

**EXPERIENCES OF PEER COUNSELLORS WITHIN AN
ONGOING COMMUNITY PROJECT**

by

MARIA MAGDALENA LAUTENBACH

MINI-DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS



UNIVERSITY
in
JOHANNESBURG

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Supervisor: Professor J Pillay

OCTOBER 2005

ABSTRACT

To accommodate AIDS orphans and children living with abuse, a 'House of Refuge,' which I call Uthando, was established adjacent to an informal settlement from funds raised by pupils from another private school in the area. A number of pupils from the private (donor) school were trained as peer counsellors and interacted with the pupils at Uthando for at least 18 months providing basic counselling and learning support. Although peer group influence starts later in a child's life - generally by pre-adolescence - it can be enormously powerful in transmitting culture, values, and norms that influence behaviour. By failing to consider peers in understanding interventions with young people and within communities there is a high probability of implementing interventions that are ineffective. The concept of school support teams is not new but the use of peer support within community projects needed further exploration. The question arose: **What are the experiences of peer counsellors within an ongoing community project?**

In this case study reflective journals and participant observation were used to identify the experiences of the peer counsellors at Uthando. Ten themes emerged from the data obtained in the empirical component of this inquiry. In each case, a definition of each experience was formulated based on the journal entries themselves and on personal observation data. These definitions may not exactly reflect the formal definitions found in other sources but have been carefully formulated to reflect the unique nature of the adolescent peer counsellor's experiences at Uthando:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the inception of this mini-dissertation to its completion, a number of people, as well as friends and family, have assisted me with various aspects of its development.

Having a stable, loving and supportive family and close friends is often taken for granted, but I would like to thank each and every one who had a kind and encouraging word for me over the years.

I would like to mention the following authorities that gave their time and expertise to play a role in my “growth” as educational psychologist. Firstly, thanks to Professor Jace Pillay for his support, understanding and guidance throughout my studies. I also want to thank my supervisor, Nardia Randell for her support and valuable advice over the past year. I have learned a tremendous amount from her.

I want to thank Mr R Brown and his Board of Executives for giving me the unique opportunity to complete my internship at Trinityhouse High School, and to realise my life-long dream and passion.

My sincere gratitude goes to my husband, Geoff who stood by my side during my studies. I know it was very tough at times, as you also had to focus on your own studies during this time. I am proud of you achieving your goals and receiving your doctorate this year.

Lastly to my son Kyle, Mom and Dad, my brother Pieter, and my very dear friend Melanie who have been more than patient throughout this journey. It has been a long and difficult road but they have made the route seem a lot easier. I am now looking forward to us exploring new roads together. This mini-dissertation is dedicated to all these special people in my life.

DECLARATION

I, Maria Magdalena Lautenbach, declare that the work depicted in this mini-dissertation is original (except where citations and acknowledgements indicate otherwise). No part of this work has been, or will be, submitted in any form as part of another degree at this, or any other University.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DECLARATION.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
Chapter 1: ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH TOPIC	1
1.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS.....	2
1.3 PROBLEMATISING THE TOPIC	3
1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY	4
1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK OF THE INQUIRY	5
1.5.1 Participants in the Study	5
1.5.2 Methods of Data Collection	5
1.5.3 Methods of Data Analysis	6
1.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS	7
1.7 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY	7
1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH	8
1.9 SUMMARY	11
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THIS INQUIRY	12
2.2 INFORMAL OR PERSONAL THEORY.....	13
2.2.1 Personal characteristics and life experiences that impact on personal theory	14
2.2.2 Personal theory and my view of community interventions	16
2.2.3 Personal theory and my view of man	17
2.2.4 Personal theory and my view of communities	18

2.2.5	The impact of disciplinary training on personal theory	19
2.3	FORMAL THEORY THAT IMPACTS ON MY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS	19
2.3.1	Introduction to formal theory that impacts on my theoretical framework for community intervention	20
2.3.2	A conceptual and theoretical framework for community involvement and interventions: My personal living theory	21
2.3.3	Post-modern influences	22
2.3.3	Constructivist influences	23
2.3.3	The eco-systemic perspective	26
2.4	PEER COUNSELLORS	32
2.5	SUMMARY	34
 Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		36
3.1	INTRODUCTION	36
3.2	THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	36
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	37
3.4	DATA COLLECTION	40
3.4.1	Participant Observation	41
3.4.2	Research Journals	42
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS	43
3.6	USEFULNESS OF THIS INQUIRY: TRUSTWORTHINESS	45
3.7	SUMMARY	46
 Chapter 4 FINDINGS OF THE INQUIRY		47
4.1	INTRODUCTION TO THIS CHAPTER	47
4.2	DISCUSSION OF THEMES	47
4.2.1	Acceptance	48
4.2.2	Patience	49

4.2.3	Trust	50
4.2.4	Personal Gratification	51
4.2.5	Sincerity	52
4.2.6	Objective reflection	54
4.2.7	Teamwork/collaboration	57
4.2.8	Desire to serve	57
4.2.9	Understanding	59
4.2.10	Self- Awareness	61
4.3	SUMMARY	62
Chapter 5: OVERVIEW, LIMITATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.		63
5.1	OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH	63
5.2	DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	63
5.3	LIMITATIONS OF THIS INQUIRY	66
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	67
5.5	THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS INQUIRY	68
5.6	A FINAL WORD	68
LIST OF SOURCES		70
APPENDICES		76

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 1.1: <i>Overview of the research programme</i>	9
Table 5.1: <i>Experiences of peer counsellors in an ongoing community intervention.....</i>	65



CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH TOPIC

A school, which for ethical reasons will remain unnamed, was established in 1986 to provide a place where 'rural street children' could be given a new opportunity in life. Over the past few years it has evolved into a well-structured school that is recognised as an example of how schooling for disadvantaged children should take place. It is registered with the Education Department and is widely known and respected in educational circles. To accommodate aids orphans and children living with abuse who attend the school, a 'House of Refuge' which I will call Uthando was established in 2003 adjacent to the Zandspruit informal settlement from funds raised by pupils from another private school in the area, through entrepreneurial projects and fundraising.

The property, some 6 hectares in extent has ideal accommodation viz. a double-storied 5-bedroomed house, three 3-bedroomed cottages and several other usable outbuildings. The surplus vacant land will be available to the school, when funds permit, to move from the rented premises at the Church where it is currently situated. This will permit the admission of children in excess of the present maximum intake of 240 to the school. Many children seeking admission are turned away at present. The synergy between Uthando, the school and the community will greatly benefit all parties concerned. Opportunities for further social activities, including a crèche, day-care clinic, and skills training, exist at the Uthando property. All of this forms part of an ongoing community project.

It was decided at its inception that Uthando should open to 6-children who would be under the care of a suitable and dedicated couple or 'house-parents' who I will name Miriam and Timothy. Timothy is a social worker who is a permanent resident at the House of Refuge. A domestic worker assists with household duties and a gardener tends the ground around the main house. At present there are 10 children accommodated at Uthando. Ultimately when all four existing housing

units are brought into use, approximately 35 - 40 children and four house-parent couples will be accommodated. There is also the potential to build a further two cottages in future.

The house parents support these children on a daily basis but find it very challenging and draining as the demands of all the children in the house give them no free time. They also feel that the children are in need of individual therapy as living without their families is a traumatic experience. Developing a community support system is essential to support the children at Uthando, as finances do not allow the luxury of psychologists, therapists and expensive medical care. This approach counters the painful aspect of living in a community of strangers. People who do not feel they are part of community live in numbing isolation, struggling alone against problems that can overwhelm them (Homan, 2004:35). A community is a rich source of sustenance that can offer practical assistance and psychological support, but people need to find each other amid all the noise and confusion. At this point I need to address and discuss the problems facing the children and the house parents at Uthando on a daily and ongoing basis.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Peer counselling within the context of this inquiry can be seen as a process in which trained and supervised learners (**the peer counsellors**) perform interpersonal helping tasks - listening, offering support, suggesting alternatives, and engaging in other verbal and nonverbal interactions - that qualify as counselling functions with similar aged 'clients' (the children at Uthando) who are in need of psychological support.

Uthando, is the pseudonym given to the House of Refuge that serves as the setting for this inquiry.

The **community project** in this inquiry is a project carried out by concerned residents in a particular neighbourhood with the aim of taking sustained action on

issues that affect the children at Uthando, using financial support and manpower from a neighbouring school as critical building blocks.

1.3 PROBLEMATISING THE TOPIC

The social needs of the pupils in the school have always been a high priority. Physical needs of these pupils have been met by referring and transporting them to hospitals and/or sympathetic general practitioners. On a social level with the help of social workers and Christian pastors, who have close links with Zandspruit informal settlement, the schoolteachers and staff regularly visit the homes and families of pupils who show signs of emotional distress. This does not, however, give much support to pupils experiencing learning, emotional and psychological difficulties, hence the formation of the 'House of Refuge'. A number of pupils from the private (donor) school in the area have been trained as peer counsellors and have been interacting with the pupils at the house of refuge for the past 18 months providing basic counselling and learning support. There is, however, no documented evidence of the role that these peer counsellors can play as part of a school-based support team within communities. I argue that suitably trained peer counsellors can be utilised successfully to provide assistance and supporting the absence of counselors and psychologists within schools and communities to be able to address this need at grass roots level.

Society looks to schools for help: to provide a secure environment for children, to foster appropriate learning experiences, and to attend to learning and emotional problems. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity is critical (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2004:15). I argue further that peers can play a major role in meeting these needs. Although peer group influence starts later in a child's life - generally by pre-adolescence - it can be enormously powerful in transmitting culture, values, and norms that influence behaviour. A therapist who fails to consider peers in understanding interventions with young people and within communities has a high probability of implementing interventions that are ineffective (McWhirter et al, 2004:15). The concept of school

support teams is not new (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999:54) but the use of peer support in this field is only briefly mentioned. The question arises: **What are the experiences of peer counsellors within an ongoing community project?**

The following secondary questions will help to answer the primary research question:

- What theoretical perspectives inform educational psychology and the role of peer counsellors?
- What is the role of peer counsellors in the South African context as indicated in the literature?

