost equivalent to the problems their male counterparts experience during deployment.

3.6.7 Co-researcher A: The Day of Departure

Interestingly, regardless of all of Co-researcher A's efforts of being able to plot herself in the process, her good preparations, as well as ample time to sort out personal and business issues, the day of departure turned out quite different in practice than expected. In (D15/A1), she stated that it was an absolutely terrible day, mainly owing to numerous small things such as broken vehicles and the sudden pile-up of business stress. All of these problems were then suddenly passed on towards her partner with escalating stress, worry and growing feelings of remorse.

Her stress levels were so intense that the severity thereof almost led towards her refusal to board the plane. She strongly considered withdrawing from the deployment regardless of the possible consequences. She struggled with these decisions up to the point that a flight sergeant directly stated that she “*Must Now Board*” the plane (D17/A1)! She was severely traumatised after boarding the plane and cried continuously.

Co-researcher A expressed uncertainty in how she was eventually able to cope with the situation, stating that her only support was her partner who was likewise traumatised by the imminent departure and separation lying directly ahead of them. Until she made a choice to cope - she struggled to cope. The decision to cope enabled her to override her emotions with her cognitive ability. By making a mental decision to continue with her deployment, regardless of her emotional state of mind, she regained control. Until that moment, her emotions were in command of her faculties (O20/A1). Her knowledge of, and faith in her partner’s ability to cope with whatever may arise, motivated her to step forward and fly towards the planned deployment (D19/A1).

A deliberate mental decision enabled her not only to continue with the planned deployment, but also to cope with the stress of departure. The importance of that decision cannot be over-emphasised! It played a vital role in her ability to eventually cope and enjoy a successful deployment. Notwithstanding the eventual outcome, there was no doubt in Co-researcher A’s mind that the departure experience was by far the most traumatic and negative occurrence during her entire deployment.

3.6.7.1 Co-researcher A: Arrival in Burundi and Practical Solutions

After asking her how she was able to cope with the stress and trauma of the departure, she initially experienced difficulty in answering the question (D21/A1). After giving it some thought, she made a referral to her relationship with God as her source of power, as well as a number of practical things that enhanced her ability to cope, by giving her a sense of control.

One of these practical things was a notebook in which she used to write down her thoughts. By writing them down, it in turn enabled her to reorganise her own thoughts. She realised that to refuse to board and to remain behind in South Africa would serve no purpose at all, and probably complicate her life even further. An interesting “narrative” question was asked in (O24/A1) - How would you understand your notebook if you were to read the same notes ‘today’ after returning home? Immediately after re-interpreting her own story, she realised that she was in fact unable to make any real difference in the situation at home.

Secondly, looking at her story in retrospect, she realised that the situation was not that appalling! The re-thinking provided her with the ability to look at the same situation from a different perspective, enabling her to see other options, and even discover a positive outcome within the same story that was initially so painful and traumatic. Co-researcher A also felt that she was able to sort out her haggard emotions by writing down her thoughts and, thus, enabling her to order and calm down her thoughts.

On the plane she just wanted to be left alone and not be bothered with questions and comments! This quiet time was necessary for her to regain her emotional stability and to accept the reality of the deployment. Her partner was eventually able to manage everything at home without difficulty during the entire deployment period.

A third very practical solution was an MP3 player with music from home. The music was also able to calm her down. In (D46/A1) she mentioned the fact that she walked straight into a 'bee hive' and was immediately very busy trying to attend to urgent issues. Being busy assisted her in coping. By being too busy to worry about her own problems, she was able to avoid feeling sorry for herself.

Co-researcher A's fourth practical solution in how to cope, is simply to keep busy and not to let your mind wander unnecessary towards things that you have no control over. The old truth about being busy still rings true. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the work in the deployment area and the well-known military slogan "hurry up and wait", times of high intensity and work are often followed by times of boredom. Due to "too much" time on hand, this solution is not that effective over a long period. However, to be productively busy has the additional benefits of creating feelings of worth, as well as letting the person feel as if his/her personal sacrifice in being deployed is a contribution towards the broader deployment effort - adding towards the dream of making the world a better place.

Advice given to her during the pre-deployment phase that proved to be of great value to her stated: "Don't try to run your household from the mission area". This advice proved to be very sensible and often assisted her in the process of sticking to the decision not to worry about things at home – things that she is unable to do anything about in the first place - that advice helped her tremendously in coping with the situation.

3.6.8 Co-researcher A: Faith Dimension

After asking an open question, she decided to first address aspects relating to her relationship with God instead of her support systems in the operational theatre (O28/A1). Co-researcher A emphasised that according to her, a relationship with God is an integral and an essential part of one's ability to cope. She explained that as an integral part of her life, faith is not only a tool to be used during deployment, but that it is something that she also relied on at home. In this she implied that faith is not only effective in coping with deployment, but that it is able to help one cope with life in a broader sense.

Such a relationship with God is long-term and is not built overnight. She explains this relationship as a triangle, with God at the top and the partners at the sides, thus it forms a unit of strength with a baseline running through it (D28/A1).

During deployment, a separation developed between her inner relationship with God and her practical unwillingness to attend any voluntary church

service conducted by the specific chaplain whose conduct she disapproves off. This implies that on a personal level, she experienced God on her own, but still preferred not to be part of any organised religious structures as provided by the specific chaplain during deployment.

In D31 and D32/A1 she categorically stated her conviction that the mere fact that somebody has a relationship with God immediately enables such a soldier to be in a better position to cope with deployment! She explained the process of making a deliberate choice to allow God to be in charge of the things that you simply have no control over. The reality of the distance that separated her from her loved ones was almost overwhelming, until she was able to make that decision stating: “I am not able to do anything at home, therefore, let it be, and trust your support at home to cope on their side”.

The certainty of God’s presence and being in control enabled her to make that decision, and the decision assisted her to calm down and thus cope with the new environment. That decision played a critical role in her coping arsenal.

After making some allegations, she returns in O44/A1 to state the importance of faith in her ability to cope with deployment. D43/A1 states: “If God is not in charge of your life you will be in trouble!” This emphasised the role her personal relationship with God played, and her own certainty that her ability to cope with deployment was predominantly due to her relationship with Christ.

She refers to the power of a quick prayer (skietgebedtjie), but relies even more on the strength of knowing with an absolute certainty that God is in control of everything. Thus, making it easy for her to decide to deliberately give everything into God’s hands since one is unable to cope with it anyway. That certainty of God’s presence in her life had a huge calming influence on her. She contributed her successful deployment to a large extent on the fact that all her other coping skills were built on this certainty.

She stresses the fact that having a relationship with God does not imply that you will not experience stress or problems of any kind, but simply that having a relationship with God will assist and enable a person of faith to better cope with the stress and strains of everyday life. Therefore, it is not a quick fix mechanism to be used whenever one encounters some kind of predicament or difficult situation, it is an ingrained part of a person’s outlook on life.

3.6.9 Co-researcher A: Politics and Faith Discourses

The other sad thing, properly partially due to our heritage, is comments made by all Co-researchers referring to racial tension. Co-researcher A explained her negative experiences of the chaplain services, especially in how the Sunday church services were conducted during her deployment. It must be considered that possible discourses were present in these experiences, especially discourses regarding how sermons are supposed to be conducted.

Firstly, in terms of the manner in which the sermon was conducted, it made her uncomfortable due to the fact that some of the corporals and sergeants were also involved in the sermon as self-appointed “assistant pastors”

(D33/A1). The laymens' involvement in the sermons was very different from the way she was used to sermons being conducted at home. She was initially more than willing to accept the chaplain in his officially appointed role as spiritual leader, but felt extremely uncomfortable with the way in which the laymen were utilised in the sermons.

The discourse may simply be due to the difference in style in the way that these sermons were presented in relation to what she was used to. She expected cultural differences in the deployment area and was prepared for it. Due to previous contact with chaplains, she was able to understand the difficulties presented to the chaplains in trying to accommodate numerous denominations in addition to present a sermon without alienating someone.

The practice to involve laymen from the soldiers rank, is against the current SANDF chaplain's policy, although it occurs from time to time. It is so easy to offend someone by either being too accommodating towards a specific style in one way or another. One should ideally not allow non-ordained laymen to conduct sermons or act as if they are chaplains. The only persons with the mandate within the SANDF as stipulated in the White Paper of Defence, are chaplains appointed in that position.

The purpose for those guidelines is due to the fact that chaplains must be able to conduct inter-denominational sermons, trying, as difficult as it may be in practice, to accommodate all soldiers and not to alienate them in the process. My personal experience is that normally almost all members are able to accept the challenges involved in an inter-denominational approach and adapt to it without serious difficulty. This situation indicates a lack of insight from the chaplain's side.

Policies of not allowing laymen in chaplain's positions were developed in order to prevent unnecessary tension in an inter-denominational community where different church denominations could be present. The way in which the sermon was structured, was not only culturally foreign to Co-researcher A but was also very emotionally laden due to the personal style of the chaplain. This proved to be incompatible with her expectations of a sermon. The chaplain probably made a decision to involve certain members as he was used to do in his own denomination without realising the effect of the decision on other members who needed his support as well. It may even be possible that he was not even aware or simply decided to ignore the ruling on laypeople's involvement.

Secondly, Co-researcher A's perception of the sermon and its contents was perceived by her to have a strong underlying political motive (D34/A14). After a personal invitation by the chaplain, she attended a church service, but felt so uncomfortable during the sermon that she refused to attend any further church services during her deployment. She experienced the sermon as a political attack on the pre-94 political system, using his position as chaplain to state how badly black people have been treated in South Africa as well as in the rest of Africa.

In her answer to a question concerning possible racially motivated responses from the chaplain in (D36/A1), she was positively convinced that this was in fact the case. The chaplain's behaviour was definitely racially motivated as far as she was concerned. Apparently, only black members attended the sermons during her deployment term. Unfortunately, the racial discourse underlying most South Africans' thought patterns, do not contribute to a

healthy environment for deployment. This underlying racial tension was one of her “sad” memories when recalling her deployment. Caregivers and chaplains specifically, have an enormous task in building tolerance and good racial relations.

She felt that in a new political dispensation and in a new National Defence Force, it was unnecessary and uncalled for to deliberately provoke racial tension. According to her, the chaplain was intentionally stirring up racial tension. As chaplain, he was supposed to manage and promote peaceful co-existence between the different ethnic and racial groups, not to purposely intensify the existing racial tension.

Consequently, she withdrew herself from attending any further chaplain’s periods as well as the Sunday church services. Chaplains are supposed to be prophetic voices and address wrongs; promote forgiveness, preach love and reconciliation. They are hope dealers! All these aspects must be part of their make-up, or “hulle mondering” in Afrikaans.

She considered whether he was still struggling with some unresolved issues relating to our racial heritage, and battling with his own internal pain. She felt strongly that his conduct was not one of a “peacemaker” or a “peacekeeper”.

After thirteen years of a “race free” society, her practical experience was that our racial differences are still very close to the surface. Part of the frustration with this was that when two people differ on something that in reality had nothing to do with racism, racism was almost always dragged into the equation. On a one-to-one level, people from different racial groups can have a wonderful relationship, but the moment that a difference of opinion occurs, it is almost inevitable that racial tension would surface somewhere. Leadership plays a huge role in either intensifying or toning down this tension.

This comment refers in the first instance to leadership within the Defence Force, but it also refers to all public figures in a leadership position, from church, cultural, sport to political leaders. There is a strong notion that, although the “honeymoon” is over, all race groups are less tolerant and more demanding; the integration process is still very artificial on certain levels. The inter-personal relations were less racially infected.

3.6.10 Co-researcher A: Allegations

In D36/A1, serious allegations against a chaplain regarding an extramarital affair and racism were made. Added to this allegation, very serious additional claims were made:

1. The claim was made that he was married in South Africa, left his wife in South Africa when he deployed, as is the custom but then during his deployment in the DRC got married to his girlfriend there. The second marriage was according to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) customs.
2. The allegations further claimed that the chaplain apparently also impregnated the Congolese woman. His South African spouse was apparently not aware of the polygamy and his second family in the DRC.

3. It is alleged that the chaplain deliberately provoked racial tension.

These allegations added to feelings of distrust from Co-researcher A towards the chaplain and it completely undermined her trust in him and what he stands for. I did not try to verify the allegations since these were not relevant to the research in any way.

What was relevant for the research was her experience of what she perceived to be the truth and how that affected her ability to cope with deployment. Nevertheless, these allegations led to numerous ethical questions regarding human behaviour, especially the conduct of men of the cloth, and how their behaviour or perceived behaviour can have a tremendous impact on other people.

The impact within a close, deployed environment can be tremendous. Questions regarding the underlying values and motivations need to be addressed. Is the behaviour of having more than one “wife” acceptable? It could be argued that he “married” her, therefore he accepted responsibility for the child, and that having more than one wife is culturally acceptable behaviour amongst certain black groups. It is equally possible that his ‘first’ wife may have been aware of his ‘girlfriend’ and due to it being an open and ‘honest’ action that he thus still remains faithful in their understanding of faithfulness. He did not cheat because she was aware of his actions? This research is not able to answer these questions but pose them at a rhetorical level.

On the other hand, there are strong expectations from within the church as well as from people who function outside the normal church boundaries, that men of the cloth should be faithful. Some even insist that clergy should not be married at all to prevent them from being seduced by the pleasures of the flesh. These responses show how socially constructed our responses are. Just reading these allegations has already led the reader to have his or her own personal response towards Co-researcher A’s story. Some might even feel uncomfortable with the mere fact of discussing the issue as if different options of choice in the matter really do exist.

These allegations also severely affected her relationship with the chaplain, although she claimed that it did not affect her relationship with God. She admitted that she did not go through a growth period in her relationship with God and in fact barely managed to maintain the status quo. She admitted that she missed a close personal trusting relationship with a chaplain on a professional working level as well as on a spiritual support level.

The questions of what is right and what is wrong and how do we determine “acceptable behaviour” is on the table. Living in a postmodern world, some of the questions and especially the answers, will not be to everyone’s satisfaction. The different ways in which the soldiers responded to these stories prove that all do not share the same values and belief systems.

Some soldiers were very offended, while others thought it was a wonderful example of what should be done. The underlying question is which of our current belief systems and values as Christians are culturally adaptable according to our different perspectives, and which beliefs cannot be altered by cultural, ethical convictions and belief systems although they may change over time. In a post-modern society it is possible to have two widely different

opinions and both may be right in their own way! The way in which we understand marriage and faithfulness is linked to these feelings and allegations.

As far as I was able to determine, no official charge was laid and no official investigation was launched to determine whether any of these allegations were true. Nevertheless, it remains a growing concern that these and other similar allegations of chaplains' behaviour during deployment keep on surfacing. Allegations of what most would not expect of men of the cloth. Their behaviour continues to raise eyebrows in the process and these rumours are undermining the credibility of the chaplaincy.

3.6.11 Co-researcher A: Coping

"You just have to be fine" is indicative of what Co-researcher A expected of herself. This is closely linked with her style of deciding to cope and forcing herself on a cognitive level to cope with the expectations, whether those expectations are realistic or not. In O46/A1, after the comment: "You just have to be Fine", the following question was asked: "Is it a very realistic comment"? She answered that as a coping mechanism, it is not realistic at all, because you are alone, you are experiencing your own difficulties, worries and troubles. Plus, you walk into a certain atmosphere on the other side with its own set of rules, tensions and difficulties.

This localised tension can partially be contributed to a management decision that occurred during a previous deployment cycle. The tension escalated to the extent that weapons needed to be withdrawn to ensure that a potential tragedy can be prevented. This indicates the seriousness of the situation. Decisions from management can have far-reaching implications; even future deployments can be influenced by previous decisions (D53/A1). Nevertheless, her "decision" that you just have to be fine worked extremely well for her.

She mentioned that all the conflict was generated in the deployment area. Due to a personality clash that came from way back, a specific individual, contributed to the problem. It was not management per se, but the fact that this individual was part of the management team, affected management as well (D50/A1). The effect of this personality clash resulted in an attitude from the soldiers of "we will show you", leading towards a very confrontational attitude by all parties involved. This was the bee-hive situation she found upon her arrival in the operational theatre, with numerous parties trying to influence her as soon as possible.

An enormous positive aspect that contributed towards her ability to cope was the communication options available for deployed soldiers, enabling them to communicate with family and friends in South Africa (D55/A1). The cost was subsidised by the UN, providing affordable communication via telephone and SMS. E-mail facilities were provided free of charge by the UN. Unfortunately, some camps and areas, like Goma, were not so fortunate and did not have access to a landline, satellite communication or Internet facilities. The positive impact of frequent communication with loved ones cannot be over-estimated. The opportunity to communicate with loved ones was greatly appreciated by all the Co-researchers. Effective communication with loved

ones may not make a lot of sense if military secrecy were the main motive, but regarding the ability of human beings to cope, good communication with loved ones plays an immense role.

The availability or absence of these facilities has a direct impact on the wellbeing of people. The rapid increases in communication options during the last few years resulted in people becoming more and more dependent on them. The rapid growth of internet and cell phone (mix-it) communication must not be disregarded by management in their deployment planning.

Members who form part of the African Union Force (AU) were excluded from the same communication benefits. The fact that the UN tried to look after soldiers under their control in this manner unfortunately created lots of tension and anger amongst the soldiers deployed under the AU auspices. AU soldiers did not receive the same privileges, even if deployed in the same area. This discrepancy in treatment added to the stress that soldiers experienced and led to feelings of animosity, anger and resentment; soldiers felt let down. The same positive effect due to good communication options under the UN, was a negative effect for the AU.

One of the things Co-researcher A identified that helped her to cope, was the knowledge that she was coming back to South Africa (D58/A1). The time limit of the deployment provided boundaries with the certainty that an end is in sight. The ability to have a goal greatly enhances peoples' ability to cope. With an open-ended undefined cut-off time, uncertainty and stress are significantly increased. She utilised a calendar to count off the days (D59/A1), but stressed the fact that she was very careful not to focus on a specific date since that is not always practical, due to transportation and numerous other options. She mentioned as a tip that one should not book holiday accommodation or make plans for a welcoming party in South Africa on the expectation of returning home at a specific date.

One should wait with these plans because the festivities may have to be held without the attendance of the guest of honour, due to delayed departures. Delays can be caused by mechanical or technical problems, weather conditions or military activity that can threaten safe flight. Wait until you are absolutely certain before jumping to conclusions.

She made the comment that the support systems at home were stronger than her support systems in the operational area. She mentioned support received from a colleague but admitted to herself during the narrative that she was in fact the one giving the support and that she acted like a "mother" to the rest of the members (D44/A1). Excellent support was received from her friends and family in South Africa, but very little support was received from her direct headquarters during her deployment. The same theme was present in all the Co-researchers' stories. They expected better support from leadership during deployment.

3.6.12 Co-researcher A: Highlights

A very positive experience (D63/A1) was the contact with the Uruguay soldiers. Their friendliness and the fact that they were well prepared for

deployment, particularly their well-equipped mess, created a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Every Saturday, a traditional 'braai' was held, and they put in an effort, not only to invite the South Africans, but also to be nice with them. Their professional behaviour furthermore made an impact, and their country can be proud of them. Their military discipline was impressive and overshadowed the South African soldiers' discipline. The intensity with which they were able to focus on their reason for being deployed in a foreign country impressed her. The times spend in the presence of the Uruguayan soldiers were a highlight and definitely contributed to her ability to cope with deployment.

She was grateful for the opportunity to repay their friendship at a later stage when one of the Uruguayan soldiers was evacuated to 1 Military Hospital, and the South African telephone communication system enabled them to speak directly with their colleague while in a hospital thousands of kilometres away (D64/A1). They were in turn very grateful. This highlighted the impact of mutual support from fellow soldiers even if they are foreigners.

3.6.13 Co-researcher A: Negative Experiences

Co-researcher A (D65/A1) indicated that she experienced the following things negatively:

1. The high level of racial tension.
2. The ulterior motives for soldiers' deployment. The main deployment motivator was financial gain. Her estimate was that money motivated at least 90%. The other motivator was escaping from their circumstances in South Africa. In (D67/A1) is the statement that they can do what they want, they can drink, and sleep out and they carry on as if nobody is aware of their behaviour.
3. The shocking low level of discipline; in some instances it is almost non-existent (D68/A1). She experienced bad discipline across the board and not only contained to a specific group, in fact, the same discipline problems that we encounter in South Africa on a daily basis, is mirrored in a small contained micro cosmos. The military is not separate from what is happening in the broader South African society. It is difficult to force people to respond in a certain way if it is not really part of who you are, and what you believe in. It is possible to pretend for a short term but impossible to do so over an extended period of time.
4. The moral dilemma presented by the chaplain's behaviour; was definitely one of her negative experiences.

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3.7 Interpretations of Experiences: Co-researcher B

3.7.1 Co-researcher B: Background

My second Co-researcher was a Sesotho-speaking Chaplain in her thirties. She had at least five years of experience in the Defence Force as chaplain during her deployment and is perceived by management to be an effective and capable chaplain. As a black woman in ministry and in the chaplaincy, she is breaking new ground. She studied theology in a traditional church and bears the title of Reverend. She is identified to be fast-tracked and attends most high profile conferences and seminars, especially those related to womens' issues. She is friendly but self-assertiveness enables her to stand her ground, if necessary. She is generally respected and well liked. She is not currently in a full-time relationship.

Co-researcher B was deployed to Burundi under very difficult circumstances - her brother passed away just before her deployment. She deployed directly after his funeral. My transfer to Pretoria coincided with her deployment and we shared one working day together before she was deployed to Burundi. I was responsible for the unit's chaplain services. As colleagues working together, she was aware of my studies and volunteered her services as Co-researcher. She was initially very positive regarding the research. Unfortunately, the intervention caused by the interviews opened wounds to the extent that she requested to be excluded as Co-researcher in future due to the pain caused by recalling her experiences during deployment. Just the recollection of those memories was a traumatic experience for her.

As we initially agreed, her request to be excluded from further involvement in the research was granted. She willingly offered her interview data to be used as research material, on the pre-requisite that she must be excluded from any further interpretation phases. She also declined an offer to be included in future feedback regarding possible outcomes. She expressed the hope that the process has not only made her aware of the extent of her personal pain, but that she is making progress in getting healed.

Personally, I am concerned about the extent of the anguish and pain she still experienced and the impact the research interviews had made on her. I would have preferred an outcome where she was able to make peace with her experience. But I respect her decision to cope on her own. In retrospect, I appreciate her willingness to assist me notwithstanding her own negative feelings about the original feedback process after her deployment.

Co-researcher B mentioned that she volunteered to become involved with the research hoping that talking about it with someone who was at least interested in her story would assist her in coping with her experience. She was totally unprepared for her own emotional and painful response, and therefore, in an effort to protect herself, made the decision to withdraw from the research process.

3.7.2 A Summary of Co-researcher B's Interview in Story Format

"I was emotionally abused! It was not an easy deployment! You just have to cope. You just have to help yourself to cope. Because the support system is not there, it is there but it is not functional. Instead of getting support you will get a hammering! But let's go back to the beginning. It was my wish also to serve externally! Our president once said: How could we have peace if our neighbour doesn't have peace? That motivated me to say: If I am saying I am peaceful, I have to see that my other neighbours around the African continent are also at peace!"

"For me it was not the money, but it was for exposure and for playing a part in Burundi! And, also seeing and hearing new stories, what Burundians are like. I like to be involved in a community project and I knew that my presence, even if not for a long time, but my presence will leave some legacy for the women, especially in Burundi."

"I am sure that at least in those difficulties and calamities, I was able to reach out as a caregiver, and was able to come out with some positive results as well. Hard work keeps you busy. You have to be creative as to how you can go about your work. Because if you don't have a computer, how are you going to do your work. You have to be creative and you have to think hard. For me there was not a lack of resources, there was NOTHING at all! I arrived in a mission area without an office, without a computer, without a vehicle, and I was the contingent chaplain! You have to go to your people. How is it possible to visit your people without a vehicle?"

"Weekly there is a convoy, but I meant to go to the sub-units, to go to the VIP protectors outside, the static guards. I really struggled. Without any communication lines, it also affected my services. I cannot communicate over the radio, because everyone listens to the radio. We use the same channels so everyone is going to hear. Sometimes it is confidential messages I cannot just talk over the radio, but up until the fourth month I was without a cell-phone."

"Every time I was simply informed there are not enough resources. But what I fail to understand is why can't I at least have the basics? So I really was NOT supported. My division in South Africa did not support me. For them I was too demanding, and I don't think anyone, not even up to today have even listened to my story! Or ever tried to be involved or to assist me or just help me by asking me what exactly is going on? No one!"

"NO one, not even my superiors, up till this very moment enquired about my wellbeing! The deployment occurred more than two years ago but no one even up till this day has come to me, not even to say thank you for availing yourself to go on this deployment! NO ONE, and monthly I was sending my reports, not even a single person. Nothing! Except the people that I am working with in the Air Force, those other people nothing!"

"I am still hurting, and I become very emotional when I talk about deployments. It is easy for management to say we (new chaplains) come into the system voluntarily and after joining the SANDF that we cannot volunteer for deployments because you already volunteered through enlisting. You just

have to take instructions; you have to do the job. I love my job but ... in this deployment I was emotionally... *actually I was emotionally abused*, because people who were supposed to be supporting me were the people who were emotionally abusing me!"

"You are no longer under your arm of service. It was like that also for me, I had new bosses, I had to report to, for that duration, but nothing really was happening, no support was given! I never got a thing from them, NOTHING! I fought my own battles; I was alone, totally alone! The exception was the support of my colleague, whom I was deployed with in Burundi. He was also experiencing the same difficulties, but because he was a man, he tried to be strong just to support me."

"But he also went, almost through the same experience that I went through. But mine I think was worse, it was worse! You can imagine if you are a councillor and you don't have an office to work from! I had to counsel the people from my tent; you cannot sit in a tent during the day with the temperature of 45 degrees Celsius in Burundi. I had to sit outside and I feel that I betray my members, because it is not confidential, it is not private to sit outside with a member!"

"Because I didn't want to see myself just sitting around, I was not running away from the actual problem, but I wanted to keep myself busy, so that I don't dwell too much on what is happening around, I would go out and do the feeding schemes, go out to do this and that, at the local churches and that for me was a motivation it was keeping me busy it was helping me to cope."

"People were looking up to me, I was even invited to the International Womens' Conference for the Great Lakes region and I felt proud that I was there. I am making a mark, and was able to talk to the women on that International Conference just to say that we in South Africa, these are the steps we have taken. This is how far we are. So at least there were positive things that kept me going. I had support from the other Multi-professional team members. We really worked very well together. I received exceptionally good support from the social worker that I was with for the first three months."

"From my Unit I received excellent support as well, my OC (Officer Commanding) he would at least phone me once every two weeks. From my family I received great support, I knew that at least every two weeks I must just go to the Airport for a parcel, and that was great! From my service, the Air Force the support was also good, yes my SSO and my SO1 was very supportive. I knew that my colleagues were supporting me because every time I would hear from anybody they would tell me, we are praying for you in the meetings, so the support was there. But the support from the service, the division that was supposed to support me was not there at all! And when I am even speaking of my higher HQ, it was not there."

"I will never deploy again! Because I am still sitting with open wounds, you know they are even septic! I still hurt, and when I listen to people talking about deployment, I excuse myself, because I don't want to be involved, I don't want to talk much about it! I am still hurting, and I am still sitting with those wounds. If they want to force me to deploy again and order me "You will do this" I better resign!"

"Changes are needed at the office of CJOPS. At least they can start to understand that the moment you are deployed, you are totally, totally cut from

your normal way of life, totally isolated. You see those same faces everyday! You are restricted; you don't have your own life in your own hands. The department is now controlling your life. You cannot even go out on an outing on your own!"

"So you are taken away from your normal life and that on its own is a very negative thing, it affects people negatively! That is why people have to be prepared in a resilience program! We have to be prepared, but after preparing them you have to continue with your support. You need to continue supporting your people. Make sure that there are even entertainment areas, leisure time areas, where the people can entertain themselves, enjoy themselves but not forgetting the main reason why they are out of their country."

"But I mean, if you just continue to make people negative, negative whenever you start talking. There is something wrong, there is something wrong! You know it is not motivating people at all. So the support must be there and it must not be conditional support, it must be ongoing support very, very positive support! That is a bullet that is killing us so! Because you are supporting the members but no one supports you! There is an expectation that the social worker and the Chaplain must provide all the support. Especially in my case, it was so difficult, because I have to make sure that almost 1500 soldiers were taken care of. But who is taking care of me?"

"Because if I talk to my Service SSO in the Air Force I am wrong! It is as if I am skipping the channels, I must only talk to the people at CJOPS (Chief Joint Operations). But the people at CJOPS are not there, and when I left, I explained to them the situation."

"You know that I just buried my brother and he committed suicide, which is not a nice experience for me nor for my family! That didn't prevent me from doing my job, because I knew that from my family the support was there. But I also expected them to support me. I expect them to understand. You can imagine if your colleague just comes to the mission area, and when he arrives there you don't even know your colleague is coming there! And all of a sudden you hear your colleague is there and he is investigating you! The person that is supposed to be supporting you comes to the mission area. He comes to the mission area and he is investigating you. I was investigated, because there was this allegation that I am not co-operative and am giving the commander hard times! But what I fail to understand is, I am discussing these matters with CJOPS they knew exactly what is going on. I am submitting the reports."

"Every time I talk to someone he would say 'No, talk to this one!' And when you talk to this one he would say "No talk to that one!" It is difficult to get them in their offices! You have to phone them on their cell phones. Sometimes you find out they are at home. It was not easy for me to talk to them whenever I had to. And all of a sudden a colleague comes there and *you* are being investigated!"

"I was emotionally hurt! It almost destroyed me! How is this possible? And even up till today not even an apology! Only last year I was asked that I must secure an appointment for de-briefing! What an insult! Two years later! Now they suddenly want a de-briefing after two years! I simply refused. During my deployment I was threatened. They wanted to charge me. I was told I am a bad example! I am setting a bad example for women. I was told a lot, a lot of things!

My own colleague that was supposed to support me was the one threatening me! Back in South Africa there was a meeting at one stage, with a number of the deployed chaplains. It didn't serve any purpose. I mean, because my attendance was just to share my experiences especially as a female."

"I think deploying as a female chaplain plays a major role because you become like a mother! People get to trust you more than your male colleagues, and then people relate to you and they will just talk about anything with you knowing, that you are a mother! Support is an issue - gender is not!"

"Just to share that experience and in a forum like that, it is not easy to open up to say this. It is just normal. So in a forum like that where you are with strangers and all that - it is difficult to open up! Because, I believe that if that was supposed to be done, it was suppose to be done by the Office of the Chaplain General, to call us individually, because it is very confidential things that we discussed! It was supposed to be done from that level to invite us individually to his office and talk to us, and let us share our experiences and maybe from out of what we have shared, there is something that the chaplaincy can do to uplift the standard and to support its members!"

"The way I am hurt, the way that I am torn apart. That is why I am saying I will not go back, because even now, even if I could be called for a debriefing it is already too late for that! And how would I trust that this is a real debrief? How will I trust that things that would be said there will be treated confidentially? And how will I trust that if there is a promise to support caregivers that that support would be there or it is just to push me to deploy again! So I don't trust anything in the system concerning deployment."

"I had a very good relationship with local pastors and I used to attend their church meetings. The projects that I was doing, going out to the orphanages, to the churches...that indirectly supported me! Because I would say to myself, you know, I think I am suffering but look at these poor people. I am suffering administratively but they are suffering in all spheres of life. And that helped me continuously. Co-researcher B summarised her deployment experience as follows: It was unpleasant, I was torn apart, I was emotionally abused! I will never ever volunteer again!"

3.7.3 Interpretation of Experiences: Co-researcher B

3.7.3.1 Co-researcher B: Motivation

Co-researcher B's motivation was inspired by President Mbeki who said: "How could we have peace if our neighbour doesn't have peace?" (RB/1-11). What encouraged her was the need to make the world a better place, and with peacekeeping missions, we have a very special opportunity to assist our neighbours on the African continent. Unlike most of our soldiers who volunteered for deployment, she was not inspired by money.

The exposure to new experiences and learning how people live in Burundi, was an additional motivator for her (RB/1-12). To become involved with the local community and to contribute towards their uplifting was also a personal goal. She really believed that her contribution would make the world a better place. Her motives were honourable and it continued to motivate her to

deliver work of high quality, notwithstanding her own personal trauma and the lack of support she experienced during her deployment.

Her motivation contributed towards her ability to keep on functioning professionally; it also motivated her to complain about the lack of resources and things that were not on standard as she expected them to be. This urgency to fulfil her calling to the best of her ability unfortunately played a role in the negative perceptions from management. She was perceived by CJOPS as difficult and not co-operative, as giving the commander hard times with her persistence to receive the necessary resources to enable her to do her job. Unfortunately, her noble motivation did not help her to cope with the trauma she experienced during deployment. Her motivation could partially be blamed for some of her negative experiences.