Based upon the abovementioned information, the unit of analysis in this inquiry can be stated as: *experiences of peer counsellors engaging with pupils at Uthando house of refuge as part of a school-based support team.*



1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY

The aim of this inquiry is to determine the experiences of peer counsellor's within an ongoing community project. In order to achieve the main aim of the study as stated above it is necessary to state the following objectives. Firstly, to do an extensive literature review in order to reveal the theoretical perspectives that inform educational psychology in general and, hence, the role of peer counsellors. Secondly, to further highlight the role of the educational psychologist and the peer counsellor within the unique South African context by referring to topical and relevant literature; and lastly, to determine by means of the empirical component of this inquiry the actual experiences of the peer counsellors within the context of Uthando.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK OF THE INQUIRY

Designing a study requires an understanding of the philosophical foundations underlying the type of research, taking stock of whether there is a good match between the type of research and one's personality, attributes, and skills, and becoming informed as to the design choices available to one within a specific paradigm (Merriam, 1998:1). In this section, the step-by-step planning of the research project will be presented (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:63) along with a brief introduction to the research design.

The design type of this study is a generic, qualitative case study. The case study is a way of organizing social data and looking at the object to be studied as a whole (Stake, 2003:135). According to Merriam as quoted in Henning et al. (2004: 41) a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. A complete account of the research design may be found in chapter three.

1.5.1 Participants in the Study

The participants in this inquiry include the existing 18 peer counsellors from the donor high school. These participants range from grade eight to grade twelve pupils who voluntarily offered their time to be trained by Lifeline as peer counsellors and have been actively visiting Uthando for an extended period of 16 months. Eight of these peer counsellors have participated on a regular basis in the program and have consented to make their personal journals available for analysis in this inquiry.

1.5.2 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection methods used in this inquiry include observation of peer counsellors engaging with pupils at the Uthando house of refuge over a period of 6 months during their scheduled visits. This six month period extends from January to June 2005. Reflective journals (see Appendix A) will be used and completed by participants on a weekly basis over the last three months of the inquiry. All journal

templates will be compiled and structured in the same way but no restrictions will be placed on the participants regarding the use of the journal itself.

1.5.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1984:54) write extensively about the problems that researchers may face when confronted with a mass of unanalysed data. Words from the journal transcripts may have multiple meanings and it is not always possible to immediately identify what participants meant by simply converting data to a computable format like numbers (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:235). Qualitative methods must be used but Creswell (1994:124) confirms that there is no “right way” of doing this. The methods used for analysis in this inquiry will, therefore, be incorporated according to the purpose of the method and the appropriateness in each case. The following section refers to the analysis of data gathered using a variety of qualitative techniques in this study.

Data from entries in participants' personal journals will be analysed using conventional content analysis methods or what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as “open coding”. Open coding refers to the creation of categories pertaining to certain segments of text. This is done in mostly inductive fashion, not unlike the basics of grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Coding of data in this case will be done using sentences as segments in order to identify all possible categories and create a larger basis for theoretical sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:500). LeCompte and Preissle (1993:210) also advocate the process of breaking down the data into segments of meaning for analysis and then categorising the segments. Main categories or themes will be constructed from previously coded data units with their ensuing categories (Flick, 1998:179) and conceptualized using my personal observations during the project. As coordinator of the community project I was able to make these observations as a participant observer.

1.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness or 'usefulness' of this inquiry is based on constructed knowledge (from participants lived experiences) and in the writing up of the inquiry I will focus on synchronising methodology and methods in order to ensure coherence. This, together with a cohesive theoretical base, is what Kvale (2002) refers to as 'good craft'. Henning *et al.* (2004:151) take this a few steps further by emphasising craftsmanship with precision, care and accountability, open communication throughout the inquiry and the role of "immersing the process in the conversations of the discourse community".

1.7 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

In the execution of this study, the ethical requirements as set out by the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Education will be taken into account. The necessary permissions will be obtained from the private schools in question (Appendix B) and consent forms highlighting all ethical issues will be completed by participants and parents or guardians (Appendix C). Initial findings of the inquiry will be made available to participants for further comments. Objectivity and integrity will further be ensured by adhering to the following:

- i. Acknowledging any shortcomings in the study by reporting on this aspect in the final chapter.
- ii. Reporting fully on the findings in chapter four and five of this inquiry.
- iii. Ensuring the just and accurate presentation of data in chapter four.
- iv. Participants will at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes. Consent to participate in the research will be obtained on a letter signed by both participants and parents/guardians. Reflective journals will be analysed (using pseudonyms) and be stored in a locked facility.
- v. Participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons (voluntary participation).

- vi. All possible means will be undertaken to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by partaking in this study and a pseudonym will be accordingly allocated to all participants to protect identities and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential.
- vii. Participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

Fundamental ethical principles relating to the practice of educational psychology must also be adhered to and include:

- i. Nonmaleficence: that no participant be harmed in any way by participating in the research. This complies with the principle of safety in participation; that human respondents should not be placed at risk or harm of any kind.
- ii. Beneficence: contributing to the health and welfare of others by having an active, altruistic, community oriented approach that gives back to the participants and the community.
- iii. Autonomy: the liberty to choose ones own course of action, including aspects such as voluntary participation and informed consent.
- iv. Justice: participant will be treated as equals.
- v. Fidelity: faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual counsellors.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

This inquiry is divided into five chapters. The overview of the five chapters that make up this document can be seen in table 1.1 with brief descriptions of the topics and summaries where appropriate:

Table 1.1: Overview of the research programme

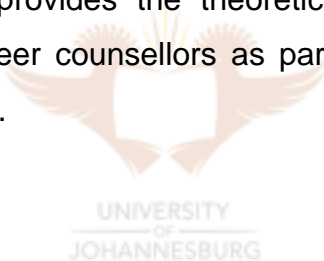
<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Topic and summaries</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Chapter 1	<p>ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY</p> <p><i>This chapter serves as an introduction to the research inquiry. It provides a description of the research setting, the design of the inquiry, issues of trustworthiness and ethical issues relating to this kind of research.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Background to the research topic ❑ Clarification of concepts ❑ Problematizing the topic ❑ Aim and objectives of the inquiry ❑ Research design and framework of the inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants in the study ○ Methods of data collection ○ Methods of data analysis ❑ Usefulness of the inquiry ❑ Ethical implication of the inquiry ❑ Overview of the research ❑ Summary
Chapter 2	<p>LITERATURE REVIEW</p> <p><i>Included here in order to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework. This will constitute the basis from which the inquiry is built. The gist of this framework includes both informal and formal theories that guide my work as educational psychologist and researcher as I investigate the experiences of peer counsellors in an ongoing community intervention.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Introduction: the role of theory in this inquiry ❑ Informal or personal theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal characteristics and life experiences that impact on personal theory ○ Personal theory and my view of community interventions ○ Personal theory and my view of man ○ Personal theory and my view of communities ○ The impact of disciplinary training on personal theory ❑ Formal theory that impacts on my theoretical framework for community interventions ❑ Introduction to formal theory that impacts on my theoretical framework for community intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A conceptual and theoretical framework for community involvement and interventions: my personal living theory ○ Post-modern influences ○ Constructivist influences ○ The eco-systemic perspective ❑ Peer counsellors ❑ Summary

<p>Chapter 3</p>	<p>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</p> <p><i>This chapter is placed here in order to provide the reader with the background to how the research design was chosen and how I aim to carry out the empirical part of the inquiry</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Introduction ❑ The context of the study ❑ Choice of research design ❑ Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participant observation ○ Research journals ❑ Data analysis ❑ Usefulness of this inquiry: trustworthiness ❑ Summary
<p>Chapter 4</p>	<p>FINDINGS OF THE INQUIRY</p> <p><i>The experiences of peer counsellors who participated in an ongoing community intervention at Uthando (a house of refuge), as derived from the content analysis of semi-structured journals are discussed in this chapter. Data that were analysed for this purpose came solely from these journals which were kept by the peer counsellors over an extended period of at least six weeks.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Introduction to this chapter ❑ The role of peer counsellors in a community based project: discussion of categories derived from analysis of the data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acceptance ○ Patience ○ Trust ○ Personal gratification ○ Sincerity ○ Objective reflection ○ Teamwork/collaboration ○ Desire to serve ○ Understanding ○ Self awareness ❑ Summary
<p>Chapter 5</p>	<p>OVERVIEW, LIMITATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH</p> <p><i>This Chapter provides a brief overview of the inquiry and a discussion of the findings.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview of the research ● Discussion of the findings ● Limitations of this inquiry ● Recommendations for further research ● The contribution of this inquiry ● A final word

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter serves to provide a general orientation to the study as well as a systemic framework for the study. It was suggested in the introduction that peer counsellors in South Africa could be utilised successfully within ongoing community projects as these interventions are essential to address the social, psychological and learning support needs within a community. The personal experiences of these peer counsellors with regard to their community intervention at Uthando will provide researchers with invaluable insight into how South Africa can utilise this intervention strategy as a solution to address the shortage of psychological services within our unique situation.

The rationale for this study was first placed within the South African context and set against the background of a preliminary literature review that highlighted both local and worldwide trends in the field of peer interventions. Chapter 2 expands on this literature review and provides the theoretical framework, highlighting the importance of the use of peer counsellors as part of an intervention strategy in ongoing community projects.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF THEORY IN THIS INQUIRY

Without conscious effort I have gradually come to realise that theory and the way I engage with this unique research are inextricably linked. The theoretical framework, intentions and purposes with which I approach this inquiry not only determine the way in which I interact with other individuals (the peer counsellors in this case) but are also critical in the way I am perceived and accepted by these individuals during research. The main purpose of developing this unique framework is, therefore, to help me sort out my world, to make sense of it, and to guide me as an educational psychologist and researcher in how I behave in it. I must also be able to predict what might happen as I gradually expose myself to new intervention techniques within the community project at Uthando while simultaneously engaging with my ever-growing knowledge of theories that may impact on my approach to community interventions in the future. Knowledge of theories provides a guiding perspective for me as an educational psychologist and researcher but the term theory itself has multiple meanings (Prochaska & Norcross, 1994:3). In this introduction I now, therefore, focus briefly on the concept of “theory”.

According to Le Compte and Preissle (1993:118) theories are human constructions; they are derived from information which people collect by seeing, hearing, touching, sensing, smelling, and feeling. This information is then put together into formal or informal theories by means of cognitive processes, or thinking (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:120). I see theories simply as statements about how things are connected. They help me to explain why certain things happen as they do. It is not one, but a number of theories that collectively make up my personal theoretical framework that guide me during community interventions. It is these theories that enable me to structure my actions during my research. Kottler and Brown (1996:94) add that theories are “blueprints for action.” By

grounding my intervention strategies in these theories I am further able to make sense of the dynamics and importance of community involvement, regulate my behaviour during a variety of situations, be in a position to predict what might happen next in the intervention strategy, and most importantly, be able to make decisions based on ethical considerations informed once again by theory. I realise, however, that it is essentially my cognitive processes, or thinking about community interventions in a critical manner that has led to the development of what Le Compte and Preissle (1993:120) classify as formal or informal theories.

At an informal level, theories or notions of how the world operates simply guide how I approach community interventions. At a formal level, theories structure the world of psychology as a science. These theoretical frameworks differ from lay concepts and theories in that they are developed in a rigorous and systematic manner based on logical reasoning and set scientific methods. Formal theories must also stand up to vigorous challenges by the community within the specific discipline and most importantly be intelligible to this group. However, both formal and informal theories are grounded in my experience as an educational psychologist and researcher. As such, they structure my expectations about the intervention process and my response to phenomena within it.

In my personal development as a “community psychologist” my knowledge of “theories” was initially influenced by my exposure to literature that focused mainly on theory from a *research perspective*. I have now adapted these theories on a personal level and started to apply them specifically to the research process. Prochaska and Norcross (1994:5) recognize the ‘confusion’ on the issues revolving around the selection of a personal theoretical orientation but also support my view that I do not have to commit myself as an adherent of only one such orientation. These authors see theories being adapted in a variety of contexts and community psychologists “borrowing heavily from divergent theories” (Prochaska & Norcross, 1994:5). A preference for one orientation does not preclude me from the use of strategies and interventions from another (see my discussion on technical eclecticism and theoretical integration later in this chapter). Theoretical knowledge derived from a variety of sources as mentioned in this introduction has

helped me to adapt my practice as a community psychologist and researcher toward the demands of each individual situation and client. In this chapter I will, therefore, highlight not only the formal or 'grand theories' (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:135) that inform my practice as community psychologist but also the informal explanations or lay theories (tacit theories) that I have developed in my daily tasks. I argue that it is essential to include these elements when constructing a theoretical framework as they all have a profound influence on the way an educational psychologist approaches community involvement within the South African context as a whole. Some of these unique (lay) theories that I include in my theoretical framework for community interventions are derived from my own cultural background, my academic training, personal life experiences, and individual personality traits. I will, therefore, provide a brief summary of these aspects before engaging with the formal theories that inform my theoretical framework for community interventions.



2.2 INFORMAL OR PERSONAL THEORY

Informal or personal theory that impacts on my role as educational psychologist and researcher within this community intervention will now be discussed. Cultural background, academic training, personal life experiences, and individual personality traits have already been highlighted as examples of informal theories that impact on my role as a change agent within this specific community intervention. These aspects will now be discussed in greater detail and their significance will be explained further using concrete examples from my experience as a community psychologist and researcher in this inquiry.

2.2.1 Personal characteristics and life experiences that impact on personal theory

Any theoretical framework, scientific or otherwise, is affected not only by ascriptive characteristics (e.g. sex, age, ethnicity, country of origin, economic status, and social or occupational role) but also by the educational psychologists' personal

history and the general socio-cultural frameworks and philosophical traditions in which he or she lives (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:122). Some of the abovementioned aspects have played a definite role in the way I approach this research.

Having started my post graduate studies in my mid thirties I am of the opinion that I am able to look at various situations during community interventions with 'mature eyes' and to understand complex issues that I would not have been able to do if I had started when younger. Age may therefore play an important role in the development of an individual's personal theoretical framework and the way in which she or he approaches intervention strategies within communities. Of course, the added experience that comes with age also helps. Being a white, middle class South African female with a Calvinistic upbringing, for example, has led to me forming certain opinions and preconceptions about how things should be done. The morals and values adopted during my Afrikaans upbringing differ from and distinguish me from any other change agents within community involvement with differing histories and socio-cultural frameworks. My personal history as an educator and at least 10 years of counselling experience at various high schools also cannot be ignored as integral components in the way I develop my personal, informal theory of intervention strategies and the way I approach this inquiry. I contend that the personal theories of the peer counselors in this study are subject to the same influences and that their age and lack of experience in the field may influence their engagement with the children at the house of refuge. On the other hand, this may also turn out to be a main focus during the analysis of the data reflected in chapter four.

Kottler and Brown (1996:148) remind us that strong theoretical underpinnings may help to reduce anxiety when dealing with the complexities, ambiguities, and the uncertainties of the counselling process. The participants in this inquiry, however, do not have this theoretical foundation. The way that these peer counselors interpret and apply themselves in their approach to community involvement is, however, influenced by the way they view every situation on a personal level based on their 'personal theory'. This theory has in my case been derived over a

period of time from two major sources of knowledge: the techniques and theories of supporting communities, and the richness and realities of life itself (Kottler and Brown, 1996:150). These factors have played an important role in the development of my personal theory of community interventions and how I view all components of the intervention process. The 'young but developing' personal theories of the participants in this community project (the peer counsellors) need to be exposed in order to shed new light on the role of peer counselors within an ongoing community project such as this.

2.2.2 Personal theory and my view of community interventions

Popular ways of integrating theory into the intervention process are discussed by Prochaska and Norcross (1994:429) and include technical eclecticism and theoretical integration. At the moment I am still going through a reflective period where I am deciding on how to classify my approach to the integration of theory in my practice as an educational psychologist. I still sometimes seek to improve my ability to select the best treatment for each client within the community and this labels me as a *technical eclectic* (Prochaska & Norcross (1994:430). In these cases I am guided by what has worked well in the past for clients and communities with similar problems and characteristics. I have in the past drawn on procedures from different sources without subscribing to the theories that spawned them but as I develop as an educational psychologist I am relying more and more on theories that have become a major part of my background. This, therefore labels me more as a developing "*theoretical integrator*." I, for example, regularly fall back on client-centred therapy and Gestalt techniques as a 'safety net' when creating a trusting relationship between myself and the client. The reason why I mention the fact that I border on technical eclecticism, however, is due to my use of other therapy techniques such as narrative and solution focused therapy in some cases. My post-modern leanings as described elsewhere in this chapter also suggest a certain degree of eclecticism.

Although every educational psychologist's style of practice is different, depending on personality, theoretical preferences and work setting, I believe that a healthy

relationship with community members, collaboratively structured roles and positive expectations on the part of the members of the community will lead to constructive change. My intervention strategies within community involvement are more likely to be successful when I am genuine, flexible and accepting while implementing logical stages and applying generic skills. My personal view of community intervention can, therefore, be seen as a process of helping individuals to change, by creating favourable conditions for them to achieve their own insight and to change from within. Through this they gain self-confidence in their own abilities and are encouraged to assume self-direction and responsibility for their lives (Gillis, 1994:2). I also feel that theory should not constrict my freedom and movement as a change agent but that I should also try out and master the techniques described in the various theoretical orientations in order to personalise them and make some of them my own. The peer counselors in this inquiry do not, however, have the 'luxury' of this theoretical foundation.

2.2.3 Personal theory and my view of man

I see every human being as a unique entity in which human conduct is shaped, maintained and modified, namely through a biological, intrapsychic, social and metaphysical context (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:38). Human beings are therefore intrinsically good and trustworthy. They will instinctively move, in a deliberate way, toward goals that are satisfying and socially responsible. Irresponsible or socially undesirable behaviour emerges from a defensiveness that alienates human beings from their own nature. As defensiveness declines and persons become more open to their own experiences, they strive for meaningful and constructive relationships (Kottler & Brown, 1996:98). Therefore human beings are growth-orientated and tend toward self-actualisation. This natural process of development toward higher stages of moral, emotional, and behavioural evolution can be facilitated by community psychologists who are able to stimulate the inherent capacity for progress in clients who are temporarily stymied or faltering (Gillis, 1994:41).

Human beings do not live their psychobiological lives in a vacuum. A person exists among other people and is part of processes of the world in which they live, work,

play and die. I, therefore, tend to focus on the societal and metaphysical contexts in this framework. These contexts represent the broad existential contexts in which the experience of human beings (as psychobiological entities) are evoked, maintained and modified (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:39). I therefore view man to have the innate independent ability to change, grow and self-improve through focusing on their inner strengths and resilience. I argue, based on initial observations of peer counselors at work in the house of refuge, that these characteristics are also evident in them.

As I view man as a 'person among other people' it is important to now focus on the community as an important part of the societal context.

2.2.4 Personal theory and my view of communities

The community is a system consisting of connected components (family members) organised around various functions that interact to maintain balance and a state of equilibrium. Each element is dependent on the functioning of other elements. Among family functions are the giving and receiving of affection, child rearing, and the work environment (Gladding, 2002:6). As they live together from day to day, families develop systemic patterns of behaviour that serve to maintain the system in a state of equilibrium. Each family member contributes to this equilibrium or homeostatic balance. I argue in this section that this balance is very fragile within Uthando and that it is easily disturbed. Children within Uthando may change roles in a conscious attempt to keep the 'family' in balance, however precarious this balance may be. I have used this example here to demonstrate the complexity of working within this unique community in order to highlight the complexities facing the peer counselors who visit on a weekly basis. It must be stressed at this point that the participants did not initially have knowledge of this diversity within the Uthando community.