3.7.3.2 Co-researcher B: Pre-deployment Phase

Co-researcher B was deployed full of enthusiasm and energy and with a positive attitude and mentally prepared for her experience. She experienced no problems during the administrative part of the pre-deployment phase. The worst part of the pre-deployment preparation was the untimely death of her brother a few days before her departure to the DRC. On a personal level, this was an extremely painful and traumatic experience for her. Notwithstanding her personal loss and stress on her parents and family, she was still prepared and motivated to deploy. This is ample proof of her initial commitment towards the cause.

It should be considered that her brother's suicide affected her more than she was either aware of, or willing to admit - even to herself. This could have contributed towards her need for understanding and support, something that she did not receive from her direct superiors. The mourning period was almost non-existent since there was almost no time between his funeral and her day of departure.

3.7.3.3 Co-researcher B: The Day of Departure

In contrast to other co-researcher's the day of co-researcher B's departure was of very little significance to her. This could be that she was still so committed and motivated to go, or that her own personal loss was simply not allowed to intervene with her prior commitment to deploy. Shock after the sudden death of her brother may also have overshadowed the day of departure.

The additional pressure to be the first black female chaplain to deploy may have played a role in her determination to succeed and not to withdraw before her deployment. Unfortunately, I was not able to ask her opinion on these options. The other co-researchers found it quite plausible. On the other hand, she was looking forward to the experience; therefore, it could also be true that she was happy to be deployed, eager to start working and to make a difference. For some, a change is as good as a holiday.

3.7.3.4 Co-researcher B: Arrival in DRC, Practical Solutions

From the moment she arrived, she was very disconcerted with the lack of resources, by the almost total absence thereof (RB/1-6). She arrived in a mission area without an office, without a computer, without a vehicle. She felt helpless without “proper communication” with her clients. The fact that she was expected to communicate with them on an open radio link was totally unacceptable to her.

The lack of office space in which to communicate in private with clients, greatly distressed her. The lack of resources was apparent from the moment she arrived there. Her efforts to organise these resources were met with resistance. Her expectations had a lot to do with her shock upon arrival in the mission area. She expected a computer, an office, telephone lines and all the resources she had become accustomed to in her working environment in South Africa.

The fact that the resources were simply not available, totally stunned her and her response was to demand these resources as promptly, as urgently as possible. This led to the tension experienced from the side of management in that she was demanding and ‘difficult’. She likewise experienced a total lack of support from them and felt alienated. The reality is that in an operational area, these resources are not a given. And as unpleasant as it might be to sit outside, it is seldom the first priority on the Officer Commanding’s to-do list to provide an office for the Chaplain, especially during a peace-keeping mission.

Most Officers Commanding do not understand the important role that a good chaplain can play in making a mission a success. On the other hand, the deployments in Burundi have been ongoing for a long time and the basic facilities were already in place. It should not be compared to a tactical deployment base in the bush that can be demobilised and moved within a few hours. It is similar to permanent bases in the sense that all the services must be catered for.

In the light of the incidents happening in the past in Burundi amongst the peace-keeping forces, (for instance the shooting incidents between own forces), it would be my personal assumption that the support services, especially the chaplain service, must be a high priority. They should have a permanent office allocated to them. If it is impossible to allocate a separate office due to logistical reasons; a private area or an office that can be shared amongst the caregivers, should be made available.

If an existing chaplains’ office was re-allocated to somebody else, it also conveys a message of the importance that the Officer Commanding attach to the chaplaincy. It is an indication of how he/she understood the role that chaplains and other support personnel can play in supporting the workforce. It is undeniably one of the chaplains’ biggest current drawbacks in the system in that the moment they, for whatever reason, do not have the full support of the Officer Commanding, their task becomes immediately much more difficult to fulfil. I can only assume that the same is applicable to social workers.

My interpretation would be that Co-researcher B's expectations of resources as well as the support she expected were a bit high. I can clearly recall that during my three months deployment in Lesotho, I was not once contacted by my operational headquarters with enquiries on my personal and emotional well-being, or for any reason whatsoever. A similar pattern was followed during my border deployments. I am not arguing in favour for a lack of support and personal interest in the deployed, I am only trying to put it into perspective. This interpretation was supported by the Co-researchers.

The lack of support and resources greatly upset and disturbed her emotional stability. Adding to these unfulfilled expectations, she experienced the unwillingness of her Officer Commanding to supply these resources as a personal attack. Combined with the personal trauma she experienced just prior to her deployment, her response is understandable. What is not understandable is the total lack of concern for her well-being that was exhibited by senior members who must have been aware of her pain and the stress she experienced.

3.7.3.5 Co-researcher B: Faith Dimension

In the first interview, her personal faith was never discussed. Her dreams of making Africa a better place and to make an impact on the childrens' lives were addressed. But faith, as a coping mechanism, was not discussed. I know that her calling is very important to her, and that was how she experienced her deployment - as a calling. I think she focused so completely on caring for the deployed soldiers that she underestimated the personal difficulties.

She focused so completely on how to provide spiritual guidance to the deployed contingent and how to uplift the women of Burundi, that she may have neglected her own spiritual welfare. The whole question of "caring for the carer" is on the table, and who, in practice is in fact responsible for that. The need for such a "caretaker" is clear.

3.7.3.6 Co-researcher B: Politics

Comments were made by Co-researcher B, implying that a racial motive could be underlying the lack of support she experienced on a logistical level in the DRC. She harboured a strong suspicion that it was more of a racial problem than a resource problem (RB/1-49-50). This comment interested me, because the members working at CJOPS who frustrated her and tried to investigate her were black.

Because her Commanding Officer was a white male, their differences of opinion regarding resources and how she tried to obtain them were immediately seen as racially motivated. It is quite possible that the Officer Commanding may have had different reasons for his decisions based on monetary or logistical motives. It is also possible that he had his own preconceived ideas about a "black woman" as chaplain and in that her instincts might prove to be true. It is nevertheless interesting that their disagreement was immediately drawn into the racial paradigm.

The fact of the matter is that Co-researcher B did not have a good working relationship with her Officer Commanding and experienced a lack of support from him regarding her request for resources. This research cannot comment on his real motives and only speculate.

Although she is quite outspoken on the fact that his behaviour was racially motivated, it still leaves the question regarding why her “own” people responded the way they did? It is questionable whether the obvious lack of support from CJOPS could be laid on the Officer Commanding’s doorstep. He may have shared his unhappiness with her behaviour, but they had access to all her reports stating exactly, from her point of view, what she has done and why she behaved in a specific way. I would have preferred to discuss my questions with her and to receive her feedback. It is quite possible that due to the delicate racial relationships in South Africa, people can blame racism for numerous differences of opinion that may be personality or value driven.

3.7.3.7 Co-researcher B: Support Systems

In terms of support systems, she experienced a total lack of support. Well, she admitted that it is “there” but not functioning at all (RB/1-3). It is interesting that in a sense she disregarded all the other support systems, focusing only on those that failed to do so. From her family, friends, colleagues and home unit, excellent support was given, but it was overshadowed by her hurt caused by the lack of operational support. As an alternative support system, working hard and remaining busy, proved to be an effective coping mechanism (RB/1-5).

To be creative in approach to problems, was a definite challenge for her. Communication with soldiers deployed in different areas proved to be difficult due to the lack of confidentiality on a radio system. It was also difficult to reach these members physically due to the lack of transportation, as well as the safety issues involved.

Co-researcher B’s frustration increased as she struggled to visit deployed soldiers in numerous locations. The seemingly unwillingness from the Officer Commanding’s side to assist her in performing her task also contributed to her frustration. Budget constraints were used as an excuse for the lack of resources. Support was received from the other multi-professional team members and they work together remarkably well. Particularly, the support received from the social worker whom she was deployed with during the first three months, provided exceptionally good support to her (RB/1-15). This support was very important to her and definitely enabled her to continue her endeavours to do her work in the way that she wanted to do it.

Additional support was received from her home unit (RB/1-16). She received good support from her home unit’s Officer Commanding. He contacted her at least once every two weeks. This support from him strengthened her resolve and motivated her to keep on asking for the resources she needed. From her family she received great support on an emotional as well as in a practical way. They would send her a parcel at least every two weeks. That support comforted her and was vital to her well-being.

Exceptional support was received from her Arms of Service, the Air Force. She received support from her Senior Staff Officer (SSO) as well as her SO1 who was exceptionally supportive. She knew that her colleagues were supporting her because every time she would hear from them, they would tell her: “We are praying for you in our meetings”, so the support was there. I am aware of the fact that the styles and lines of approach between the Arms of Service differ.

It is an open secret that chaplains in the SAAF are treated differently than most Army chaplains are treated by their Officers Commanding. This difference in approach and style may be partially responsible for some of her negative experiences. The Air Force often refers to the “blue culture” and put a very high regard on the value of people and their opinions. The Army tends to be less accommodating and much more rigid and inflexible in its approach.

As far as I am able to gather, it was Co-researcher B’s first experience of working under a commander from a different Arms of Service. This notion is supported by the fact that all SAAF chaplains from both genders and from all races come back from deployment with very unpleasant stories of how they were treated. This disqualifies race and gender as a reason, but definitely highlights the differences in approach - particularly between the Army and the Air Force. Due to the Army being much bigger in size, it is almost self-evident that CJOPS will tend to utilise the Army’s style and approach.

However, the support from the service, the division that was supposed to support her was not there at all; this she referred to the chaplain’s office at CJOPS and the Chaplain General’s office in general. The lack of support from the chaplains directly responsible for the deployed chaplains under the command of the Joint Operations is her main grievance. The total disregard for reports, telephonic requests and the lack of respect in the way people are treated offended and troubled her tremendously.

3.7.3.8 Co-researcher B: Coping

“Coping is something that just must be done” (RB/1-3). Almost as if there is no other option, “you just have to cope”, is a very similar comment made by Co-researcher A. The interesting thought which they share is that at the end of the day, every individual is still responsible for his or her own well-being. One must make the decision to ‘cope’, because if not, the alternative is just too awful. The deployment was unpleasant and emotionally draining. The lack of support forces one to look after one’s own well-being. The interest from colleagues, friends and family members was not sufficient to fulfil her need of support.

The projects, like going out to the orphanages and to churches, indirectly supported her by giving her a sense of purpose, a sense of making a difference! She often told herself: “I think I am suffering, but look at these poor people. I am suffering administratively but they are suffering on all spheres of life”. That perception enabled her to manage her own pain and anger and to ‘cope’ on a temporary level (RB/1-44).

The extent of her emotional trauma is so severe that she is still hurting badly; even normal conversations about deployment still upsets her. Eventually she decided to withdraw from any further research (RB/1-9). The comment made that we joined the defence force voluntary and now we simply have no say in our own lives, gives some insight in how she feels. Feelings of losing control over one's own destiny feature very prominently in her story. She resented the fact that the "system" treated her that way.

The sentence that sums up all her experiences during deployment is the following "...I love my job but...in this deployment I was emotionally-actually... I was emotionally abused, because people who were supposed to be supporting me were the people who were emotionally abusing me!" (RB/1-9). This emotional abuse is still the cause of the pain she experiences today. Even by just listening to somebody talking about deployment, still causes her pain. This emotional abuse is not yet healed and the pain of remembering her deployment motivated her to withdraw from the research process.

3.7.3.9 Co-researcher B: Gender and Being a Mother!

According to Co-researcher B, her gender made a definite impact on her deployment. The impact was predominantly the fact that other soldiers put her into the role of mother. Trusting her like a mother, and sharing all their personal stories as if with a mother (RB/1-36). She felt that she became like a mother to the rest of the deployed! She is convinced that people trust women more than their male colleagues, and when people relate to a chaplain in that sense, they will discuss anything with her knowing that she is a *mother!*

Nevertheless, looking at the gender question, including the symbolism of motherhood, she remained convinced that it is still more difficult for females to be deployed than for males (RB/1-37). She unfortunately did not elaborate on her reasons why she felt it was more difficult for women to deploy. Notwithstanding the gender difficulties, she remained adamant that gender was not the reason she struggled with during her deployment (RB/1-38)!

3.7.3.10 Co-researcher B: Allegations

The apparent lack of interest in her welfare as a person by the chaplains at CJOPS created deep emotional pain for Co-researcher B (RB/1-7). This greatly added towards her difficulties and struggles to cope. She felt that nobody in the structure that was officially responsible for her well-being cared even a little bit about her. Her previous management from the Air Force side, tried to support her on an emotional level, but due to the command lines, was unable to make any real difference to her practical situation because she was not under their functional control during her deployment.

In (RB/1-10) she stressed that her "strong words" may sound like allegations, but it is not! The lack of any support either emotional, practical or logistical from operational command and control was her greatest problem. She felt totally alone and isolated without any support! She questioned their ability to be appointed in their positions, and felt that they were a disgrace to the chaplain service as well as the whole deployment effort in Burundi. Their unprofessional performance disabled the deployed chaplains' ability and did

not contribute towards a situation that enables chaplains to work effectively towards the peace-keeping effort as a whole.

3.7.3.11 Co-researcher B: Highlights

Co-researcher B had a very good affiliation with the local pastors and regularly attended local church meetings. It was a positive experience and remains a pleasant memory for her (RB/1-44). The involvement in a community project and the hope that her presence might make a difference remains very positive and inspires her with hope (RB/1-13). The hope that her presence, - even if for a short period - may leave some legacy especially for the women in Burundi, contributed greatly towards her self-esteem. She felt proud to be invited to an International Womens' congress and was pleased to be able to share the women of South Africa's story with them. She felt that her work was of a high standard, and that knowledge gives her some satisfaction. These positive experiences contributed towards her resilience.

3.7.3.12 Co-researcher B: Re-deployment

Re-deployment is definitely not currently an option for Co-researcher B (RB/1-21). The reason is that she is still sitting with "open wounds" and according to her, they are now even septic! She still tries her utmost to ignore any discussions concerning deployment. Her initial willingness to assist me was based on her hope that it would assist her in finding healing for her wounds and serve as motivation for her initial participation in this research (RB/1-23). I am very sad that she was unable to continue and really hope that she would seek additional assistance to heal her "septic wounds".

A growing concern is the gradual unwillingness expressed by caregivers to deploy in future peace-keeping operations. This is not only due to their shared unpleasant experiences, but partially due to a feeling of *been there, done that*. To simply try and force them will definitely not be advisable, Co-researcher B threatens that she would rather resign than to be forced to deploy again (RB/1-22). The fact that all SAAF Chaplains who were deployed returned with painful stories (Annual SAAF Chaplain's conference 2005; 2006 and 2007), is reason for concern. Unfortunately, currently, the Army-dominated system is treating this concern with disdain. It may be advisable to address the issue before it creates additional embarrassment for the SANDF or jeopardise peoples' well-being in the process.

3.7.3.13 Co-researcher B: Intervention

The research intervention opened old wounds and highlights the fact that narrative research, even with the best of intentions by the researcher, still leaves an impact on the Co-researchers. Almost all the co-researchers cried somewhere during their interviews, and exhibited signs of emotional pain. The emotional and personal strain of deployment on caregivers cannot be

adequately expressed verbatim. Just sharing their stories was traumatic. All the caregivers received some form of hammering during their respective deployments, and this pain sometimes continues long after their return home. This is supported by international trends.

3.7.3.14 Co-researcher B: Negative Experiences

One of the most painful experiences co-researcher B had was the unannounced visit, combined with the shocking news that she was under investigation for giving her commander a hard time and setting a bad example to women. This happened even after diligently explaining everything in her monthly reports. The threat that she may even be charged still rankles her to this day (RB/1-28). The experience left substantial emotional scars. She is still hoping for an apology which is not forthcoming. This incident was definitely the single most painful experience during her entire deployment.

A particular combined feedback session after her return, did not serve any real purpose for her. On the one hand she felt uncomfortable speaking up in front of others about her own traumatic experiences. What made it even more difficult to speak out, was the fact that the perpetrators of that trauma were sitting and listening to the feedback, while feeling very confident and self-assured of the wonderful work that they were doing.

To confront management is never an easy option, and for some it is almost impossible. Therefore, the general feeling was that the combined feedback didn't serve any purpose because all the facts were not on the table. On the other hand, Co-researcher B felt that the main purpose of her attendance during that feedback forum was to share her experiences - especially as a female (RB/1-34). Her presence was to supply the necessary representivity regarding gender, and not to listen to her opinion.

An individual debrief would have been preferable to her but it was never an option (it was never offered). As a woman, she was present to provide the proper gender equity in the quotation, but she realised that they were not really interested in her as a person struggling to cope.

On the one hand she acknowledged the privileges of being identified to be fast tracked but on the negative side, she also knows that it is partially window dressing to get the

“numbers” right. The fact remains that the organisation doesn't really care about individuals. Individuals in the organisation care for other individuals.