2.2.5 The impact of disciplinary training on personal theory

Personal theories include the mindset provided by the discipline in which research is grounded. Trainee educational psychologists at the University of Johannesburg are trained in particular disciplines and will, therefore, formulate questions reflecting the categories and assumptions current in those disciplines (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:124). I, for example, examine phenomena from the perspectives that I am familiar with and tend to ignore others. Disciplinary training has affected the initial constructs or analytical frames with which I work and also affects the conclusions I reach during therapy, support and intervention strategies.

The preceding issues play a major role in the way I approach community interventions. They cause me to unconsciously interpret interactions in accordance with traditional or accepted constructions in the discipline. As a therapist I must therefore be aware of possible distortion of my interpretations or how the client interprets his/her own situation due to the impact of this “informal theory” and I must consciously attempt to negate any bias that may occur. After this brief introduction to personal and informal theory that impacts on my therapy and intervention strategies I now turn to a discussion of formal, or more scientific forms of theory that guide my practice in this field.

2.3 FORMAL THEORY THAT IMPACTS ON MY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

Formal theoretical perspectives like behaviourism, cognitive structuralism and functionalism, to name a few, are simply interrelated sets of assumptions and concepts that are used to explain a certain group’s “view of the world.” They sometimes consist of strictly nested statements or ideas but can also sometimes be little more than mere conceptual frameworks. They influence, for example, the way I perceive and interpret situations during the community intervention process. These perspectives cannot be seen as exclusive to any one discipline and I have,

therefore, borrowed from a variety of perspectives in order to build up this emerging theoretical framework.

2.3.1 Introduction to formal theory that impacts on my theoretical framework for community intervention

The development of my theoretical framework for community interventions has gradually developed over time and has its roots in a variety of traditions (Kottler & Brown, 1996:150). I will now proceed to describe the foundation of this theoretical framework and its developments through a succession of relevant traditions. In essence I offer a post-structuralist, process-orientated vision of interventions (with leanings towards post-modernism). To be a change agent within community interventions I am guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about clients and how they should be understood and studied. Some of these beliefs may be taken for granted or only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial. The critical paradigm and my strong focus on socio-cultural aspects, on the other hand, guide the questions I ask as a change agent by helping me to place the client within the context of their own individual social and cultural backgrounds. In other words, participants in therapy engage with the therapist within the context of their collective histories in an attempt to make meaning of their situations through alternative interpretations and transformations (Soltis, in the foreword to Doll, 1993:xi).

The theoretical framework proposed in this document is, as described earlier, based on various theoretical perspectives that I have adopted. Traditional frameworks in psychology like behaviourism, cognitive structuralism, interactionism and psychodynamic theory (Dagenais, 1972 as quoted in Le Compte & Preissle, 1993:126) have been replaced by emergent paradigms which build upon them, such as critical theory for example, which in turn is modified by feminist, post-structural and post-modern perspectives. My disciplinary perspective (built up from a variety of perspectives) is what Kuhn (1970) sees as an “intellectual culture” that dictates the way I approach intervention as an activity. This culture remains stable for as long as the underlying theories adequately

explain the phenomenon of intervention and support. When things in this field are no longer explained by these prevailing theories they are gradually replaced by emerging perspectives that add to my emerging theoretical framework.

Kottler and Brown (1996:150) recognise the confusing period where educational psychologists are initially exposed to a variety of approaches to successful intervention strategies and their underlying theories. They mention the period of “theory hopping” that I have gone through and still experience every time I am exposed to new and topical theories that may inform my role as a change agent within a community intervention. This is leading to the development of my own personal style and theory of intervention strategies based on aspects like philosophy; training, client needs, counselling goals, and experience (Kottler & Brown, 1996:151). This background forms a firm foundation and influences the way in which I will view the interventions, interactions and involvement of the peer counselors in this inquiry by utilizing a broad spectrum of theories in order to understand the individual experiences of the peer counsellors .

2.3.2 A conceptual and theoretical framework for community involvement and interventions: My personal living theory

After a period of experimental theory hopping as described by Kottler and Brown (1996:153) I believe I am nearing the point where I can state that I am moving away from my reliance on “favourite” theories towards integrating a body of knowledge from all relevant disciplines into a personal philosophy that is grounded in theory and can be applied to specific situations during intervention. It will, however, take some time before I can truly call myself a pragmatic educational psychologist but it is important for me to be able to know what I am working towards. I presently view community involvement within a broad interdisciplinary context and I integrate theories and approaches from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Some of these are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.3 Post-modern influences

I see myself in this inquiry as an insightful educational psychologist who has embraced post-modernism, seeing it as a broad and pervasive mind shift that brings with it new ways of thinking and doing in all fields of human endeavour (Soltis, in the foreword to Doll, 1993:ix). Post-modernism has its origins in the critical tradition (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:27) and is an approach that requires that we look at things in new ways (Jennings & Graham, 1996:165). Doll (1993:5), however, is of the opinion that it is difficult to give one overarching definition of post-modernism and other authors (including both theorists and therapists) concur that there is no simple agreed-upon description of the post-modern tradition (Jennings & Graham, 1996:168; Kemmis, 1996:200; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:38; Hoffman, 1992:7). The open-endedness of the post-modern framework has become one of its essential features (Soltis, in the foreword to Doll, 1993:x). Post-modernism is a model of organic change showing emergence and growth made possible by interaction and transaction. It is not necessarily linear, uniform, measured or determined.

De Silva Gonsalves (1995:11) makes the following statement regarding postmodernism:

“Postmodernism had been recognised as a number of concurrent and parallel movements in various disciplines. Because it has many forms and shapes, it also has many meanings. It advocates the importance of finding a new way of thinking- a new paradigm. This paradigm, however, is not a mere shift in the orientation of thought, but rather a radical transformation of the framework with which we cognitively operate (De Silva Gonsalves, 1995:11).”

Post-modern discourse asks for a new way of thinking about our world and the way in which we were trained. It is necessary for me as an educational psychologist in training to pay attention in my discussion to the aims of postmodernism, because we live in a post-modern world and must apply

intervention strategies according to this frame of reference (Els & Schoeman, 2000: 47). Post modernism represents a move from accepting a single truth that is described by 'knowable' reality that is characterised by certainty and determinacy (Gladding, 2002:399). Instead, "truth" is relative as it is informed by individuals who are responsible for creating their own meaning thereof. This then has implications for educational psychologists who can no longer assume that they are the experts who are to 'fix' their clients' problems. The epistemology of social construction also forms part of the foundation upon which I build my theoretical framework and will now be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3.4 Constructivist influences

My theoretical framework for interventions within communities is also influenced by what is broadly known as 'sociocultural theory' generated by the renewed interest in the theory of learning and development of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky in the early 20th century. My focus on this social constructivist stance, assuming that community psychologists will learn through interaction with the client who in turn interacts with their socio-cultural environment and history (Vygotsky, 1978) assist me in capturing their experiences during any intervention. This is the framework that will guide my understanding of the peer counsellors' world, as they engage with community members and are challenged to interact.

The socio-cultural nature of this framework and the concept of cultural mediation during engagement during intervention can also be linked back to the early 1900's when the idea of the inseparability of human mind (consciousness) and activity was first proposed and agreed upon by Russian psychologists. Bannon (1997:[Online]) explains this by referring to it as the 'birth' and development of the human mind and how it can only be understood "within the context of meaningful, goal-orientated, and socially determined interaction between human beings and their material environment." This can once again be related to the intervention processes within community involvement and the roles of the peer counsellors and their 'clients' within this process.

Social constructivists also place themselves squarely in the post-modern tradition (Hoffman, 1992:8). Constructivism fits within this worldview where individuals construct knowledge by forming their own meanings through the interaction of what is already known with the unknown.

“Learning from this perspective is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing models of the world and discrepant new insight, constructing new representations and models of reality as a human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse and debate” (Doolittle, 2001:2).

In constructivism knowledge is acquired through active involvement with the social world and constructed in the minds of individuals. According to Piaget (as quoted in Schaffer, 1996), humans constantly evaluate new information in order to assimilate and accommodate it. If indeed the new information does not fit within the existing cognitive framework, adjusting the cognitive framework accommodates it. This equilibration process is a dynamic and active process, taking place within a person’s cognition (Donald et al, 2001:102). Vygotsky too (1978), helps us understand that knowledge is actively constructed, taking place within social learning activities. He is also of the opinion that productive learning takes place when the learner is challenged to develop and build on existing insight and understanding towards a more advanced level (Phillips et al, 1998:59).

The main aspect of constructivism that influences my actions during any intervention is the constructivist notion that meaning is attributed to events by the individual and that as an educational psychologist it is important for me to understand behaviour within the social context. I also take note that individual constructions of certain events may not represent universal truths (individuals will ascribe different meanings to the same situation) and that different individuals may also interpret the same event differently. As an educational psychologist I must take note of this and also the fact that constructions are normally internalised by

the individual. Because construction is internal, it is only through the interaction of the educational psychologist, peer counsellor or change agent and client, or the interaction of the therapist or peer counsellor and the world of the client, that the constructions of the client can be understood during the intervention strategy.

Interactions during any intervention (acknowledging social settings) will play an important role when the community psychologist plans interventions to provide support to the clients within their unique contexts. Peer counsellors at Uthando should, therefore, not treat clients as if they are frozen at some definite state, or as if they are incapable of further growth. I argue that utilizing peer counsellors as part of the intervention process will play an important role in the community intervention by creating a platform for establishing solutions to individual problems at the house of refuge. Peer counsellors within this community intervention must not be seen as the 'experts' but rather as partners in the process of co-constructing the realities of the community members.

The 'constructivist approach' may also have positive influences within Uthando where peer counsellors interact with individuals. One technique that may be implemented in this process is the process of scaffolding as advocated by Vygotsky (Donald et al, 2001:104). Although scaffolding is widely used in education as a teaching tool, it is also highly effective in the intervention process. It involves the peer counsellor providing the client with temporary support or scaffolding, as a form of mediation (Donald et al, 2001:104) in order for the individual to attain higher goals within what Vygotsky called their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978:40). It is not only cooperation with a more advanced partner, but also cooperation with inexperienced partners (or peer counsellors in this case) that contributes to the development and well-being of community members (Kozulin, 2003:194):

"In tackling a difficult task as a group, although no member has expertise beyond his or her peers, the group as a whole, by working at the problem together, is able to construct a solution that none could have achieved alone. In other words, each is "forced to rise above

himself” and, by building on the contributions of its individual members, the group collectively constructs an outcome that no single member envisaged at the outset of the collaboration (Vygotsky as quoted by Kozulin, 2003:194).

This quote will be explored in further detail under the discussion of the role of peer counsellors in paragraph 2.4 at the end of this section.

2.3.5 The eco-systemic perspective

Social construction discourse traces the sources of human action to relationships and the very understanding of individual functioning to communal interchange (Hook 2002:311). Knowledge about the self, the world and different aspects and concepts in the world is constructed in interaction and in relationships with other people via language (Els & Schoeman, 2000:50). In this inquiry I propose the use of the ecosystemic perspective and I support Homan’s (2004) systems approach to community interventions:

“A systems orientation is so much a part of social work that it becomes part of the definition of that profession: The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behaviour; of social, economic and cultural institutions; and of the interactions of all these factors” (Homan, 2004:80).

Children at Uthando and their unique problems can, in line with this view, be seen as part of a ‘whole.’ Viewing community interventions from this perspective also helps to create an understanding of the children’s circumstances at Uthando and the type of interventions that are most likely to be effective in every unique situation within this context. The basic point I want to bring forward at this moment is that while systems are affecting people, people also affect systems (Donald et al, 2001: 64).

By working and thinking within this systemic 'framework' it has gradually become clearer to me as educational psychologist that a community intervention requires a group effort by all components of the 'system. Working alone is not an option. I, therefore, saw the opportunity to make use of trained peer counsellors to intervene within the Uthando project as part of the system described in the previous sections of this chapter. Many studies have confirmed the assumption that peers can be trained effectively to change behaviours (Lloyd, Crowley, Kohler, & Strain, 1988). In fact, several studies have proven that peers teach skills as well as or better than more experienced or knowledgeable individuals do (Kohler & Strain, 1990). According to Kerr & Nelson (1998) including peers in the intervention strategy is essential in bringing forward behavioural change and growth for socially challenged children (Kerr & Nelson, 1998:194). These important aspects have already become evident during initial observations as part of my inquiry at Uthando where peer counsellors have taken on helping roles in a number of different interventions.

The ecosystemic perspective, therefore, forms another part of my theoretical framework for community intervention where the individual influences the context and *vice versa* (Sands, Kozlesky & French, 2000:80). The part (individual) and the whole (cultural and historical context) are in continuous interaction: the macro-context affects the micro-context and has an effect on the construction and reconstruction of the self/selves (Els & Schoeman, 2000:51). As a community psychologist I cannot only see my client as an individual. I will explain this phenomenon more clearly by using a metaphor. I turn to horticulture for my metaphor as I use the analogy of the tree to point out the importance of the gardener (peer counsellors in this inquiry) who look after the garden in a very careful and nurturing way.

□ THE SOIL

As a change agent I consider various aspects of the environment, such as socio-economic status, political realities, economic climate, and cultural factors in order to understand human behaviour within the specific social context of Uthando. The

environment (soil) could also represent the dramatic changes that are occurring in the community. Urbanisation, poverty, unemployment, and the treatment of violence can be seen as other components of the soil that either nourish or fail to nourish individuals within the community (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2004:15).

□ THE ROOTS

The intervention tree in my garden has three primary roots; family, school, and peer groups. Just as the roots of a real tree provide a network that anchors and nourishes life, so the community and the house of refuge transmit culture and along with the peer group mediate development of individual children. The community and house of refuge (which in some cases represents the family for these children) is the taproot. If there is conflict or friction within this 'family,' these aspects can contribute to dysfunction (McWhirter et al., 2004:15). The school itself (not Uthando) can be seen as another root. Society looks to schools to help: to provide a secure environment for children, to foster appropriate learning experiences, and to attend to learning and emotional problems. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity is critical (McWhirter et al., 2004:15). Peers are another major root in my tree. Although peer group influence starts later in a child's life - generally by pre-adolescence - it can be enormously powerful in transmitting culture, values, and norms that influence behaviour. One who fails to consider peers in understanding interventions with young people has a high probability of implementing interventions that are ineffective (McWhirter et al., 2004:15).

□ THE TRUNK

The trunk is the support for the tree's branches and the conduit from the soil and roots up to the leaves, blossoms, and fruit. The trunk of the tree represents specific behaviors, attitudes, biological factors and skills of individuals (McWhirter et al., 2004: 16). It represents young people's strengths and weaknesses, talents and disabilities, personal risk and protective factors. These behaviors, attitudes,

and skills are also conduits to the branches, because specific characteristics such as inability to delay gratification, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and impulsivity lead directly to problem areas within our learners/clients (McWhirter et al, 2004:57).

The educational psychologist must be aware of the intrapsychic context that relates to different feelings as well as emotions. The intrapsychic context also includes the child's self-image, feelings, attitudes and biological factors as explained (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1998:39). When children are experiencing emotions like anxiety, depression and lack of motivation, the gardener (peer counsellor) must be aware of the important role that these intrapsychic contexts play within the individual. The educational psychologist must be able to assess and diagnose these problems, which are not easy to diagnose (e.g. internal factors like diseases) and have the power to destroy the tree. In this inquiry I will still fulfill this role as the peer counsellors will not be qualified to do so. I argue that any good garden service (myself and the team of peer counsellors) has the potential to save the tree by getting rid of these diseases. To be a successful change agent within community interventions one has to plan and structure intervention strategies after identifying and diagnosing the internal problem to ensure that the tree will produce good flowers and fruit (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwala, 2001:57).

□ THE BRANCHES

The branches of the tree represent clients' adaptation to society. Many young people are healthy and sound; they are integrated into society and preserve their cultural heritage; they will be productive as workers, as parents, as members of the community (McWhirter et al, 2004:16). Young people with this healthy adaptation contrast strikingly with those at Uthando who are somewhat isolated from their cultural heritage, their families, and society. This isolation is, in many cases, as a result of dysfunctional family relationships, loss of family members, poverty, or disease. The five branches that produce the most 'damaged fruit' at Uthando are loss of family due to HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, physical abuse, delinquency/violence, and poverty. The garden service will continuously have to

identify these external factors that endanger the tree. The change agent (the peer counsellors in this inquiry) could be influential in promoting the well-being of individuals within this unique community.

□ FOLIAGE, FRUIT, AND FLOWERS

The fruits are the individual young people at the house of refuge. Some young people are whole and healthy; others are bruised and damaged; still others drop from the tree (McWhirter et al., 2004:16). Like all growing trees, the tree needs pruning, staking, and trimming; it needs adequate sun, water, and nurturing. I argue that the garden service (peer counsellors) who nurture the garden (Uthando) will intervene passionately and will know *instinctively* that nurturing must be directed sometimes toward the soil, sometimes towards the roots; sometimes towards the trunk or branches; but always the intent is to improve the fruit of the tree, by considering external as well as internal factors within this unique ecosystem (Donald et al., 2001:57). It has already been my initial observation that this *instinct* mentioned above is natural within peer counsellors and this factor will be explored further in the analysis of the reflective journals in chapter four.

The eco-systemic perspective as meta-theory explains the interrelatedness of the individual with the physical environment, which strives to remain in balance. The system is comprised out of different subsystems each with its own goals, values and communication patterns (Donald et al., 2001:44). The ecosystemic approach developed out of the ecological model as a theory of human development that serves as a background and structure to my understanding, suggestions and interventions as an educational psychologist (McWhirter et al., 2004:21). The ecological model articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1997, 1989) posits that individual human development occurs within multiple embedded ecological systems (Shaffer, 1996; 55). Bronfenbrenner identified these systems as the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, with the individual at the centre (Hook, 2002:317). The microsystem consists of people with whom an individual comes into direct contact. For example, the 'family' at Uthando is the child's primary microsystem, and the child's school-including teachers, staff, and classmates

constitute another (Shaffer, 1996:55). Each micro system influences the child's development and *vice versa*. The mesosystem refers to the interconnections between the different microsystems. Mesosystemic influences include the relationship between a child's parent (which in this case are the house parents of Uthando) and teacher, and between the child's school and the surrounding community (McWhirter et al, 2004:21). The ecological model assumes that an individual's development is enhanced if the mesosystem - that is, the relationship among the microsystems - is consistent and positive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989). The exosystem consists of the interconnections between one or more settings that do not directly involve the individual. Public policy is an excellent example of an exosystemic factor (McWhirter et al, 2004:21). Public policy decisions regarding educational standards like the outcomes based education in South Africa have an impact on an individual and his/her microsystems (e.g. family, community, and school), but the individual might not be present when these decisions are made (McWhirter et al, 2004:21). The macrosystem represents a social blueprint; cultural values, belief systems, societal structure, gender-role socialisation, race relations, and national and international recourses. An additional concept is the chronosystem, which is the development of interconnections among individuals and their environment over time (Donald et al, 2001:57).

In other words there are three assumptions of the ecological model that play an important role in community involvement and intervention. First the ecological model assumes that an individual and his/her environment are continuously changing. The environment influences individual development and, in turn, the individual changes the environment (McWhirter et al, 2004:22). Secondly, the ecological model assumes that an individual is an active participant in his/her development. That is, the individual is not merely acted upon by the environment, but exerts influence on the environment (Sands, Kozleski & French, 2000:110). Thirdly the ecological model assumes bi-directionality, or the idea that changes in one ecological system may influence changes in systems that are more proximal and distal to the individual. For example public policy decisions impact on human

development in more immediate or proximal ecological systems (McWhirter et al, 2004:22).

The ecosystemic perspective, as well as Bronfenbrenner ecological (1979), and Jordaan and Jordaan's intrapsychic perspective (1998) provides me as an educational psychologist with a broad framework within which I can assess, understand, diagnose, plan intervention strategies, plan learning support, as well as identify support structures for the peer counsellors within the unique social context of Uthando. Contextual demands have required a shift in this case from the traditional child-deficit, medical model towards an ecological and multi-systems paradigm, suggesting a wider scope of analysis and action during this inquiry. The focus, therefore, falls on the role of the peer counsellor in this inquiry.