3.7.4 Co-researcher B: Summary

Co-researcher B deployed for the right reasons, she was positive and well-motivated, received support from deployed colleagues and from home, but nevertheless, experienced severe trauma due to the lack of support from her direct peers in the operational theatre. A dramatic change of mind and heart is needed at the office of CJOPS. Firstly, the realisation of the isolation that caregivers experience during deployment must be noted and managed

effectively. (RB/1-25). To ignore or deny a problem is not effective management.

Secondly, they need to realise that you don't have your own life in your own hands. They, the department, are now controlling your life and that is a very deconstructive thing, it affects people negatively (RB/1-26). Thirdly, people cannot only be prepared with a resilience program, but after preparing them, as an organisation you have to provide continued support. Positive reinforcing and the necessary recreation areas are very important.

The expectations of a caregiver's abilities may also be unrealistic. If you are not able to look after yourself, how will you be able to take care of anybody else? That is the bullet that is killing caregivers! You are supporting the members but no one supports you (RB/1-27). I am convinced that the trauma experienced by Co-researcher B could have been minimised with the right support structures in place. A caring and understanding person would have been able to advise, guide and support her. The resource crises could have been managed differently and her whole deployment would have been beneficial to all. In addition, the Defence Force would still retain a capable and able chaplain to be fully utilised in future.

3.8 Interpretation of experiences. Co-researcher C

3.8.1 Background

My third Co-researcher C, is a white English-speaking woman in her early forties who is a health care professional. She is an extremely experienced and capable Trauma Health Care professional with twenty five-years of working experience in the South African Military Health Service. Currently she is not in a permanent relationship. She is single and has made a decision not to be married until she finds the right man; neither does she want to marry because of the fear to remain single.

"It was like walking a tight-rope! As a trauma sister with advanced experience, I was approached in 2004 to assist the Defence Force in establishing a Weather Haven in Burundi, which is a new concept in hospitals, derived from Canada. I was asked to set up the casualty department of the hospital. The initial problem came in when we were told that we had to be deployed within two weeks. After the pre-deployment, they told us: No, you are not going to be deployed because they were having problems up in Burundi'. So we were 'on the hook' the whole time, which was a bit bad because you had already said your goodbyes to your family and friends and everything else, and suddenly you have to say 'Well okay I am not going anymore'. 'When are you going?' 'Who knows?'"

"The preparation was a bit of a let down, and it was the fourth time that I was disappointed on deployment! So, I was fairly fed up at that stage. Anyway, three weeks later they deployed us to Burundi. During the first six weeks of the deployment, we were basically setting up, washing and getting all the equipment into place, while trying to get the electricity working, because most

of our equipment works with electricity. Then we started to receive patients in the hospital.”

“The problem came in... well, I experienced problems. We were like two groups. We were deployed after the first group. The other group had already been there for two to three weeks and was situated at another base. They were already settled in. We came there and we had a sort of compromise between our project manager and the facility commander who simply didn't get on with the one thinking that she is more important than the other. Eventually, you didn't know who to listen to. So, the project manager and the facility commander were at odds with one another.”

“People were aware of it; in fact it split the group right down the middle. The project manager was there with us at the Weather Haven, to help, to set up the project. Then she should have left. The facility commander was at the other sickbay with the group that would have taken over the facility. In South Africa, they (management) couldn't make up their minds whether they wanted the project manager to leave or stay, what her role and function was or what the facilities commander's role was supposed to be. So, there was a lot of stress - other stresses as well - political issues, the black and white type of thing.”

“When I arrived there, the second thing I picked up was the uncertainty of who was in command. Who is in charge here? What are we really supposed to do? Well, for the first half of those six weeks that we were setting up the casualty department, it didn't really affect us as much, because the facility commander was operating on the other side. However, when she came over, that was when our situation became a little bit out of hand with growing arguments and tension. The project manager would give an order - this group of people must not be there, they are going to do what she tells them to do today. They were off duty, we had our own scheduled 'on-time' and 'off-time'. She would just withdraw people from the facility and it totally bogged down the facility. So, in that case, I backed the facility commander, because we were working in the facility now and we still had to run the whole situation. She moved in there and started cancelling peoples' leave and off-time, which is a bit of a rough thing really, so the peoples' tempers weren't exactly the best!”

“Well, I had to make a decision who am I going to back. As far as I was concerned, the project was over for her, the thing was set up. Therefore, the facility commander took control and that were basically her orders that I followed. It was a bit difficult really because I actually shared a room with the project manager, so it was like walking a tight-rope action. We were in an already stressful situation because we still had the enemy (rebels). As such, we did not know who and where they were because we were not briefed on what the current situation was in Burundi!”

“We were told that we must watch out for theft and everything else, because we were getting the people, the locals, in to help us. But we have to watch them so that they do not carry the stuff away, because it is the top of the range equipment that we had there.”

“The official situation was that we were not allowed to help the locals. We were not allowed to treat the locals (medically). We were only allowed to treat the UN soldiers. At one stage there was an accident where one of our cars knocked down a local person, which almost resulted in a riot over the whole

thing. Unfortunately, nobody could make a decision on whether we are going to help this person or not?”

“We caused the accident, but the minute we picked him up - and you could hear it on the radio, because we had radio contact - the minute we picked him up and tried to take him to a local hospital, they refused to take him! Now it was our problem! We kept him overnight in our hospital, which is against the rules. And that incident could have escalated into a big political situation; the political situation at that stage was grave, a bit unstable. It was during the time that one of our soldiers apparently raped and killed a fourteen-year-old girl. They accused a South African soldier for the murder!” (He was later found guilty.)

“The Burundian locals took the law in their own hands and they attacked a UN car, they shot the one person while the other escaped. At that stage we were confined to base. They eventually brought the body of the murdered girl to the base for a post-mortem that we had to perform. The situation in the base for me was unpleasant, because of my background and due to my personal beliefs.” (Co-researcher C is a devoted Christian with strict moral codes, but she is not overly conservative).

“When we were confined to base, one of the first things the soldiers asked was who is going to bring the whores to them because it is their right to have whores. So you are not sure whether you yourself are safe from them, because you have to walk through the entire base and you are a female.”

“So it was not only unpleasant but scary as well, especially at night working alone in the sickbay. Management called the whole camp together and said, ‘You are now all confined to base. You are not allowed to go out’. This is your curfew time, and so again the foot soldiers asked in the meeting ‘who is going to bring the whores to us’. So, it was said openly. Management responded by saying that it is not their problem!” “Alcohol abuse was big, really big there! They had a roaring trade with alcohol there, sometimes it got out of hand and the soldiers became belligerent and aggressive. But as long as they had their entertainment, they were quite happy. It is a case of you either join them or you walk away. Luckily, I had a friend there. He had the same principles I had. That was easier for me but some people... they just joined in! You can handle it if you know it is only for a short period.”

“One of the things I noticed while I was there is that you do get lonely there. Even if you have your support systems, and your friends there, you still get lonely. You get lonely for physical contact with people. I think that plays a big role in why people will go into a physical relationship with each other, especially in the uncertainty of the situation.”

“But you see you have to, well I had to stick to my principles, it was the only thing I had to keep me going, and my principles are based a lot on my religion. I became quite close to God during that time. I am used to going to church every week. They did have a Catholic church there, but you can’t go there alone as a female - a white female! My friend did go with me a couple of times, but you know you can’t expect him to go there fulltime. So that was also a big drain on my ability to cope shall we say?”

“You have to make the best of a bad situation and you have to consciously make a decision between right and wrong! Because it is so easy to slip into

the norm, nobody would have thought anything differently from you; in fact, they probably would have accepted you better in the whole situation.”

“My friend and I had off times together, our facility commander arranged off-times for us together. So I had support from her. During the whole thing, she was very supportive. I could go and talk to her when things became a bit bad! While I was there, my sister was admitted to ICU. She was very sick. My mom also got the number for Burundi, but it is very difficult getting through on the landline. The support I got from the facility commander was good! She made a hell of a difference! I could go to her every time and I could just sit and talk to her, and well, there you go!”

“What makes things difficult was when you get back to South Africa and they ask you whether you want to see a psychologist or not? I indicated Yes, I wanted to see one, it is now, two years down the line, and they haven’t even contacted me. The more I think about it, the more I think they would not have understood! They have never even been there. I am not prepared to talk to somebody who is not prepared to actually understand what is going on there. Because it is so easy to say ‘I understand’. No you don’t understand! You have never been there, that type of thing.”

“You can’t control the situation or to wait the whole day before you get another chance again to update whatever is happening. Fortunately, I had the ability to switch off. If I am on duty, ‘I am on duty’, and then I am professional! That was drummed in to me since I started nursing, so it was second nature! You make your decisions there, whether they are right or wrong.”

“Then, we had the thing with Venter and the body there! The malaria prophylaxis, which actually causes hallucinations, like the one night while I was on duty, we worked from three in the afternoon until eight the next morning! That was the same day I had taken my malaria medication - you have to take it once a week.”

“I knew about the hallucinations that can happen as a side effect from the medication! That was the day that they brought the body of the murdered girl to us for safekeeping. Due to the hallucinations created by the medicine, that dead woman followed me the whole evening! I could see her just behind me in the corridor. I knew it was a hallucination, I mean hello... but still, I left all the lights on in the place. That was really an extremely unpleasant experience. Part of your brain knew what is happening and is fighting the hallucination and the other part can clearly see a dead body walking behind you! Knowledge and experience carried me through that incident.”

“I got the impression that the chaplain was there for the media because wherever he went, he wanted a photographer to go with him! I didn’t hear him speak once on any subject relating to religion or faith! I heard him speak a lot on HIV, the plight of the women in Burundi, but not about God at all. They did have chaplain’s periods on Sunday for an hour. I did not feel the need to go. I went once and decided that it was not for me. It was sort of like a church service, but it was not for me! I felt uncomfortable.”

“This was not the first time I was deployed, but it was the first time since 1994 that I was deployed outside the borders of our country. The bit of the prostitutes and everything else... I experienced some of it in Lohatla. I am not sure that I would like to deploy again, which is very sad. Because before this deployment I wanted to deploy, I felt a need to do my part, and I needed to do

it for the country and everything else. The four times before then it was also touch and go, one of them was Algeria, that was with the earthquake there. All the other cases were short deployments, so I was actually looking forward to go into Africa for a deployment.”

“I didn’t go to Algeria. They cancelled it the morning...also the previous night we were to climb on the plane and the next morning at 10:00 they said ‘stand down we are not going anymore!’ That, that is the worst part, you have settled yourself - I am going, and suddenly you are not going anymore! And I was really looking forward to the deployment. I was really looking forward to it! I had a chance to stay for six months, but there is no way I will stay for six months, there is no way I will put myself through that experience again for six months!”

“I would personally prefer general deployment to be for a three-month period, especially if you find that a specific deployment does not agree with you. But it works for some people. Some people just deploy over and over and over again! I don’t know if it is just an individual thing, I didn’t find it pleasant!”

“In fact, they told me just before that they are lengthening my stay there with another two weeks, and I could not handle it! I needed to get off! It was a senior officer whom I told to go to hell in no uncertain terms, and I am climbing on that plane tomorrow and to hell with you! They accept my decision! So there was a group - the last group before me, their stay was also extended for two to three weeks!”

“Another friend of mine, who is now in Sudan, deployment was also suddenly extended by three months, because the planes weren’t coming or they had problems with it! It is a very stressful situation when you are leaving 27 November, and they come to you the day before you leave and say ‘No! You are leaving after Christmas!’”

“I think a lot of the incentive to deploy is money-driven! You get a lot of money there, especially for the lower ranks. Cultural-wise, I suppose, it is a black community for you see very few whites. The culture is different, even if their culture differs, I think that our black peoples’ culture fits in much closer to the Burundian culture, so they get along a lot better in the situation than we do. Considering the question, ‘Why do you want to be deployed?’ Why are you really going there? The obvious answer would be, for the money. The second one would be that there are people that are actually going to Africa to make a difference and then you have those that deploy because they have to? What would the ‘real’ answers be?”

“For most, money comes first, and then, sometimes the hospital just gets informed that they must send so many medical personnel, nursing staff, doctors or whatever the case may be. Top management will first ask for volunteers and if there are no volunteers then they volunteer for you! So if you are G1K1 Green (Health classification indicating deployability in all areas) then you get volunteered! Thus, it is quite possible that some caregivers might not be totally positive about their deployment due to possible coercion.”

“I think we are going to be deployed much more, if I look at the news, and see what is happening in Africa. There is that idea that we are supposed to be the saviours of Africa. And whether we want to or not, whether we are stripped of personnel in this hospital - we already have a shortage of staff. We have a shortage of money with which we have to go and employ agency staff to

stand in for these people who are not deployed! So I don't think there is going to be an end to it, not at all. I think that peacekeeping is the future of the Military! Where they see a problem we will go! Not necessarily so much with the UN, but certainly with the AU."

"I think people must be deployed who want to be deployed, I don't think people should be forced to be deployed. Deploy the people who want to be deployed, you have a better force because they actually want to be there for whatever reason!"

"I don't think we will change the face of deployment, if I look at oversea's deployment, it is the same thing! A friend of mine went to the Comoros and she said exactly the same - you suddenly become the queen bee, and everybody wants you - whether you are the ugliest person in the world or not! A female amongst males, so there you go, that is your job there, there you go. Maybe if you really want to make a difference - that should be your main reason and motivation for deploying."

"You remembered I said that I would like to see a psychologist and that simply nothing happened! Well, we were given a questionnaire as well about how we felt about our deployment. And nothing came from that either. The message is that people don't care, why should they care about us, we are just the plebs on the ground. They need somebody to deploy - so deploy them! They go on deployments, yes they fly around in nice jets to get to Burundi, and there they fly around in choppers. It's a jolly holiday for them and a few days later they are back in South Africa. They are not faced with the actual situation."

3.8.2 Interpretation of Co-Researcher C's Experiences: Walking a Tightrope

3.8.2.1 Co-researcher C: Motivation

Co-researcher C was approached during 2004 to assist in erecting a new kind of military field hospital in Burundi. She focused on the casualty department since that was her specialised field of knowledge. Her main motivation was to make a difference in peoples' quality of life. Predominantly to assist her own deployed members medically in order to enable them to do the job they were sent out to do, and thus supporting the broader South Africa's initiative in Africa. Co-researcher C was motivated to make a positive contribution, to enhance peoples' quality of life. Due to her previous four unsuccessful aborted cross-border deployments, she was looking forward to the experience.

The adventure and new experiences to be savoured carry its own magnetism and allure in it. She was partially motivated to gain personal experience of the new hospital and its state of the art equipment, and also wished to contribute her skills to the greater good of mankind. She was able to relate to Co-researcher B's dream of building a better world and if possible, to contribute towards peace and democracy in Africa which is also of value to the sub-continent.

She was totally convinced that the main reason for soldiers' willingness to deploy, is definitely focused on personal monetary gain. Money comes first on the list of why people volunteered to be deployed. Especially in the lower ranks, money remains the incentive (RC/1-61). But it depends on the individual and on the kind of work the person does there. She recalled that there was a chap in transport, who drove all over Burundi; he wasn't stuck in one place, and he loved it! He insisted on going back; in fact, the next time he volunteered to go for between six months and a year! His motivation was on the one hand the money, but also because he really enjoyed his time driving around in the beautiful country and he didn't have any unpleasant experiences during his deployment (RC/1-61). His sense of adventure was his driving factor.

All Co-researchers are in agreement that the main motivator for the lower ranks is definitely the monetary gain. Some of the other ranks may have higher ideals and motives, such as making the world a better place, or to contribute their proficiency and skills in the African Renaissance, but that is normally only applicable to those who are deployed externally for the first time.

The sad part is that they all feel that disillusionment in the higher ideals of life is one of the trade-offs in returning from deployment. The unsettling question whether things in that particular country (DRC, Burundi, Sudan) or Africa in general will really change, adds towards this sense of disillusionment. It was noticeable amongst all the Co-researchers, especially when the long-term benefits of peace-keeping operations were considered. Although they commented on the fact that even the monetary gains were not all that impressive in comparison to the sacrifice that was made, the money still makes a positive difference in their own lives. Therefore, it must be accepted that money plays a major role in peoples' willingness to deploy.

An additional factor that motivates people is the freedom, freedom to see new places, but also freedom from their own sometimes mundane lives in South Africa. Some people volunteer to deploy because they prefer the camaraderie and the human interaction in the deployed area above those at home. Unfortunately, it must be considered that the recurring comments about freedom to indulge in alcohol abuse and sexual activity may well motivate some to share in the "joy"!

The dominant motivator for Co-researcher C to deploy, which had her waiting on four emergency standbys to deploy externally, (humanitarian disasters like the earthquake in Algeria), was that she felt that she need to do her part. She expressed the need to do it for her country (RC/1-55). Her motive was to serve and to make the world a better place. She was motivated by the dream to assist the South African government in its efforts to bring peace to that region. The sad part was her shattered dreams and hopes for a better future. These experiences relate very closely with both previous caregivers' motives and encounters during deployment.

3.8.2.2 Co-researcher C: Pre-deployment Phase and the Day of Departure

Due to the specific nature of her previous four pre-deployment operations, all linked to humanitarian crises abroad, attempting to prepare in advance would

be virtually impossible. Exercises differ from real emergencies. Therefore, it remains extremely difficult to be constantly prepared for rapid deployment.

It was not a problem for Co-researcher C when she was informed that she would deploy within two weeks. After going through the process of pre-deployment, they were told no, they are not going to be deployed now, and they will have to wait. So they were sort of on the hook the whole time, which was very unpleasant for them.

The main grievance with the departure day is the embarrassment of trying to explain to everybody why, after you had already said your goodbyes to your family and friends, you are still around. Then suddenly one has to say: "Well okay I am not going anymore." "When are you going?" "Who knows?" (RC/1-4). This created frustration and doubts about management's ability and intentions.

The real reason why her previous deployments were all cancelled is difficult to understand and comment upon. But questions regarding proper planning and mismanagement were asked (RC/1-11). It may be possible that the military was put on standby during her previous operations and that, at a political level, the decision was made not to continue with those operations. This is unfortunately part and parcel of the way the military across the globe functions. Soldiers must be prepared to cope with the unexpected and until such time as their abilities are needed, they must "hurry up and wait", implying that they must constantly be ready and then wait until their skills are suddenly needed. My perception was that the lack of communication and, especially the manner how that "little bit" of communication was conducted, was responsible for the negative feelings and not merely for the disappointment of being unable to deploy.

In terms of the Burundi deployment, the lack of information and the "why" or "why not" question was never addressed. The need-to-know principle is very strongly imbedded within the system. Unfortunately, this often resulted in high levels of frustration amongst members. Often soldiers will hear more news of what is happening in the newspapers and media than through the military's own channels of communication.

Co-researcher C refers to the uncertainty created due to a lack of updated information regarding the mission's security status. For instance, what the local population's possible reaction towards the soldiers might be in the light of the murder accusations? There was a certain amount of information, but not nearly enough to assist in the process of calming down members. Too little information is often responsible for worsening the situation. In the critical role that caregivers fill (especially chaplains), it is vital that they must be informed of the situation, thus enabling them to assist management in turn from their side.

Since all the caregivers struggled with their own uncertainty and fears, they were effectively disabled to address the fears of the other deployed members and to assist them. This is not only applicable to the pre-deployment information, but is especially relevant in the actual mission area.

The day of departure made no big impact on her since she was well prepared and in fact grateful that the departure day had eventually arrived. She was worried and would have hated it to be informed again that her deployment was cancelled.

3.8.2.3 Co-researcher C: Arrival in DRC

Upon her arrival in the Operational area, she found an outright clash between the project manager and the facility commander; the two simply didn't get on. Co-researcher C was convinced that the reason for the difficulties was because the one decided that she was more important than the other one. That was the situation she found upon her arrival. Unfortunately, as the project developed, the clash only increased in intensity. For the first three weeks during which they were setting up the hospital, the conflict between the two didn't really affect the rest of the group as much because the facility commander was based at a different locality (RC/1-15). However, when she came to the hospital, that was when the situation became really difficult. Eventually it reached the point where the soldiers basically didn't know who to listen to due to conflicting orders (RC/1-5). In such a mission it is absolutely unacceptable to receive conflicting orders.

Apparently the project manager would give an order, for example that this group of people must not be there, but that they are going to do whatever she tells them to do that day. But those members were actually needed at the hospital facility where they had their own rosters and timetables determining who is on- and off-duty. The manager would just withdraw people from the facility, resulting in the hospital becoming totally bogged down. Co-researcher C made a decision of who she was going to back (RC/1-19). She decided to back the facility commander, because the hospital was already set-up, people were working in the facility and they had a hospital to run (RC/1-16). Her inherent focus on service delivery and her motivation to provide an effective service motivated her decision.

Conflict amongst leaders has the result that followers are forced to take sides, thus increasing the tension in the process. People were aware of the conflict between the two managers. In fact, it split the group right down the middle (RC/1-8). The decision makers in South Africa couldn't make up their minds whether they wanted the project manager to leave or stay in Burundi. Neither were they able to specify what their respective roles were in the operational area. This lack of guidance and decision making from senior management was mainly responsible for the problem.

The emotional drain on people to constantly battle and try to sort out command and control lines added tremendous unnecessary stress to the deployment. I am convinced that the power struggle was most probably equally unpleasant for the two managers. Their own roles were not properly defined and that resulted in a whole group being drawn into a battle that could very easily have been avoided from the beginning with the right decision being made.

Co-researcher C's personal predicament was increased dramatically by the fact that she shared her lodgings with the one manager but on principle decided to back the other one (RC/1-20). In her own words she described it as: "It was like walking a tight rope". To maintain civil relations with a roommate over a long period of time while you are openly supporting her direct opposition in their power struggle as well as having a lower rank is definitely a complicated and difficult situation to be in. This added greatly

towards Co-researcher C's stress and made coping considerably more difficult.

3.8.2.4 Co-researcher C: Practical Solutions

In terms of practical solutions, the following: first people must be deployed who want to be deployed, don't force people to be deployed, even though we are military, and it is rammed down our throats: "You are military therefore you are deployable"! Deploy the people who want to be deployed. The drain on woman/manpower in South Africa when expertise is suddenly absent for six months, is a growing concern (RC/1-66)! It is a recipe for problems to force people to deploy who may be a risk to themselves or the contingent and the possibility is there that such people may even deliberately create an international incident in their anger in frustration.

Secondly, we must be realistic in terms of human nature and accept that we would probably not change the face of deployment. As a female soldier deployed to the Comoros said, "You suddenly become the queen bee, and everybody wants you - whether you are the ugliest person in the world or not! A Female amongst Males!" This emphasises that sexual activity amongst consenting adults in the deployed area is currently unofficially accepted as a given. (In the light of the amount of condoms issued on an official level, it may not be that unofficial though.) The response currently is to turn a blind eye and only when the "necessary proof" is available, or it is in the interest of the Defence Force, that action is taken. The current perception amongst white members is that they will be charged for any sexual misconduct but that similar conduct amongst black members will be deemed to be culturally acceptable. This comment was based on the feedback from the active Co-researchers. Additional research may be needed in future.

The stories from sexual conduct amongst a huge percentage of the uniformed personnel are abundant in its frequency. Unfortunately, the current attitude from senior management is very similar to the incident that Co-researcher C referred to where soldiers were confined to base, demanding an answer to the question "Who is going to bring the whores to us". Management responded by saying "It is not our problem"!

The unofficial "policy" of denial is not helping. The current HIV/AIDS situation in our country, as in Africa south of the Sahara, is making this behaviour even more scarier, especially, in the light of the high risk group that soldiers represent.

I can recall during my deployment in Lesotho that we had a roll-call one night at ten o'clock. Three of the four Majors were absent without permission, and seven ladies (prostitutes?) were found in the camp. Due to the large number of soldiers outside the perimeters of the camp; all of those absent from roll-call received only a stern warning. Till today, I am not certain whether the decision was made because it was too difficult to charge half of the base or whether the Officer Commanding was afraid that it would reflect negatively on his own command capabilities. Probably, he wanted to retain the soldiers' goodwill by being lenient. For some reason, the late-night roll-call was not repeated during my stay in Lesotho.

The SANDF is putting huge emphasis on combating HIV/AIDS, during the pre-deployment program, during the annual Concurrent Health Assessment (CHA), as well as the extensive program from the chaplains with their Combating HIV/AIDS through Moral and Ethical Conduct course presented to all Arms of Service. Notwithstanding these efforts, the sexual behaviour of members has not yet been dramatically altered.

This opens questions regarding the role of chaplains; are they moral gatekeepers, emotional supporters, or is their only role to provide spiritual guidance? The role of all the caregivers must be clarified; unrealistic expectations may lead to unfulfilled expectations. On both sides of the spectrum, there may be unfulfilled expectations. Co-researcher D's story contains examples of unrealistic expectations from the soldiers' side, while Co-researcher B's story contains elements of her own unrealistic expectations with resulting anguish.

3.8.2.5 Co-researcher C: Faith Dimension

Co-researcher C is a deeply religious person and utilised her relationship with God and her religious principles as the basis of her coping ability. Unfortunately, due to various factors, the chaplaincy did not add to the process through either support or strengthening her religious beliefs. She got the impression that the chaplain was there for the media because wherever he went he wanted a photographer to go with him! To the extent of stating "I didn't feel like I needed *that* chaplain!" (RC/1-52). The detachment between them could be related to ability and personality.

Her main accusation against the chaplain was that she never heard him say anything, not even once, regarding religion! She heard him speak a lot on HIV, the plight of the women in Burundi, but not of God at all. This experience may be linked to the chaplaincy effort to focus on HIV/AIDS as well as on relevant topics such as women's rights. Apparently her experience was that he was more a "political commissar" than a chaplain due to his lack of emphasis on religious issues. She attended the chaplain's Sunday sermon once, but decided that it was not for her, admitting that religious practices are a very personal experience (RC/1-53).

Since she was more than willing to attend the local Roman Catholic Church, it could easily be argued that racism was not her motivation to withdraw, but that the cultural differences in the approach followed during the sermon was foreign to her. She was painfully aware that the colour of her skin made the attendance of the local church not without its own challenges, especially in the light of the South African deployment not being too popular at that stage in the eyes of the local population.

After a direct question of where the Co-researcher found the strength to cope with the unstable situation internally as well as externally, her answer was simple: "I came quite close to God in that time" (CR/1-33). This is a very clear statement of the role that her relationship with God played in her ability to cope. She left with a strong relationship with God and it became even stronger during her deployment. Faith was by far the strongest anchor in her armour providing her with the ability to cope.

3.8.2.6 Co-researcher C: Politics

One has to accept the fact that Africa's inhabitants are predominantly black. Consequently, one encounters very few whites, especially in Central Africa. Central Africa's cultures differ from South African cultures, but even so our black cultures have more in common with the rest of Africa than with most whites. Therefore, according to Co-researcher C, South African blacks get along a lot better in the situation than most whites do (RC/1-61). This statement was, however, disputed by two of the Co-researchers.

There was considerable support for her statement claiming that it might be more difficult for whites to deploy in Central Africa due to the big cultural gap between them and the local population. All my Co-researchers experienced problems during their deployment notwithstanding the colour of their skin. Their racial orientation was as far as I can deduct, not the main cause of their pain and difficulties. Although, all the whites were convinced that it is more difficult for them to be deployed due to bigger cultural differences. There are more black soldiers in the Defence Force, and therefore more black soldiers are deployed. Being the dominant group present at the mission area it is not a surprising result that they will feel more at home amongst their colleagues sharing the same cultural background than the small white minority might feel.

During my Lesotho deployment we were at one stage only three white soldiers amongst the one hundred and sixty eight (168) deployed soldiers. It is culturally definitely much more difficult for the minority to maintain its culture when all conversations, music and cultural activities are dominated by the majority. I was not able to speak Afrikaans with anybody for weeks, except on the occasion that I was able to call home.

During a previous Chaplain General Conference, the remark was made that Africa is for Africans and that they don't want whites there. Regrettably this attitude is growing amongst some and more and more white people feel unwelcome and alienated from their own country. On the other hand, Co-researcher B is just as convinced of racial discrimination against her as a black woman. All this shows how deeply ingrained some of the racial discourses in our country still are.

A growing concern mentioned by Co-researcher C is what practical option would be available for management when certain professional groups refuse to be deployed in future for whatever their reason may be (RC/1-62). She was specifically referring to medical personnel. One of the options available would be to order them, or force them on the threat of resignation, to be deployed. Her main concern was what the impact could be on a small isolated community or on the individual soldier thousands of kilometres from home when those soldiers are forced to deploy. One can only speculate whether their ingrained professionalism would be enough to sustain them or not.

Both Co-researchers, B and C called upon internal professional reserves to enable them to still deliver work of good quality, although their professionalism did not protect them from inner turmoil. We may speculate that those deployed against their will may either harm themselves or those whom they were supposed to serve.

Some talk regarding coercion had been mentioned within the Military Health Service. Co-researcher B made similar references to treats against chaplains. Since they voluntarily joined the system, they have apparently lost their ability to choose whether they want to be deployed or not. These pressures on members who are appointed on a contractual basis are tremendous, they are scared that their contracts may not be renewed if they refuse to deploy. One may ask how that could affect deployed members' ability to cope with deployment in future.

Shaw commented (Shaw & Cilliers, 1995:25) that the end of the cold war has not resulted in peace. The current political climate is focused on peacekeeping operations and it will probably remain a focus point in the medium to long-term Defence Force operations. This estimate is currently confirmed by literature. In a paper (Shaw & Cilliers, 1995:25) presented at the 1995 Institute of Defence Policy (IDP) Seminar on South African Policy on Global Peace Support Efforts in Cape Town, it was stated that South Africa's obligatory contribution to UN peace support efforts accounts for 0,34% of the total UN budget earmarked for peace support operations. This makes South Africa the single largest contributor on the African continent. South Africa finds itself in the unique position where, due to its own successful transformation to democracy, the country's role as peacemaker in Africa was gradually accepted.

Some people in the world and in Africa have the idea that South Africa is supposed to be the saviour of Africa and therefore whether we want to or not, whether we are stripped of personnel or not, whether we can afford to or not, we will be deployed (RC/1-63). The growing role that South Africa plays in Africa cannot be disputed. Although it would be a big mistake to overrate our role and position, we are not that popular.

The long-term sustainability of the military peacekeeping effort may gradually become more difficult unless the human factor is not addressed urgently. In terms of caregiver's willingness to deploy, my findings are that they are all reluctant to deploy, up to the point of threatening to resign if they are forced to do so. I must again state that my research was done only amongst members of the Air Force and Military Health Services. It is therefore possible that Army chaplains may differ from these findings. On an informal level, shared conversations led me to believe that most may agree with my findings, if only in private.

Uncertainty at ground level regarding policies and decisions taken at higher level, are an additional cause for stress. For example, treating local patients or not after accidents caused by own forces is not always so easy to manage on the ground due to different ethics and pressures active in the actual situation. It is a very different situation from a boardroom perspective three thousand kilometres away. The practical working relationship between different countries regarding medical care was not clear.

Two different sets of rules are regulating the AU and UN forces living and working together. However not receiving the same support or compensation created tension amongst soldiers (RC/1-8). Similarly, tension was created due to the different ways in which communication was handled by the AN and the UN - a certain recipe for creating problems.

According to the rules of engagement, peacekeeping soldiers were not allowed to provide medical treatment to the locals. They were only allowed to

treat the UN soldiers. After an accident where one of UN cars knocked down a local, there nearly was a riot over the whole thing. None of the commanders could make a decision, as to whether they were going to assist the injured person.

They (South African soldiers) caused the accident, but the minute they picked up the injured man and tried to take him to a local hospital, the hospitals refused to accept him (RC/1-24). The Burundian hospital refused to admit him in order to force the peacekeepers to provide the patient with medical care. Their attitude was it is a UN problem we won't handle it! The injured person was kept overnight in the hospital, which was against the rules. That could easily have escalated into a big political situation. Consider the implications if that patient for instance had passed away in a South African military hospital, what would the consequences have been? On the other hand, if all local hospitals refuse to assist the injured patient, while your forces were responsible for the injury, would it be ethically justifiable to simply let the injured die?

One must remember that the political situation at that stage was grave, even a bit unstable. It was during that time that one of the South African soldiers raped and killed a fourteen-year-old girl. They blamed the South Africans for it (RC/1-26). He was later convicted in South Africa where he killed his two children and injured his wife during a shooting incident.

In Burundi, the locals took the law in their own hands, they attacked a UN car, they shot one person but the other one was lucky to escape. After that incident, the UN personnel were confined to base (RC/1-27). This implies that they were not allowed to leave the base for any personal, recreational or other reason. Only absolutely essential movement as authorized by the Officer Commanding was allowed.

This incident clearly illustrates how quickly a potentially grave and dangerous situation can develop. It is relatively easy to decide on certain rules of engagement sitting in an air-conditioned luxury conference room. To enforce them while standing in the middle of a crowded street full of angry locals after one of their own was knocked down by a soldier, is a totally different ball game.

The social constructionism in the two stories is vastly different. Unfortunately, the critics and politicians judging the soldiers' behaviour very seldom, if ever, share the same practical situation when debating what the reasonable man (soldier) would do. Similarly, the media have their own agenda and they thrive on sensationalism.