2.4 PEER COUNSELLORS

Peer counselling (sometimes referred to in the literature as *peer leadership*, *peer helping*, or *peer facilitation*) is helpful in increasing the impact and efficiency of professional counselling (Gazda, 1989:216; McWhirter, et al, 2004:282; Donald et al, 1997:190). Peers have a powerful influence on the development of any child (Donald et al, 1997:149; Schaffer, 1996:682). In many cases peers influence reaches where neither the teacher nor adult could possibly reach (Topping, 1996). Peers are seen to exert their influence through reinforcing, modeling, discussing, and even pressuring one another to comply with values and behaviours they condone (Schaffer, 1996:682). Peer counselling within the context of this inquiry can be seen as a process in which trained and supervised learners perform interpersonal helping tasks - listening, offering support, suggesting alternatives, and engaging in other verbal and nonverbal interactions - that qualify as counselling functions with similar aged 'clients' who are in need of psychological support (McWhirter, et al, 2004:282). The influence of the peer group is particularly strong during the period from early childhood to adolescence (Donald et al, 1997:190). They act as important intermediaries between the developing

individual and society. The task of establishing identities within the specific context at Uthando should, in fact, happen through such peers.

Kerr and Nelson (1998:208) provide some reasons for adopting intervention strategies using peers. They contend that peers teach some things as well as or even better than adults do (see also Kohler & Strain, 1990) and that the learning process is a reciprocal event, benefiting both parties. Vaughan, Bos and Schumm (2000:239) add that peers may be the most underrated and underused human resource available. They are already present in the setting and can provide natural consequences that continue to maintain behaviour over time (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2000:177). Although the question arises as to whether another child can become an effective agent of reinforcement, the evidence is clear that peers are, in fact, rather 'potent' sources of social reinforcement (Schaffer, 1996:683) or even appropriate models for desired behaviour (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2000:177). Donald et al. (1997:149) also contend that peer support may even become more influential in cases of social disadvantage where the social support offered by the peer group may have to make up for the lack of other forms of support, including family support which is absent at Uthando. James and Gilliland (2001:523) report that a peer counselling program that provides mentoring, tutoring and support functions may also be influential in keeping at risk and marginalized children out of trouble and in institutions like Uthando. This is, in reality, typical of the present situation at Uthando where peer counsellors, as part of the ongoing intervention programme, are being used to shed more light on the growing body of knowledge in this field while at the same time providing the essential intervention strategies as mentioned above.

Erickson (1963:262) proposes that 'adolescents' help one another temporarily through much discomfort by forming cliques and by "stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies." Peer groups, friends and close associates are sometimes the best indication of the paths that some children will follow. It is important for children to be exposed to individuals beyond the family, and in the case of Uthando where there is no family as such, individuals who hold positions of social responsibility, like the peer counsellors, can be utilised (Donald et al,

1997:150). In this regard, Schaffer (1996:683) contends that peers also influence one another serving as social models for a variety of social behaviours. The peer counsellors at Uthando are in an accepting and encouraging relationship, and can frequently act as counsellors to the children and have a positive influence on their self concept, identity, and goals in life (Donald et al, 1997:150). 'Trusted others' (Donald et al, 1997) being used as peer counsellors have the potential to help children cope with stressful problems and life situations. It is used at Uthando to actively harness the influence of the peer group for the developmental advantage of the children.

My role as supervisor to the peer counsellor group cannot be overstated. Key relationships with significant adults (myself in this situation at Uthando) are also essential to stabilize the identity and social role of the adolescent but the focus of this inquiry remains on the peer counsellors themselves. For this reason, no further detail of my role will be discussed.

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter a review of the literature has been done in order to support my view that society looks to schools for help: to provide a secure environment for children, to foster appropriate learning experiences, and to attend to learning and emotional problems. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity was depicted in this chapter as critical. It was further established that peer counsellors can play a major role in meeting these needs. It was also argued that an educational psychologist who fails to consider the role of peer counsellors in understanding interventions with young people has a high probability of implementing interventions that are ineffective. The concept of school support teams was pointed out to be well documented in the literature, but the use of peer support in this context is not.

The larger part of this chapter focuses on the theoretical perspectives that inform my personal perspective as educational psychologist and the way in which I view

the role of peer counsellors in the community project at the Uthando house of refuge.

Chapter three will now elaborate on the research design utilised in this inquiry.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design that was followed to gather, record and analyse data in this study, in order to answer the research question identified in Chapter 1. This chapter includes the indication of a specific type of design, reflects on my role as researcher in this inquiry, discusses data collection and the recording of data, and ends with a description of the data analysis procedures.

3.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The background that I provided in Chapter 1 (Paragraph 1.1) provides a description of part of the context of this inquiry and consists of a representative number of events, settings or people which may enable me as researcher to generalise the results of the study to a defined population. Typical examples of studies with a contextual and descriptive strategy are encountered in the historical disciplines where the focus is on a specific event like in this inquiry where the aim is to investigate a single case in an in-depth manner (Mouton, 1996:132). In contextual studies, it is also customary to refer to the selection of cases (for example, individuals, an event, a text or an organisation) that are included in the inquiry (Mouton, 1996:132). The specific case or situation at Uthando house of refuge, situated in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, has already been adequately described in chapter one and no further elaboration on the House of Refuge itself will be made at this point to eliminate repetition. Mention must, however, be made of the peer counsellors who are the participants in this inquiry.

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, a number of pupils from the private (donor) school in the area have been trained as peer counsellors and have been interacting with the pupils at Uthando for the past 18 months providing basic counselling and learning support. These participants range from grade eight to

grade twelve pupils and have voluntarily offered up their time to be trained by Lifeline as peer counsellors. Eighteen peer counsellors from the donor high school started the program and have been visiting Uthando twice a week since the inception of the program. Eight of these pupils have consented to make their personal, semi-structured journals available for further analysis.

A sample can be seen as those participants involved in the research or as a selected portion of a specific population. Qualitative researchers purposively select the most “knowledgeable” respondents and in this inquiry I have used a purposive sampling method in selecting knowledgeable peer counsellors from the private school (Merriam, 1998). These high school pupils were readily accessible and willing to part take in this research project. Krathwohl (1993:136) describes non-probability sampling method as ‘methods that do not include random sampling’. To be more specific, I have used a convenience sample – a group of individuals who were available according to the nature of the situation, time constraints and the characteristics of the individuals predisposed them. Of the 18 peer counsellors who started the program, eight have continued to provide data for this inquiry as active participants.



3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Strauss and Myburgh (2002:41) point out that because of the new South African political dispensation, previously accepted research findings are no longer necessarily still valid. Researchers from Africa and South Africa are now challenged to develop new methodologies, which are applicable to data gathering concerned with situations on the African continent. This often calls for a qualitative strategy. According to Merriam (1998) qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Denscombe, 1998:30). Patton (1985) comments further:

“Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there.

This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and that analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting..." (Patton, 1985)

I have used a qualitative research approach in this inquiry in order to adequately address the post modern theoretical framework I am working from. The focus of this research is therefore the phenomenon of interest from the participant's perspectives, not mine as the researcher. Secondly as in all forms of qualitative research I am the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. I am, in other words, responsive to the context and can adapt inquiry techniques to the circumstances. As a qualitative researcher I am also able to consider the total context and can process data immediately as the research evolves. As a qualitative researcher I recognise that I need to be flexible and responsive and not seen as the expert adapting the context to fit my needs (Merriam, 1998:6). Thirdly this type of research usually involves fieldwork. I will physically go to interact with the people at Uthando to observe behaviour in its natural setting and not only rely on data gained from a single method of data collection (Merriam, 1998:7).

Krathwohl (1993: 311-313) describes qualitative research as methods that permit the description of phenomena and events in an attempt to understand and explain them. It is an inductive method, which allows the problem to emerge from the data or remain open to interpretations of the problem different from those held initially. Using the qualitative point of view I will try to understand how participants perceive the world around them (Bell, 1993:8). This will be context dependent and will lead to multiple explanations and views. By using qualitative procedures I aim to remain close to the participants at Uthando and to observe and describe their actions as they interact with the children there.

The descriptive research design aims to provide me as researcher with accurate and detailed information about the role of peer counsellors in an ongoing community project. Descriptive research design aims at the researcher's goal as accurately as possible (Merriam, 1998:7) and it considers the total context of the environment and setting. This research demands detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and, therefore, the research design will be descriptive in nature (Mouton, 1996:184). With detailed rich descriptions, the actions, meanings and feelings of the experience will be recorded and contextualised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). To this end the peer counsellors (participants) in this inquiry will view their role and personal growth at Uthando by describing their personal experiences through personal reflection, using a semi structured journal. This leads to a description of the specific 'case' that is to be explored.

A case study is defined by Merriam as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Merriam, 1998:27). Peer counsellors interacting with children at Uthando on a weekly basis can be seen as the phenomenon under review. Case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry, but they are neither new nor essentially qualitative (Stake, 2003:134) and often not well defined at all. For this reason I describe the specific case here in some detail in order to show how I see a case study, not as a methodological choice, but rather as a choice of *what* is to be studied. The case, as described by various authors, could be a person such as a pupil, a teacher, a headmaster; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on (Merriam, 1998:26; Stake, 2003). In this inquiry the case is the group of peer counsellors (8 of the initial eighteen pupils from the donor school) taking part in a community intervention at a House of Refuge (a project carried out by concerned residents in a particular neighbourhood) with the aim of taking sustained action on issues that affect the children at Uthando, using financial support and manpower from a neighbouring school as critical building blocks. To be more specific, the case in this inquiry can be described as a group of peer counsellors from a private high school, taking part in a community intervention within a house of refuge (named Uthando for the

purposes of this inquiry) that has been established to cater for the social needs of orphaned and abused children.

Qualitative research is being used more and more in psychology today, due to the fact that it focuses more on behaviour processes of individuals and groups and their experiences. This inquiry can be seen as a generic qualitative case study as it is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, identifiable group and the interactions taking place within this closed social unit. I will now discuss the research methods within this qualitative research project that I will use to gather and analyse data.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

According to Marshall & Rossman (1999) qualitative researchers rely mainly on four methods for gathering information. These include participating in the setting, using direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and analysing documents and material culture. These methods form the core of most qualitative inquiry – the staples of the diet (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:105). In the postmodern era and in a rapidly changing and complex social world, however, pragmatic blending of methodologies and methods are not unusual (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:35). Social change is increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives (Flick, 1998:2). To this end, researchers often have to select the best way (according to them) to elicit usable data from the participants. For this reason I have chosen *two* of the main methodologies mentioned above for the collection of data in this inquiry.

Data collection methods used in this inquiry include:

- My observation of peer counsellors engaging with pupils at the Uthando house of refuge over a period of 6 months during their scheduled visits. This six month period extends from January to June 2005.

- The use of reflective journals (see appendix A) that will be completed by participants on a weekly basis over the last three months of the inquiry. All journal templates will be compiled and structured in the same way but no restrictions will be placed on the participants regarding the use of the journal itself.

These two methodologies will now be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is an essential element of all qualitative studies. As its name suggests, participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for the study. Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do. Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, as I will do in this inquiry, learning about daily life there (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 106). In this inquiry I immerse myself in the setting on a weekly basis in order to experience the situation first hand. This immersion offers me the opportunity to learn directly from experience. My personal reflections will be integral to the emerging analysis of the participants' data or cultural group of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 106).

Observation is part of living and part of our commonsense interaction with the world (Merriam, 1998:94). Participant observation is used as a research tool in this inquiry and my personal observations in this inquiry will be used in conjunction with document analysis of the semi structured journals to substantiate the findings (Merriam, 1998: 96). Peer counsellors will also base their journal entries on what they see first hand and will use their own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what they observe before writing down field notes. Observation according to Merriam (1998) is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed first hand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study (Merriam, 1998:96).

According to Merriam (1998) what is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge. This written account of the observation constitutes field notes (Merriam, 1998:104). Each peer counsellor will receive a journal with set questions to fill in and reflect upon on their daily observations at Uthando (See Appendix A). It is much more likely that a researcher will jot down notes during an observation and wait until afterward to record in detail what has been observed. Thus, unlike an interviewer who can usually fall back on a tape recording of the session, a participant observer has to rely on memory to recount the session (Merriam, 1998: 108). In this inquiry it is essential that the peer counsellors as well as the researcher keep notes on what is observed. In this inquiry I have not only observed the peer counsellors on a weekly basis at the house of refuge but I have also continuously reminded them of the importance of keeping these notes. During these observations, a number of photographs will be taken by the participants and may add another perspective to the analysis of the data.

3.4.2 Research Journals

For the purpose of this inquiry a schedule in the form of a semi structured journal will be given to the participants (see Appendix A). The journal is based on the conceptual framework of the peer counsellor's involvement within the house of refuge. A group of eight peer counsellors (out of a total of eighteen who started the project) will keep their journals with set questions on a weekly basis for up to ten weeks. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) the review of documents of this nature is a constructive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting. Such documents are useful in developing an understanding of the setting or group studied. Similarly, research journals and samples of free writing about the topic can be quite informative (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 116). These research journals kept by the peer counsellors and the researcher will inform this inquiry. Merriam (1998) argues that ethnographers often maintain something called a fieldwork journal – an introspective record of the researcher's experience in the field. In this inquiry the journals will include ideas,

fears mistakes, confusion, reactions to experiences, and can include thoughts about the research methodology itself (Merriam, 1998: 110). In this inquiry the fieldwork journals are the main data collection 'tools' that will reflect participants' experiences regarding the intervention at Uthando.

There are, however, a number of methodological criteria that ought to be followed during the process of data collection. These include suspension of personal prejudices and biases, systematic and accurate recording of the observations and establishment of trust (Mouton, 1998:111).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Henning (2004: 101-104) a true test of a competent qualitative research is in the analysis of the data, a process that requires analytical reasoning and the ability to capture understanding of the data in writing. Content analysis indicates that in working with qualitative data the researchers have many options on how to convert the "raw" data to final patterns of meaning. The conventional qualitative coding and categorizing procedure implies that the data are divided into small units, which are then systematically named per unit and coded according to what a unit signifies for the researcher. Data from entries in participants' personal journals will be analysed initially using conventional content analysis methods or what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as "open coding". Open coding, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, refers to the creation of categories from certain segments of text. This is done in mostly inductive fashion, not unlike the basics of grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Coding of data from the research journals will be done using sentences as segments in order to identify all possible categories and create a larger basis for theoretical sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:500). LeCompte and Preissle (1993:210) also advocate the process of breaking down the data into segments of meaning for analysis and then categorising the segments. Main categories or themes will be constructed from previously coded data units with their ensuing categories (Flick, 1998:179). All codes from the individual journals will be assigned a *colour* (to assist in the further analysis of the data) and will then be mapped into tables and structured into

ordered patterns of meaning (see Appendix D). From these tables, short descriptions of the findings will be written and presented in Chapter 4. The use of colour in this table will make the process of verifying and quoting from the individual journals substantially easier.

Strauss and Myburgh (2003:66) also mention that although qualitative research data is often in written language, it can also take on other forms for example video recordings and sketches. Within this study video recordings as well as photographs were taken to add to the richness of the written data. If these photographs or videos are used in the final analysis of data, direct quotations from the raw data will be used to support the story line. It is expected that the journals of the peer counsellors will be represented in a descriptive narrative form. If necessary, basic discourse analysis will be applied in order to elaborate further on themes originating from the content analysis of the data.

The use of documents often entails a specialized analytical approach called content analysis. The raw material for content analysis may be any form of communication, usually written materials (textbooks, novels, newspapers and journals); other forms of communication – such as music, pictures or reflective journals – may also be included (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 117). Probably the greatest strength of content analysis is that it is unobstructive and nonreactive. It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. As researcher I will determine where the greatest emphasis lies after the data have been gathered (Marshall & Rossman, 1999: 117). In this inquiry it will be important that I take on the responsibility to determine where this emphasis lies. This will be accomplished mainly using the methods and techniques of simple content analysis (Mouton, 1998: 110). Mouton argues that the beliefs and values of the researcher are likely to influence the process of data analysis. In trying to prevent this dilemma, I have distanced myself as far as possible from my beliefs and values until the end of this inquiry.

3.6 USEFULNESS OF THIS INQUIRY: TRUSTWORTHINESS

In a narrow approach, validity came to mean whether a method measures what it is intended to measure. In a broader sense, trustworthiness pertains to whether a method investigates what it is intended to investigate (Kvale, 2002: 303). The use of multiple sources and dual methods within the study enhances trustworthiness of the information gathered including credibility and dependability of the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:118). Merriam (1998) argues as well as LeCompte and Priessle (1993) that certain factors lend support to the claim of high internal validity of ethnographic research:

- The common practice of living among participants and collecting data for long periods at the site provides opportunities for continual data analysis. Journal entries will be examined at regular intervals for this purpose.
- Participant observation is conducted in natural settings at Uthando reflecting the life experiences of participants more accurately than laboratory settings.
- Ethnographic analysis incorporates researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring (Merriam, 1998: 205). Throughout the inquiry I will be 'living among' the participants over an extended period of time in order to be able to carry out these functions.

All aspects as mentioned above were applied in this inquiry; therefore this inquiry lends support to the claim of high internal validity. The connection between reliability and internal validity from a traditional perspective rests for some on the assumption that a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study have produced the same results (Merriam, 1998: 205). Repetitive patterns in the observations of the peer counsellors as indicated in their reflective journals could, moreover, indicate reliability and validity.

3.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter three discussed the research design that was used in this inquiry. It considered the research context, research methods, sampling procedures, data collection, and the analysis of data. Chapter four will now provide a description of this analysis.



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE INQUIRY

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THIS CHAPTER

The experiences of peer counsellors who participated in an ongoing community intervention at Uthando (a house of refuge), as derived from the content analysis of semi-structured journals are discussed in this chapter. Data that were analysed for this purpose came solely from these journals which were kept by the peer counsellors over an extended period of at least six weeks. The data were already presented in textual format and were analysed by qualitative methods that are described in Chapter 3 (see Paragraph 3.5).

The findings of the inquiry confirmed that the intervention of peers in a structured and ongoing community intervention was valuable to both peer counsellors and the children within Uthando. Ten themes related to the experiences of peer counsellors that can be useful in promoting change within an ongoing community project were derived from the data and will be discussed below.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

The experiences of peer counsellors were categorised into ten main themes by the analysis of data as described in Chapter 3. The ten themes were identified by finding repetitive patterns within the codes derived from basic content analysis of the personal journals and supported by my personal observations. These ten themes include **objective reflection, desire to serve, understanding, self-awareness, acceptance, patience, trust, personal gratification, teamwork/collaboration** and **sincerity**. Each theme will now be discussed in more detail with direct quotes from the journals to support the findings. Main themes that were identified as repetitive patterns within peer counsellors' personal journals will be described individually in this section and presented with examples drawn directly out of the personal journals kept during an ongoing community intervention project.