3.8.2.7 Co-researcher C: Allegations

Co-researcher C accuses senior management of being uncaring: "Why should they care about us, we are just the plebs on the ground. They need somebody to deploy, so deploy them! They go on deployments, yes they fly around in nice jets to get to Burundi, and there they fly around in choppers. It's a jolly holiday for them. And a few days later they are back in South Africa without the need to be faced with the actual situation (IC/1-70)." This feeling of being disregarded by senior management definitely becomes a problem

when soldiers must be motivated externally or internally. The gap between junior and senior ranks is a given, but when even the officers feel that they are just plebs on the ground, it becomes alarming.

On the other hand, Generals have the responsibility to make difficult decisions that may even endanger people's lives, but when officers experience senior management as uncaring, it is reason for concern. All Co-researchers supported this allegation, and they all felt that if senior management had shown more genuine interest in their personal situation, that numerous problems could relatively easily have been prevented.

After the UN soldiers were confined to the base, one of the first things the soldiers asked was, who is going to bring the whores to them? According to them, it was their right to have whores (RC/1-28).

The situation was very unpleasant for Co-researcher C due to her belief system and social background. As an outspoken Christian, she strongly believes in fidelity and abstinence, she was uncomfortable with the soldiers' sexual activities and their demands.

The fact that she was unsure of her own safety in the camp as a female is a shocking testimony of the discipline, morals and values of those who made the demands. For me, it is almost impossible to grasp that as a soldier, she felt unsafe and at risk amongst her own colleagues. It was an unpleasant and very scary experience for her (RC/1-27). Management's response of: "It is not our problem!" (RC/1-29) is almost unbelievable, it is in fact an admittance that they don't know how to manage the problem, the easiest option is to ignore it. The topic was also addressed under the heading of Practical Solutions.

These serious allegations about sexual practices, demands for whores and an apparent lack of concern regarding these demands raise question marks. The fight against HIV/AIDS, the moral regeneration program, ethics and moral values, the general discipline amongst soldiers as well as leadership's ability to lead effectively, are all questions that came forward. The commander of the medical contingent was not always sober! (RC/1-29). This is a very serious allegation if commanders themselves set examples of misbehaving.

Allegations of sexual misconduct with prostitutes on the one side, and alcohol abuse on the other, are causes for concern. She also referred to a roaring trade with alcohol, sometimes it got out of hand and the soldiers became belligerent and aggressive (RC/1-30). Every single person returning from deployment, with the exception of deployment to Sudan, comments on excessive alcohol abuse. It may perhaps be necessary to formally investigate the extent of these allegations and to address the problem sooner rather than later.

3.8.2.8 8.2.8 Co-researcher C: Coping

People cope in different ways with a stressful situation. Reporting sick was a way through which some of the soldiers coped. This was noticeable in the fact that the night before the shifts would prepare to go into the field, five or six people would report sick. As a result, when the main group goes out, those who reported sick were left behind (IC/1-70). Reporting sick was their avenue of escape, their method of coping even if only on the short term.

A second stronger coping skill is professionalism and good training that enabled caregivers to continue providing a service, even if they are personally under strain. Co-researcher C maintained the ability to switch off. She commented: “If I am on duty, I am on duty, and then I am professional! That had been drummed in to me since I have started nursing, so it was second nature. (RC/1-44).”

A third coping skill is the support and understanding from seniors. One of Co-researcher C’s very positive recollections was the excellent support she received from the facility commander (RC/1-38).

That the positive support made an immense difference was clearly stated. Just the fact that one could go to her every time to just sit and talk made the difference (RC/1-39). It was this basic feeling of being accepted - of having somebody to trust - that was absent in Co-researcher B’s story.

After some frightening comments about alcohol abuse and sexual activity, the following question was asked: What is the effect of things like that on a deployment? What does it do to people, what did it do to you? (CI/1-31).

“It is a case of you either join them or you walk away. If you walk away then you got a bit of a problem. Luckily I had a friend there that I had known for years. He has the same principles that I have. That made it easier for me, but some people, they just join in! It is one of those things, a bit unpleasant but not too bad. You can handle it if you know it is only for a short period (CR/1-31).

You need to find someone with the same values, beliefs and norms. People sharing similar beliefs and principles support one another! At the end of the day, every individual must make a decision regarding the way he or she wants to live his or her life. You are the only one who can decide whether you are going to join them or walk away. This is a very sensible comment and all Co-researchers agreed with this statement: at the end of the day, every person must make his or her own decisions.

In South Africa, Co-researcher C is used to going to church every week. In Burundi, there was a local Catholic church, but one can’t go there alone as a foreign soldier and as a white female, it may not be safe. She convinced a friend to attend sermons with her a couple of times, but realised she couldn’t expect him to accompany her every Sunday. His denomination was a protestant church and differs in their denominational approach it can be seen as a relative conservative Afrikaans church, the “Hervormde Kerk”.

Nevertheless, one has to make the best of a bad situation and one has to consciously make a decision between right and wrong! A scary comment she made was the following: “Because it is so easy to slip into the norm, nobody would have thought anything differently from you, in fact they probably would have accepted you better in the whole situation” (CR/1-34). This indicated the strong group pressure brought upon members to comply with the trend to abuse alcohol.

If the biggest part of the contingent behaves in a certain manner, for example by drinking excessively - including senior personnel, it is very difficult to stand up for oneself and declare: “I am not partaking in this behaviour due to my own personal values and beliefs”. This may be why there were stories of chaplains who have joined the ranks of those who tend to overdo it from time to time.

Co-researcher C's preference for the length of deployment was three months; especially if one finds that deployment does not agree with one. But one needs to admit that some people thrive on deployment, some people just deploy over and over again (RC/1-58).

It is almost as if the deployment group becomes a substitute family. Such people often prefer to be in the deployment area. They are a socially accepted part of the group and have "friends" with whom they really enjoy the experience.

3.8.2.9 Co-researcher C: Support Systems

One of the things Co-Researcher C noticed while she was deployed, is that people do get lonely during deployment. Even if they have their support systems and friends, they still became lonely during deployment. One longs for physical contact with other people during deployment. She thinks that loneliness plays a big role in explaining why people will move into a physical relationship with each other. Added with the uncertainty of the situation, and the close proximity in which people live together. Nevertheless, the need and reasons for behaving in a certain manner she still feels strongly that one should stick to your principles; it was the only thing that kept her going. Principles are based on your religious and belief systems (CR/1-34).

Neither a written request for an appointment with a psychologist nor a questionnaire about how deployed members felt about their deployment resulted in any response. The support promised during the post-deployment phase never come to light, this added to the already negative experience of a "systems" lack of care and it created a gloomy picture (RC/1-69).

There might be a very simple explanation why the psychologist did not respond to the request for an appointment, ranging from an administrative glitch to a lack of manpower, or simply unprofessional behaviour. The fact remains that two separate requests for help were simply ignored by the organisation. They might even argue that as part of the SAMHS she had better access than most to these facilities. However, nobody responded on the request that was made during an official post deployment session. The result was that her suspicion of an uncaring organisation was strengthened.

An interesting comment was that the social worker was there to work with a women's group that was formed to see how they could improve the plight of the Burundian women and setting up orphanages (RC/1-64). The question is - what was her main task - was it the Burundian people or the South African forces? This balance of looking after your own forces and reaching out towards the community is applicable to all caregivers and to the peacekeeping operation as a whole.

3.8.2.10 Co-researcher C: Highlights

Highlights included special friendships, from attending church to visiting places (CR/1-35). Visiting the local congregation and sharing religious beliefs over a cross-cultural line was definitely a very positive experience. She

enjoyed the beauty of the countryside whenever it was possible to do so, good support from her facility manager and the biggest highlight - returning home! The mere fact that after three months only a handful of highlights were realised is an indication of how she felt about her deployment and that being away from home for months is not equally enjoyable for all.

3.8.2.11 Co-researcher C: Negative Experiences

The unfortunate incident where a South African soldier was accused of murdering a young Burundian prostitute created a lot of tension amongst the deployed due to the aggressive reaction from locals after the event.

Co-researcher C was on duty on the night that the corpse was brought to the hospital for safekeeping (RC/1-46-47). The Malaria prophylaxis used by soldiers in mid-Africa causes hallucinations. Co-researcher C had taken her medication that same day, resulting in hallucinations of the diseased woman following her the whole evening! (RC/1-48). Even if a part of her mind knows it was hallucinations, she could still see the corps of the dead woman walking just behind her! (RC/1-49). Even understanding what is happening in terms of hallucinations, it was still a very unpleasant sensation to say the least. She was able to recall a friend's hallucinations in which the frogs were calling out "ambush, ambush" with every croak. At least in retrospect that was funny to her.

Looking at her own hallucination she commented that the battle between what is real and what is not in her mind is similar to the battle between what is truth and what is false. In retrospect, she saw the corpse following her in the hospital corridors as a metaphor of our previous frail and weak, human body of flesh keeps on following us trying its utmost to seduce Gods children back to death (sin). In other words the corpse was trying to seduce her back to a life of sin. She realised that it was not a vision but a hallucination. She used the narrative metaphor to see a deeper meaning in the unpleasant incident. Your mind must be able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

A second negative experience occurred while she was there. Her sister who was dreadfully ill was admitted to ICU (RC/1-36). She was extremely worried about her sister's condition and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness almost overwhelmed her. This subsequently added to her deployment stress. The realisation that you can't control a situation promotes feelings of helplessness. Fortunately, daily communication through an intermediate at 1 Military Hospital helped her to remain up to date with her sister's condition. Although a telephone line was available in Burundi, it was extremely difficult to get through from South Africa (RC/1-37). Her contingent was part of the AU and communications with family and friends in South Africa was therefore difficult.

A third unpleasant episode cropped up just before Co-researcher C returned home. She was informed that her stay had been extended with another two weeks! She almost could not handle it! She told a senior officer in no uncertain terms: "You go to hell, I am climbing on that plane tomorrow, and to hell with you!" (RC/1-58). This severe reaction must be viewed in the light of a person who very seldom, if ever swears, and who really tries to live a

committed, spirit filled life. Then one may begin to understand the level of anger and frustration she must have experienced to react in such a confrontational manner. Add military discipline and that he was of a higher rank, and that she therefore ran the risk of being charged with insubordination, the picture of her pain and frustrations becomes clearer.

A fourth negative experience was the fact that after returning to South Africa, she was asked during the de-briefing whether or not she would like to see a psychologist (RC/1-69). She answered affirmative, realizing that she must discuss certain things. Unfortunately, nothing came from that request and no follow-up system existed in preventing people from slipping through unnoticed.

Additionally, in her emotional state at the time, she was convinced that the therapist would not have understood how she really felt (RC/1-40) as such a person would never have been in a longer period deployment situation themselves.

To offer services of such nature and then not provide it, can have serious consequences on individuals. Unfortunately very few people will insist on seeing a psychologist but rather suffer in silence. The current staff shortages amongst Military Medical Services is only making service delivery more difficult.

3.8.2.12 Co-researcher C: Re-deployment

Currently, it is highly unlikely that Co-researcher C would deploy again. She definitely would not volunteer to re-deploy externally for a long-term deployment. A short-term emergency deployment after a natural disaster may still be quite possible. Her motivation is still to assist people in need, and if it is a limited timespan, it remains a positive alternative.

I am not convinced that Co-researcher C is at peace with her deployment to Burundi and that she may be in an ongoing process of healing. She was very positive about our conversations and her contributions assisted me in having a better understanding of how she managed to cope. She often was able to provide new insight and was able to look at certain issues from different angles. Her honesty and objectiveness was greatly appreciated and her contributions to the research process made a substantial impact.

3.9 Interpretation of Experiences: Co-researchers D

3.9.1 Co-researcher D: BACKGROUND

My fourth Co-researcher is a white Afrikaans-speaking woman working as a social worker. She was in her late twenties with four years experience in the Defence Force. She was in a fulltime relationship at the beginning of her

deployment but the relationship did not survive the deployment, she is currently single.

3.9.2 Her Story: “Burundi het almal geknak!” (We have all been dealt a blow)

This Afrikaans comment summarises the experiences of Co-researcher D. The closest translation we were able to make was: We have all been dealt a blow.

Co-researcher D's deployment story was motivated by love. Her first experiences of the mission area were short visits as a courier. Her initial aim to visit the mission area was to gain understanding in how members live during deployment. Her boyfriend deployed to Burundi, which motivated her to volunteer her services so that they can be deployed simultaneously. Initially, her request was not granted because of their relationship, but an opening suddenly occurred when another social worker was not able to deploy.

The necessary permission to deploy was then granted because they were in need of a social worker. She was earmarked to be deployed for three months, but was eventually deployed for four months. Upon arrival in Burundi, she had to hear how incompetent the previous social worker was. This badmouthing of her predecessor made her very uncomfortable.

Although the Medics only had one vehicle available, she and the psychologist combined their efforts and shared the vehicle. Since her arrival in Burundi, she tried to reach the different bases and sections where soldiers were deployed. Due to the specific peace-keeping mandate from the AU, soldiers were deployed at numerous locations to protect identified positions and people. It was these isolated pockets of soldiers that they wanted to visit.

Three weeks after her arrival in the mission area, a deployed soldier started to shoot at his colleagues. In the process he killed one and wounded two others. After the shooting incident he committed suicide. The only motive that could immediately be determined, was stress. Looking at his history, a DP28 document of three pages indicated that he was previously identified as a potential troublemaker. From the side of caregivers involved, the feeling existed that he should not have been deployed in the first place. In fact, he was returned to his unit during a previous deployment due to a shooting incident.

The very same soldier visited the social worker (Co-researcher D) in her office the day before the shooting. He requested permission to return to South Africa to unveil his father's tombstone. Unfortunately at that stage, it was at too short notice to grant special leave and she suggested that the unveiling should be postponed until proper arrangements could be made. His request was not denied. She asked for sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. She felt that he should have put in his request for the unveiling of a tombstone in time as he was aware of his families' plans for unveiling for some time. The necessary arrangements could easily have been made if his request was submitted timeously. Apparently, his family refused to postpone the unveiling at that late stage.

The member expressed fear over the possible wrath of his ancestors. After a consultation session with the social worker, he left, seemingly, content with the outcome. The very next day the shooting incident occurred.

After the tragic incident, the soldier's colleagues blamed the social worker and the psychologist for not preventing the shooting. They asked why they didn't assist him with all his problems. The unhappy soldiers claimed that the social worker and psychologist should have prevented the incident from occurring in the first place. Only after the accusations had been made, did she realise that the member in her office and the murderer was the same person. According to her perception, the brunt of the accusations fell on her and not on the psychologist.

Her boyfriend was officially appointed to investigate the incident. The accusations, combined with her own self-reflection on whether or not the incident could have been prevented, led to tremendous stress. The board of inquiry's aim was to determine why the shooting took place. The president of the board (her boyfriend) tried to remain objective, and not to alienate the soldiers who made the accusations by showing any favouritism towards his girlfriend, to the extent that she was almost treated as the guilty party.

Due to a growing concern over the deployed soldiers' wellbeing, numerous inquiries were received from senior management in South Africa regarding the wellbeing of specific individuals. It pained her that nobody asked her once how she was doing or how she was dealing and coping with the incident. At that stage, she felt as if everyone was blaming her for the incident - some said it directly. These accusations unsettled her and made her depressed. In addition to these feelings of depression, the side effects caused by malaria prophylaxis rapidly diminished her ability to cope with the increased stress. She was down in the dumps, isolated herself from people and eventually made an appointment to visit the doctor after realising something was amiss.

Directly after the incident, a number of high profile officers flew in as part of an investigation in trying to determine what could have been done to prevent similar occurrences in future. She had an argument with the chaplain from CJOPS after he had implied that a lack of representivity caused the incident. Even after the high-profile visit, nobody inquired after the wellbeing of the social worker and the psychologist, or how they were coping with the stress and strain. A memorial service for the victim was held at the base, apparently not for the murderer. Afterwards, one of the generals representing the psychologist asked in general how she was doing. He was totally unprepared to respond to her frank answer and rather than address her plight, he decided to ignore her comment.

The next day was Co-researcher D's birthday. Due to the stress she and her boyfriend were experiencing after the incident, the couple started fighting. He felt that she was unnecessarily negative and she felt that he was not supportive enough, that he was not even trying to understand how the incident was affecting her. Her emotional anguish was worsened after an open session between a General and the soldiers where almost all comments made by the troops were directed against the social worker. The general disregarded the untruths or unrealistic expectations expressed in these statements.

What irked Co-researcher D was that none of the senior members even tried to explain the role of the social worker to the soldiers or highlighted the fact

that she had only been in Burundi for three weeks when the incident occurred. Nobody cared that she had already started to visit the isolated soldiers in trying to support them. Her predecessor apparently did not visit any soldiers at the different locations which was not a problem for the chaplain from CJOPS because the predecessor was at least 'representative'. The false accusations caused tremendous pain and heartache. The fact that nobody stood up to set the record straight hurt her tremendously. She critically looked at herself and felt extremely isolated. After the general's open session the couple decided not to go out for her birthday as they initially planned. Some of the men tried to cheer her up on her birthday with pizza and something to drink! Unfortunately, with having nothing to eat during the day and in addition to drinking headache pills, the alcohol immediately affected her. The result was that she was not able to attend the evening rollcall, being a bit intoxicated.

Her boyfriend accepted responsibility and said that he would apologise for her absence and that she should not worry about it. She felt that it was better not to attend rollcall than to run the risk of possibly embarrassing herself as an officer. This indicates that she was still able to think logically and make rational decisions. She was convinced that as a senior officer her boyfriend would be able to apologise for her absence without causing any problems.

The apology went ghastly wrong, somehow during his apology, he implied that she was "wasted". The deduction was immediately made that Co-researcher D is struggling with an alcohol problem. It must be remembered that she was still relatively new in the operational theatre. Now she was branded as somebody with an alcohol problem, as if she was not under enough stress already. Disregarding the sent apology, she was formally charged for non-attendance during the evening rollcall. The whole base was apparently aware of the fact that she was to be charged even before she was informed. Numerous sarcastic jokes about knowing a "good lawyer" were made before she was even aware that she was in trouble.

The experience was very humiliating, especially through the manner in how she was eventually informed of the charge. She completely felt let down, particularly by her boyfriend who promised to take care of the rollcall but who then allowed it to escalate out of proportion. He promised to protect her but did not even explain what happened and why his apology went horribly wrong. She was unhappy that she allowed herself to be convinced not to attend the rollcall and thus creating even more problems for herself in the process. This incident placed their relationship under considerable strain. She responded with a letter requesting to be returned to her unit in South Africa, giving lack of resources and support to properly conduct her work as motivations for the request. Her request was not granted although a second social worker was eventually deployed to assist her with the workload.

Co-researcher D was referred to a psychologist deployed as part of the UN contingent and diagnosed with post-traumatic stress. She struggled to sleep and went through a very difficult time. She drafted a letter explaining the situation regarding the missed rollcall session during her birthday. She tried to explain how the severe emotional stress after the incident was aggravated by the false accusations. Suddenly, after this letter, her commander was very understanding and tried to laugh off the incident. She insisted that the incident be removed from her personal file.

The Officer Commanding was in South Africa during the incident and experienced difficulty in understanding why his psychologist and social worker were under so much stress. In stating: “It is normal to behave abnormally in abnormal circumstances”, she felt that her response was normal in abnormal circumstances. Although he was accused of utilising sarcasm as a management tool, he changed his initial decision after he had received her letter. It will remain a difficult task for leaders to balance discipline and the ability to be lenient.

Doing something actively, like writing a letter, created feelings of coping for Co-researcher D. Good support from an environmental health member assisted her, as well as excellent support from her family. Sadly, her father was very ill during her deployment and passed away shortly after her return to South Africa. She felt as if she had let him down during his illness, and still feels guilty that she was not present in order to support him during his illness.

Her relationship with her boyfriend did not survive the deployment. After the rollcall incident, breach of trust occurred and the relationship was in a downward spiral. The deployment in Burundi played a role, but she is convinced that the deployment was not solely responsible for the break-up, that it probably would have happened anyway.

Looking back at the deployment, she remains convinced that she managed to cope regardless of all the problems and stress she experienced. However, for her, re-deployment is definitely not an option to be considered currently. Even today, in looking back, she admits that there still exists a possibility that she somehow felt responsible for the shooting incident. Rationally, she realises that the perpetrator deliberately visited the social worker and tried to build an alibi. His own actions pushed him into a corner that led to his behaviour. She also knows that her decision was the correct one, but the nagging questions remain: “Was there anything else I could have done? What if...?”

Her relationship with God deteriorated during this time; in fact, she experienced a vast distance between them, although anger and resentment against God never entered the equation. She realised her need to have a relationship with God, but it slipped further and further away from her. It was as if she was incapable of preventing the deterioration. She focused all her anger on her previous boyfriend because she felt that he had let her down every time she needed him.

The expectations that existed between them, especially from the side of management even before her deployment, placed additional stress on their relationship. They have been lectured on numerous times to behave properly. She was acutely aware of the scrutiny their relationship would be under and accepted it. She was, however, not prepared for the apparent abandonment and letdown from management during her crisis. The seemingly double standards which apply in how different people were treated, frustrated her. It was as if the wellbeing of the troops was all-important and that no thought was given to anybody else.

She was adamant that it is vital that roles and expectations must receive clarification to try and prevent future incidents where people get hurt unnecessarily. Even today, when discussing the events that occurred during deployment, she would say: “*Burundi het almal geknak!*” (*We have all been dealt a blow*). The deployment was not an unpleasant experience only for

her. The Contingent Commander made the following comment in explaining his personal philosophy of life and deployment:

“When we were young and you were upset your mother gave you the bottle. How can you expect a forty-seven year old man to stop drinking now! In South Africa, we are killing each other, in South Africa we are shooting each other, in South Africa we are making accidents, why do you want it to be different in Burundi?”

This philosophy brutally states the reality that the soldiers represent a cross-section of the general population, and that the same ailments present in society may just as well be present in the military.

Currently, the resilience program is her passion. This program focuses on supporting people in the mission area. She feels very strongly that a soldier’s home unit must assist in supporting that individual during deployment. A single person cannot effectively support all the deployed personnel. Lessons learned during her deployment are currently of great value in her efforts to support people and motivate them to also support the caregivers in a likewise manner.

3.9.3 Discussion of Co-researcher D’s story

3.9.3.1 Co-researcher D: Motivation

Co-researcher D’s initial motivation was to see foreign countries and new places to explore the world. She dreamed of seeing exotic new places. She also wanted to gain understanding of the circumstances soldiers experience during deployment and how they cope. She initially went as a courier visiting different bases, but it was only for short visits (A6/D1). She did not even consider volunteering for long-term deployment until her boyfriend was deployed.

Her motivation to volunteer for deployment was romantic love. Deployment would enable them to remain in close proximity to one another. It definitely was not the money that motivated her to deploy (A11/D1). The senior management in the social work department did not favourably receive her initial request to deploy.

Later comments made it clear that their reluctance to deploy her were due to their concerns about possible improper behaviour by the couple. This is the kind of double standards that the other Co-researchers also mentioned. On the one hand, a couple must not deploy together to prevent “improper” behaviour, but on the other hand, the same social workers must supply the soldiers with huge amounts of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Who is fooling who?

Eventually, due to a personal problem, the social worker who was supposed to deploy was prevented from doing so. Co-researcher D’s request was granted to deploy to Burundi at the same time as her boyfriend (A11&12/D1). There was never any doubt in her mind that deployment would be difficult,

especially with the added strain of a relationship under scrutiny by all (AA2/D1). They were urged to conduct themselves decently more than once and she feels unhappy that as far as she knows, no steps were taken against another social worker who returned pregnant from the mission area.

She felt that her honest and open approach was used against her. She admitted that she may have volunteered to be deployed for the wrong reasons. But, notwithstanding her own botched-up relationship, she still thinks that couples should not necessarily be prevented from deploying together as long as they comprehend the risks involved (A37/D1 & AA1/D1). As a couple they went out of their way to behave in such a way that no fingers whatsoever could be pointed in their direction claiming “improper” behaviour. The double standard relating to sexual misconduct was addressed by all the Co-researchers. This is apparently equivalent to the same moral values prevalent in South Africa - some restrain themselves and some indulge themselves.

3.9.3.2 Co-researcher D: Pre/Post-deployment Phase

After she had been informed that, contrary to previous statements, she was to be deployed due to the withdrawal of the other social worker, her pre-deployment phase went very quickly. She went through the small mobilisation and not the complete pre-deployment phase (AA4/D1 & AA6/D1). She strongly doubted that attending the drawn-out process would have made any difference in enabling her to cope more effectively.

Apparently, most people consider the current long pre-deployment phase a waste of time (AA5/D1). In fact, she was grateful that she only went through the small mob phase (AA6/D1). As a social worker she understands the stages of deployment and she felt properly prepared for the experience. It is impossible with the current information to either agree or disagree with her opinion. A point of concern for me is that all the Co-researchers were in agreement that the current mobilisation phase is not really effective in preparing people to cope. Nor is the demobilisation really able to function according to expectations. After returning from Burundi, she spent one day in the demobilisation area. This was mainly to conclude outstanding administrative matters (AA7/D1).

An additional concern is that the social workers are involved in the de-briefing process of all other deployed members trying to assist them, but they are not de-briefed themselves (AA11/D1). This was more or less applicable to all the caregivers who participated in this research process. It is definitely an aspect that may have to be addressed. The reason for this is that they are perceived to have “knowledge”, but things look different when you are sitting on the other side of the table. This comment is directly linked to the question of caring for the caregiver. Do the caregivers need care or are the caregivers so well trained and professional that they are above the need to be supported and cared for?

Feelings of being jabbed and poked between the ribs and mocking remarks made behind one’s back, are not a very effective debriefing. Unfortunately,

this was how she experienced the de-briefing process. Until this moment no direct discussions on what happened were held with Co-researcher D. Nobody asked her what went wrong during her deployment. Therefore, regarding co-researcher D's situation, I have no choice but to state that her debriefing was only effective on administrative level but in terms of an emotional debrief, it was an absolute disaster.

3.9.3.3 9.3.3 Co-researcher D: Arrival in Burundi

Upon arrival the previous social worker was badmouthed for a lack of service delivery (A12/D1). With the aid of the psychologist, an effort was made to reach all deployed personnel, regardless the lack of transport (A12/D1). Although she mentioned the lack of transport with only one vehicle for all the sickbay personnel, it was not nearly as big an issue to her as how Co-researcher B experienced it. She planned visits with the available transport.

No negative comments were made about the sleeping arrangement or general reception. The only comment was that everybody wanted to see what the "girlfriend" looks like. The fact that people knew that they were in a relationship made it just a bit more difficult than it may have been. Neither the departure nor the arrival was a negative experience, in fact, for the first three weeks things went very well.

My opinion is that if the unfortunate shooting incident did not happen, her deployment would have been totally different. She was already making a difference prior to the episode. It is a good example of how one negative incident can create a ripple effect with long-lasting, negative influence.

3.9.3.4 Co-researcher D: Practical Considerations

To keep on coping after the shooting incident was really difficult for Co-researcher D. After the allegations against her, as well as being charged and the deterioration of her relationship, all added additional strain on her (A49/D1). A practical solution to assist her in coping was to write letters, from asking to be returned to her unit, to the one demanding that her file be cleared. To be able to do something practical gave her a sense of coping and of being in charge. It created a feeling of not having lost complete control over her life (A49/D1).

With the exception of the psychologist who she was referred to, nobody really enquired on how she was doing. A little understanding and care may have altered her total perception of the incident. In the light of the huge effort by the group who tried to determine what went wrong, it is not a good testimony of their effectiveness that she was excluded from the process. That her personal opinion and welfare were not considered at all, place a big question mark on that whole exercise.

It is debatable whether they have moved a single step forward in finding a solution if they were not even aware of the turmoil in the two caregiver's hearts. This thought is closely linked to the other Co-researchers, comment that senior management simply don't care. They even made the comment

that the whole exercise, flying to Burundi, was just a scam to calm down the soldiers and to make the right “ooh” and “ahs”, but that there was no real concern amongst them.

Advising herself in retrospect, she said that she would not have volunteered to deploy at all if she had any idea of the traumatic impact deployment would have made in her life (A62/D1). However, going back to the same deployed situation, she would again have made the same decisions and responded in a similar way (A63/D1). This comforted her with the certainty of knowing that it was not due to her own actions or decisions that the situation became so awful. She was not responsible for the shooting incident and those who blame her were only sidestepping their own guilt.

3.9.3.5 Co-researcher D: Faith Dimension

Co-researcher D mentioned that she experienced a distance between her and God (A70/D1). She struggled to even admit it that her relationship with God was detached from her normal day-to-day life. She never blamed God for what happened, but rather focused all her anger against her boyfriend (A71/D1 & A72/D1). She didn't even want to contemplate the possibility that she might be angry with God.

Although in retrospect, she acknowledges the possibility that she felt let down and as if God did not protect her. She is, however, very honest about her own role in the relationship with God and openly admits that she is primarily responsible for the gradual breakdown in the relationship between them.

She is acutely aware of the distances that crept into her relationship with God and regrets it. She is working on that relationship, trying to restore it, although with limited success (A77/D1). She openly declares that she needed God and her faith to sustain her coping skills but that it is not constantly part of her thought patterns. She admits God's existence in accepting that Jesus Christ died on the cross for us to be saved and that we are His children (A79/D1). Nevertheless, she experienced God as remote with an ever-growing distance between them. She is still struggling to retain her original relationship with God, and admitted that it is gradually becoming more of a concern to her.

Co-researcher D had a good working relationship with two of the three chaplains. Until today, they all agree “Burundi het almal geknak!” (we have all been dealt a blow). The good relationship was not enough to either ensure her attendance to church services or to inspire her to grow spiritually.

3.9.3.6 Co-researcher D: Politics

The chaplain from CJOPS felt the shooting incident was caused by a lack of representivity, although two of the three chaplains' posts in Burundi were filled by black chaplains (A32/D1). The shooting incident that took place was black on black violence, no racial issue was involved. The previous social worker, who, “theoretically”, was responsible for the deployed, was black.

Therefore, it is not too surprising that these accusations from the chaplain led to an argument between them. The accusations indicate a strong racial

discourse from the chaplain's side to simply assume that due to the colour of her skin she would be less capable or willing to assist the person. That he may carry some of those racial feelings in him is unfortunately still a part of our political heritage, but that he would immediately confront her with such allegations without first considering his own premises and checking his facts, is ample proof that we still have a lot of unresolved racial issues amongst us.

The new dispensation must ensure that a similar discourse does not develop around "Representivity" as it had grown gradually around "Apartheid". It must be remembered that the initial purpose was not to discriminate against a specific group, but to allow people to develop within their own cultural and ethnic groups. The problems occurred when people became blind towards the inherent discrimination and simply were unable (some till today) to understand how the system could hurt others. To be representative of the country's population is a noble cause. To cling to representivity without asking critical questions, we run a real risk of building a new wave of unquestioned "Apartheid" discourse that may develop into a dragon ready and eager to devour our country.

White children who started school in grade one after 1994 in a new and democratic South Africa and who have finished school are currently refused entry into numerous institutions and posts. The reason for these refusals is that they are white. This is applicable from universities that will turn down students with excellent grades to applicants for bursaries, to national sport teams not to select the players of choice, to almost all government positions because of the colour of their skin.

I can easily understand why middle-aged white men are taking the brunt for the sins of the fathers. There is a growing concern that without any cut-off time, "representivity" may simply become reverse discrimination. Co-researcher D felt that the chaplain implied that her race was an underlying cause of the shooting. Her answer was: "Chaplain I think it doesn't matter if I am white or black. As far as my understanding is, under black people there are different cultures as well. So it is not so that only one black social worker could understand all the black cultures. So I don't think it is about colour" (A31/D1). This shows how ingrained the racial issue still is amongst South Africans and how easily senior people will use the racial card, even if not applicable.

As far as I can ascertain, it is the very same chaplain who was responsible for the anguish that Co-researcher B (a black woman) experienced due to the total lack of support provided by his office. During the investigation after the shooting incident, he was very quick to judge and appoint blame. Maybe, it would be sound advice if we first take care of the splint in our own eye before we are so quick to see our neighbour's faults so clearly.

The words in Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV: 1999) reminds us to first look for the log in our own eye, and not to be so quick to judge, for God will judge us the same way as we judge others. Unfortunately, the reality of life is that it is often easier to see the "log" in our neighbour's eye and not to be aware of our own discourse because we are so used to them and feel comfortable using them.

Deployment tends to expose who we really are, one can pretend to be something else for a few hours or even a few days, but it is impossible to keep up the pretence over an extensive period of time. One can pretend to have

certain values, norms or even good manners for a short while, but one cannot keep on pretending for months. It is simply impossible.

Her boyfriend was put into a very difficult position by his appointment as president of the board after the shooting incident. It is understandable that he wanted to remain objective. It is quite possible that he was intimidated by the soldiers' demands and wanted to make absolutely sure that he could not be accused of siding with his girlfriend. However, in the process he may have gone overboard.

In the light of his relationship with the social worker and her being accused by the deceased's friends and colleagues, it would have been better if somebody else was appointed as president of the board. I understand that it is not always so easy to find the right person, but his inability to support her in her time of need left deep scars. This was one of her most painful and negative experiences in her life.

3.9.3.7 9.3.7 Co-researcher D: Allegations

The soldiers' accusations that the social worker and psychologist were responsible for the incident where a soldier killed a colleague and then committed suicide, throws some light on the unrealistic expectations soldiers have from caregivers (A22/D1). As far as I can gather, these allegations were never defused or directly addressed. In order to avoid a potential mutiny, the soldiers were only pacified. The perspective of the social worker and psychologist of their role and function was not dealt with. It is possible that more realistic expectations of the role and function of caregivers, combined with a higher level of personal responsibility by all parties, may have prevented a lot of pain and sorrow.

A recurring theme amongst all the Co-researchers is the rampant alcohol abuse and promiscuity amongst many of the deployed soldiers. Co-researcher D stated: "It is a BIG thing there, alcohol abuse is an issue" (AA21/D1). Unfortunately, just to try and prevent the availability of alcohol is almost impossible (AA22/D1). The unsuccessful prohibition in the USA proves human ingenuity.

Regrettably, alcohol usage is directly responsible for causing numerous problems encountered during deployment (AA23/D1). It is of concern that senior members and even some Officers Commanding were more than once implicated in the abuse of alcohol. The example that senior officers set is often part of the problem, not only by allowing it but often through participation (OA24/D1 & AA24/D1). The organisation is indirectly responsible for numerous of its own problems of its own. The example set by senior people sends a stronger message than any word or speech ever could. This is applicable to all walks of life and is currently a problem with senior people in South Africa who are either being investigated or charged with some or other unethical action.

A contingent commander's comment brings the reality of South African society forward: "*When we were young and you were upset your mother gave you the bottle. How can you expect a forty-seven year old man to stop drinking now! In South Africa we are killing each other, in South Africa we are*

shooting each other, in South Africa we are making accidents, why do you want it to be different in Burundi?" (AA22/D1). This comment clearly illustrates that what is happening in the military and what happens during deployments are in fact very similar to what is happening in the hearts and minds of the general public. It is just intensified and more visible during deployment. In fact, it is possible that due to existing military discipline, the SANDF is doing relatively well in comparison to its civilian counterparts.

3.9.3.8 Co-researcher D: Coping

Apparently, stress caused the fatal shooting incident. The murderer visited the social worker the day prior to the incident requesting special leave to unveil his father's tombstone. Due to the short notice, it was not possible to grant the request (A15/D1). He left her office apparently satisfied with her explanation and advice (A16/D1), only to kill a fellow soldier the next day. This research did not try to establish the cause of the shooting. This tragic incident just reminded us of how quickly a tragedy can occur and especially the difficult task caregivers have in trying to pre-empt and determine who might be a high risk factor and who might just be another "normal" guy who failed to plan for the unveiling of his father's tombstone on time!

This research listened to the story of how the incident and the related events negatively impacted on Co-researcher D's life. It must be considered that to deploy a soldier with a previous history of unruly behaviour, was a huge risk. Unrealistic expectations of the role and function of the social worker and psychologist (caregivers) added to the impact left by the tragic incident.

According to Co-researcher D, almost all her colleagues in the sickbay experienced severe stress during their external deployments (A3/D1). Initially, Co-researcher D coped very well. As a group, they were aware of the scrutiny by both management and their co-deployed. The Malaria prophylaxis definitely played a role in undermining her ability to manage her emotions. All these problems were aggravated by an already difficult situation. Severe stress after the shooting incident caused by the allegations further worsened the situation. She suffered from growing moodiness and feelings of being isolated (A28/D1).

She became very emotional and was down in the dumps while she grappled with feelings of growing negativity (A27/D1). Directly after the incident, she talked a lot to her boyfriend about what happened (A29/D1). As he became more involved in the board of inquiry, these conversations became more strained. His dwindling support and understanding robbed her of her primary support system (A36/D1). Due to her father's illness, she did not want to add additional stress to her family, and therefore, did not share her anguish with them. That robbed her of her second support system.

A number of senior generals flew to Burundi to try and manage and contain the incident (A29/D1). They spent lots of time talking to the foot soldiers and with one brief exception, did not even enquire after the wellbeing of the social worker (A30/D1 & A37/D1). This unfortunately aggravated the feelings of isolation and rejection already planted by the soldiers' accusations (A22/D1).

Their lack of interest may be linked to their own expectations that she, as a professional social worker, would be able to cope without 'difficulty'. They assumed that she was able to cope simply based on their own discourses. I am convinced that their visit to Burundi and apparent effort to defuse the situation were sincere. It was definitely not a successful visit in terms of supporting and assisting the social worker, but the troops may have experienced the visit totally different. The visit feedback from the generals' side may have been claiming success, based on their own assumptions and experiences.

At that stage, almost no support was provided to the social worker during the process following the shooting incident. (A21/D1). According to Co-researcher D, she did not receive any support from the social work directorate. Her emotional anguish worsened after a session between a general and the soldiers (A37/D1). It hurt her greatly that none of the senior members tried to set the record straight or to mention that she was barely three weeks in Burundi and, therefore, could not be blamed (A38/D1). As far as I am concerned, she could not be blamed, irrespective of the time she was in Burundi. This incident caused co-researcher D tremendous pain and sadness. The fact that nobody stood up to set the record straight hurt her tremendously. She felt extremely isolated. Although some of the men tried to cheer her up on her birthday with pizza and something to drink, it was a disaster. Things went terribly wrong and instead of supporting her, their efforts to cheer her up only aggravated the situation (A41/D1, A47/D1, A40/D1 & A43/D1)!

The relationship with her boyfriend deteriorated rapidly after the generals' visit and the failed roll-call apology. On her birthday they had a big fight (A35/D1). He felt that she was unnecessarily negative and she felt he was not supporting her during her ordeal of false accusations. She accused him of not even trying to understand how she was feeling and how the incident was affecting her (A36/D1).

She questioned him regarding the "misunderstanding" after the rollcall apology had gone wrong. She asked, why the initial message was garbled, if that was not deliberately done, why anything wasn't done to rectify the misunderstanding. Even after she had formally been charged, he neglected to discuss the issue and clarify his own part in the situation. Apparently, he refused to accept that he was partially responsible for the way in which the incident escalated out of proportion.

This collapse of support was probably the single worst turning point in Co-researcher D's story of coping. She felt convinced that he could have protected her better and in fact he let her down (A44/D1). According to her, he continued to let her down on different occasions, all critical to her. An example was his absence during her father's illness, but sudden presence during the funeral (A75: /D1). Co-researcher D had to forgive herself for her partaking in the relationship (O76/D1& Aa/D1). She is realistic and honest enough not to hold their deployment responsible for their failed relationship but that certain flaws were already present. The malaria prophylaxis added to her depressed state and lack of support was a recipe for trouble. Changing her medication made almost no difference (O24/D1).

Co-researchers D's Officer Commanding was in South Africa during the incident and expressed difficulty in understanding why his psychologist and

social worker were suddenly under so much stress. He stated: “It is normal to behave, un-normal, in abnormal circumstances”. She felt that her response was normal in abnormal circumstances (A48/D1). His inability to understand or even try to understand why they struggled to cope added unnecessary stress on them and worsened the situation. His sarcasm worsened things further. A sudden change of attitude occurred after he eventually had realised what happened that day. He suddenly became very understanding and tried to laugh off the incident (A48/D1). Since he had already charged her, for Co-researcher D, it was definitely not a laughing matter at that stage. She insisted that all traces of the charge must be removed from her personal file.

Her personal determination to see things through, added to her ability to continue working, even in a very difficult situation (A57/D1). Her determination was under severe stress, but at one stage almost her only anchor in helping her to cope. Even so, Co-researcher D acknowledged that the research interviews were extremely difficult for her (A65/D1). Especially the initial opening up was painful, although it improved considerably later on. Talking about her experiences brought back painful memories as all the memories are interconnected with each other (A66/D1).

One of the reasons why Co-researcher D is still struggling with coping, is that she is still grappling with the question of whether or not she might have been able to prevent the incident. Although she knew, on a rational level, that she was not responsible, she sometimes still feel responsible. These nagging thoughts are particularly persistent when she recalled all the accusations against her (A68/D1).

She is sometimes angry at herself for rushing through session after session to be able to get some free time, knowing that she was a bit irritated with his request at such a late stage, and not able to really do anything about it! Although part of her realised that it was his own choice and that he wanted to use her to cover for his actions and not expecting things to get out of hand (A69/D1). She is still carrying the remorse with her whether necessary or not; it will probably remain part of her life story in the future.

At a certain stage, you just hang on for dear life waiting for the return date knowing all will come to an end and then you can go home (A50/D1). Co-researcher D admitted that is probably not the best option when one must cope with a difficult situation, but sometimes there are not many alternatives left (A52/D1) All Co-researchers agreed that having a return time, made a huge difference in their ability to cope, it was as if they just hang on knowing that it will all come to an end!

3.9.3.9 Co-researcher D: Support Systems

The session with the psychologist assisted her to understand what had happened and to look at it from different angles (A50/D1). She was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress (A45/D). She continued to visit a psychologist after her return to South Africa, to assist her in coping with her experiences.

Good support from an environmental health member as well as support from her family assisted her (A53/D1). Her father was ill during her deployment and passed away shortly after her return to South Africa, adding feelings of

letting him down during his illness (A54/D1). Due to her family's own circumstances, their ability to give support was dramatically limited. She was obviously reluctant to share with them all her experiences in full, trying to protect them as far as possible, not wanting to add extra strain on them. Her relationship with her boyfriend did not survive the deployment (A55/D1). The deployment in Burundi played a role, but is not solely responsible; it probably would have happened anyway (A56/D1). Today she is relieved that she is not in a fulltime relationship with him, and that the deployment was able to show her cracks between them in time.

The second social worker who was deployed after her letters of requesting to be returned to South Africa alleviated the work stress, but still left her with the nagging feeling that she was not able to cope (A60/D1). It is painfully obvious that the deployment left several wounds and that not all the wounds have yet healed into scars.

One of her main objectives currently is to support her colleagues on deployment (A64/D1). This is very important to her because she experienced a lack of support from her own unit, from her area manager, as well as from her home unit; nobody ever phoned her. She is convinced that if she had received the necessary support during the time that she was in desperate need thereof, it could well have assisted her during her own experience. Excuses of how sorry they are today that they have never called her were not well received by co-researcher D.

One of Co-researcher D's concerns is the lack of leisure time equipment that is issued (AO27/D1). A lack of sensible options to occupy soldiers' time led to bad habits. Unfortunately, the availability of alcohol and the lack of alternative recreation almost motivated the soldiers to drink too much (AA26/D1). She also expressed concern that soldiers pay a regimental fund but do not benefit from it; for example, no newspapers, or magazines are received as an alternative form of recreation (AO27/D1). She feels that the money soldiers contribute towards the regimental fund could supply at least some of these.

Up to the last interview, Co-researcher D was still receiving professional help in coping with what happened during her deployment (A68/D1). She went through a very severe depression and sometimes still feels as if people don't really understand what happened to her. Especially those people, who were never deployed, are simply unable to understand what happened to her and why she is still struggling with it (A68/D1). Nevertheless, looking back at the deployment, she remains convinced that notwithstanding a number of terrible things that happened, she still managed to cope (A61/D1). But, re-deployment is definitely not an option that she would consider currently.

I think it is her sense of professional and personal pride that inspires her to insist that she was able to cope. Re-telling the story assisted her in growing more confident in her ability and the "fact" that she was able to cope!

3.9.3.10 Co-researcher D: Practical Solutions

Co-researcher D shared the following inputs as possible options to improve the impact of deployment on members (AA8/D1). Firstly, the commanding officer has to be competent and able to understand not only the bigger

picture, but also where and how every member fits into that picture. He/she must have knowledge of his subordinates' capabilities and what their specific roles are.

Especially, regarding the social worker, numerous misconceptions exist in terms of their specific skills and abilities and what they are supposed to do. This same comment is also applicable to the role of chaplains and other caregivers. These misconceptions were also noticeable in terms of the chaplains' role.

Secondly, a commander must be able to manage people, he/she must have the ability to understand people and lead them, not force them. Soldiers and good leadership have been closely linked for ages. The use of sarcasm or veiled jabs at sent messages is not very effective when one is trying to manage people. Good leadership is always important but under difficult and stressful circumstances, it is vital to have good leadership in command positions. A leader must set the right examples and has to be fair and understand the bigger picture before jumping to conclusions.

On a third level, she felt a concerted effort is needed to inform uniformed members of the role and function of the social worker. The mere fact that social workers are often referred to as the "Welfare Officer" is ample proof of the many misconceptions that still exist. She feels so strongly about proper pre-deployment screening, that she stated that if the process were to work properly, theoretically no social worker would be needed in an operational theatre because only mentally and socially fit soldiers would then qualify to be deployed in the first place.

People with a previous history of violence and disciplinary problems should not be allowed to deploy. His service record indicates that he should not have been deployed in the first place (A13/D1). He was returned to his unit previously after a shooting incident (A14/D1). The mere fact that somebody was redeployed after a previous violent incident is huge source of concern.

Co-researcher D wonders whether the presence of a social worker does not motivate some soldiers to develop "problems" in order to manipulate the system. She is convinced that some soldiers use the social worker as an excuse to achieve a different ulterior motive, for instance to get special leave to visit your loved ones. That is why she asks if social workers should be deployed at all. Not because there is currently not enough work, but that if the right people are deployed, there should be no need for social workers. She continues her argument by stating that only sound, healthy and stable soldiers are supposed to be deployed from the onset. The chaplain is hopefully capable of addressing new issues that may crop up, such as death in the family. The social workers can then focus intensively on pre- and post-deployment and be relieved from all external deployment. This idea might not be received very well by some of her colleagues.

A very important aspect that is becoming clear, is the fact that caregivers are not included in a system where they also receive care. If the chaplain, social worker, psychologist or medical personnel is in a healthy working relationship they take care on their own, but when interpersonal problems arise between them, no formal system of care is in place (OA18/D1). This may need to be addressed in future.

3.9.3.11 Co-researcher D: Highlights

Regardless of the pain she experienced due to her relationship, breaking up with her boyfriend, she is still grateful that she is not in a fulltime relationship with him at this stage of her life.

One of the few highlights was the growing understanding of the importance of an adequate resilience program for deployed soldiers (AA32/D1). Co-researcher D is focussing her current service delivery in trying to create a growing awareness of the importance of a proper resilience program, both before and during deployment. You have no option but to learn from your own experiences and draw from them into your work (AA32/D1).

Resilience is an absolute passion with her and she is doing excellent work. Being very concerned about resilience, she started a resilience committee at her home unit to assist in managing all the parcels and post that family members are sending to deployed personnel. Realising that it is impossible to manage it alone, she is involving more and more people in the process to assist her (AA29/D1 & AA30/D1). Currently, a home-coming program is being developed.

3.9.3.12 Co-researcher D: Negative Experiences

Only three weeks after her arrival, a shooting incident claimed the life of one person and leaving another injured. The perpetrator committed suicide after the incident. The fact that he was killed by his own hand was already negative, (O12/D1) but what was even worse was when his colleagues started to blame her as social worker and the psychologist for the incident (A13/D1&A16/D1). This single event changed and altered not only the remainder of her deployment, but will remain with her for a long time to come.

The fact that her boyfriend was appointed as president of the board, tasked to determine the cause of the shooting incident, was a negative experience for Co-researcher D (A18/D1). His determination to be objective and not to let their friendship and relationship influence his judgement, led to a situation where he was not able to provide the necessary support she desperately needed during that stressful time with all the accusations and self doubt she experienced (A20/D1).

Co-researcher D experienced isolation due to her boyfriend's actions or lack of actions. She felt letdown by his behaviour and deeply hurt (O75/D1). His insensitive behaviour was one of the negative things that hurt her the most. To add injury to insult from Co-researcher D's point of view, one of the colonels said that they had doubts about sending her on deployment in the first instance due to her limited experience (AA12/D1).

She felt that the colonel implied that senior management expected her not to cope with the deployment from the very beginning. This indirect jab was very demoralising and indirectly implicated her inability to be deployed, neither was the issue directly addressed after her return. A number of factors contributed to put Co-researcher D under severe strain and made her entire deployment experience an unpleasant one.

Paulo Coelho (Coelho, 2000:151) wrote the following in his book *Veronika decides to die*:

“A lot of doctors before me have made similar studies and reached the conclusion that normality is merely a matter of consensus, that is, a lot of people think something is right, and so that thing becomes right.

“Some things are governed by common sense: putting buttons on the front of a shirt is a matter of logic, since it would be very difficult to button them up at the side, and impossible if they were at the back.”

What do we as academics, as caregivers, as soldiers, as South Africans, as cognitive human beings – think is right? What do you think is right?