4.2.1 Acceptance

Acceptance, and the peer counsellors' excitement at being accepted by the children at Uthando is a dominant theme in the journals **“The children at Uthando are a lot friendlier to me, so I think that they finally ‘accepted’ me - Yay!”** Being accepted by the children at Uthando is seen as important, and some journals reflect that being accepted by children of the same age group is important to them: **“The thing that stood out for me was that we must help others even if they are the same age as me, as they still want my help.”** Moreover, being accepted by peers of varying age groups highlights the notion that peer counsellors do not really see differing ages as a barrier in this unique relationship: **“Today I don’t think I made a difference in another’s child life at Uthando but they made a difference in my life, they helped me understand that no matter how old you are you can still help others your age.”** Being accepted created a sense of belonging and also created a platform for the building of stronger relationships: **“It gave me a sense of belonging - it made me feel closer to them.”** Stronger relationships, in turn, led to deeper understanding and the rejection of language as a barrier: **“I interacted with a girl at Uthando although she does not understand English much. I could just notice on her face and through her actions how glad she was to work on this project.”** Besides the language barrier, letting go of personal biases also led to mutual acceptance in this sensitive intervention at Uthando: **“I kind of at first did not like Danny... (Pseudonym)”** and **“I learned to lose my judgement and take people for who they are inside.”** Acceptance appears to be something that must come from both the children and the peer counsellors and involves learning about various situations and contexts: **“I need to learn to be more accepting of people and their situations.”**

Acceptance brings about excitement, a feeling of being wanted, and the joy of forming new relationships. This can only happen if age is not seen as a barrier, if peer counsellors reject language as a barrier and let go of personal prejudices and biases.

4.2.2 Patience

According to the peer counsellors, patience plays an important role in the intervention process where the facilitating role of the peer counsellors unfolds over time: **“I need to learn to have more determination and patience to do the best for the children at Uthando.”** Change within the peer counsellor and the client can only happen over an extended period: **“I learned that you must be patient and allow people to develop their own relationships.”** In order to build new relationships over time you need to create space for the clients to be themselves in the first place. Letting the children at Uthando find positive aspects about themselves and to find solutions to their problems can only happen over time. Moreover, building the children’s self-confidence and trying new ways to create relationships involves knowing the group more intimately: **“It’s our relationships that we build that are the most important.”** The peer counsellors acknowledged the challenges that the community intervention presented to them and the need for patience in finding solutions to these challenges: **“Today we were teaching one of the children to read; it was a challenging task. I learned patience and a sense of accomplishment once we finished the book.”**



Breaking through the exterior barriers put up by the children at Uthando also took time and patience. The seemingly simple task of ‘coaxing children from their shells’ required patience on the part of the peer counsellors: **“I think I have made a difference in a child’s life by being a happy, brave person who has helped her get out of her shell she was in”** and **“I got to learn about the children at Uthando - they are very shy and you need a nutcracker to open the nut.”**

Having the patience to continue with the intervention over time was seen as a major factor in the formation of stronger and more intimate bonds between the Uthando children and the counsellors. In this regard a peer counsellor noted that **“I found it so wonderful to see how she came out of her shell and is so happy now compared to how she was when she first came from her awful situation.”** This last quote is indicative of the level of engagement with the

children at Uthando and the fact that very personal and individual aspects of the children's lives have been exposed over time. Getting to know the children at Uthando also involved peer counsellors trying new ways to create relationships which sometimes demanded that they look at the world of the children through their eyes: **"I felt like I knew what Dennis was going through..."** Empathy, or, increasing understanding of a person by viewing the world from their perspective, can only happen over an extended period of time which also demands a degree of patience.

4.2.3 Trust

Many of the peer counsellors focused on building and establishing trust relationships with the children at Uthando: **"...I want children to feel comfortable around me and to know that they can trust me and share their problems with me, I try to be as gentle and open as possible, I try to seem 'approachable.'"** The above quote also indicates how peer counsellors realised that to be able to form trusting relationships, caring environments must be created. Mutual trust and understanding between the children and the counsellors is also mentioned: **"When the kids talk to me I feel that they know me even though they have no idea about my life. It is scary but very beautiful and rare to have someone understand you fully."** Peer counsellors found themselves forming very specific bonds with individuals: **"I have really managed to connect with someone."** They established these bonds by finding strategies that worked for them. Through these strategies the peer counsellors started forming bonds and building important bridges with the children. These strategies seem to include building caring environments and being friendly and focused during every visit: **"I think I gave the children some reassurance that there are people for them to talk to."** It must be noted that one of the peer counsellors equated *friendliness* with trust but this phenomenon was not a dominant theme, indicating perhaps that the individuals' concept of trust was not yet well developed. Being consistent when meeting with the client is one strategy that worked to establish trust within the children at Uthando, and the peer counsellors also indicated that they were the

ones who had to initially expose themselves in order to gradually build this trusting relationship: **“To get some trust you must start with the small things. Slowly but surely trust will come, but you have to be the one to open up first and then it will come slowly.”**

Making new connections with the peer counsellors does not seem to come easily. It is also evident that trusting others is very difficult for some of the children at Uthando: **“When I said I would be coming the next day she was just so distant as if she did not think that anyone would really stick around for her.”** Some of the peer counsellors noted this phenomenon and stressed the role of loving and caring environments where increasing shows of affection are seen as a sign of increasing trust.

4.2.4 Personal Gratification

Enjoyment and the excitement that was generated by the intervention emerged as two dominant features in the discourse of the peer counsellors that indicate a sense of personal gratification: **“The children at Uthando really seem to enjoy our company. I love it when the children smile - it makes me so happy”** and **“...to see them smile and laugh means a lot to me and makes me feel good about myself and makes me feel extremely happy.”** In fact, the peer counsellors readily confirmed their enjoyment of taking part in the intervention even when exposed to potentially traumatic events and situations: **“This week was extremely nice for me – besides the fact that Siphon punched me in the arm.”**

Feelings of self satisfaction on the part of the peer counsellors is stressed in a few cases where the dominant theme is one of *giving*. They see it as a privilege to be able to work with the children: **“I felt blessed just being there as all I really offered them was my time.”** Some of the peer counsellors identify with this concept and show deeper understanding of their role and purpose at Uthando: **You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of**

yourself that you truly give as the words from the prophet Kahlil Gibran comes to mind.” Some peer counsellors are even overwhelmed by what they term *joyful interaction*: **“Their laughter and pure joy was amazing on its own.”** Other peer counsellors stress feelings of accomplishment in many different cases and see these individual successes as great personal achievements: **“It blew me away to teach someone how to read – even if it was a small amount. I feel as if I am giving her a gift that has no value great enough.”**

The fun side of the intervention seems to play a major role in the expression of feelings of self gratification. Peer counsellors seem to be able to see the ‘usefulness’ of their role at Uthando and the expression of a sense of accomplishment and *pride* at being involved in the project is evident in a number of things they write: **“Since I’ve gone to Uthando, I always leave there with a smile on my face knowing that we are giving to our community in such a way”** and **“...I was touched to be part of such a unique memory.”**



4.2.5 Sincerity

One theme to emerge from the analysis of the data is the genuine gratitude of the peer counsellors to be involved with the project at Uthando. They express humility and respect for the children at Uthando, showing signs of sincerity and revealing personal feelings in their journal entries: **“My feelings were humble because I take my ability to read and write for granted”** and **“...even though these kids have so little they still have a smile on their face.”** They are also humbled by the discovery of the importance of personal relationships, their personal experiences, and what they see as ‘cries for help’ from the children at Uthando: **“What touched me was that he came to me... He actually was crying out for help.”**

Peer counsellors also started to reveal personal feelings through the interaction with the children at Uthando and slowly started to relate to them on a more personal level. This is evident in the way the discourse changes from *us and them*

to one where genuine relationships are evident and they refer to themselves as a single unit: **“I found out that we have a lot in common...”** This may point to the fact that they were getting closer to one another during the intervention process.

Some of the peer counsellors report how they have learned not to judge or make assumptions about others: **“I learned to take things with a pinch of salt and learned to deal with other peoples differences...”** They also confide that giving does not have to be a physical thing, **“This week when I saw how happy just us being there made the children, it really made me realise that we don’t need to give the presents to make them smile, we just have to show that we are there for them and they will be happy”** and that the notion of giving normally involves a selfless relationship with the children. This is evident where they put the children first before themselves: **“I feel that I am making a difference because my attitude towards them is selfless. It is not about what they can bring me or what I can give them. It is our relationship that we build that is the most important aspect with our interaction. The children at Uthando come first in my life.”**

Some of the peer counsellors seem to realise that *any* caring interaction can make a difference in the Uthando children’s lives: **“I learned that everyone needs someone who would just be there for them.”** They expose caring within the group **“some of the smaller children helped in little ways but they all really seemed to care about each other”** and highlight the role that affection seemed to play within Uthando: **“When I arrived one of the children gave me a huge hug and it made me feel so welcome.”** Peer counsellors also express the genuine feeling of missing the Uthando children when they are not there. Sincere commitment is expressed to the task at hand: **“I just love going to Uthando and cannot wait until the next time I go.”** Genuine feelings of admiration are also shown for Uthando children who have overcome adversity in their lives and who seem to be coping with their *new family and friends* at Uthando: **“I have learned that anyone can be happy and peaceful after being in a terrible situation”** and **“I saw that although one of the girls has been through a lot of hurt and**

pain she is NOT (emphasis in original) negative about life – I really admire that.”

4.2.6 Objective reflection

Choosing to *observe from a distance* has enabled peer counsellors to learn things from the children at Uthando that have led to deeper understanding of various situations. **“I enjoy all the kids company and observe more by standing back. I think we can learn from this and become more accepting of other people in our own lives.”** This reflection has led some peer counsellors to mention the need to learn from the children at Uthando **“I can also learn something from these children”** and to learn from their experiences as counsellors. Another example is where one participant identifies the need to learn from the children during the intervention. She states in bold print and upper case: **“I NEED TO LEARN FROM THESE KIDS!!”** Others see this as a reciprocal event and highlight learning and growing together: **“I don’t think I made a big difference in his life, but he made a difference in mine”** and **“It was wonderful to learn more about each other”** and **“So its not only them who learn and have fun, we also learn and have fun.”**

Objective reflection seems to lead to higher levels of thinking and conceptualisation of many situations. This is evident, for example, in cases where peer counsellors mention how they make meaning of facial expressions: **“I could just notice on her face and through her actions how glad she was to work on this project.”**

Peer counsellors in this inquiry all seem to relate happiness to the success of the intervention. They see enjoyment as a visible sign of this success. Some go as far as to state that the happiness of the children at Uthando can be equated to *making a difference*: **“The children At Uthando really seem to enjoy our company. I love it when the children smile. It makes me so happy”** and **“To see them smile... is all I need to know that I am actually making a difference**

in their lives and hopefully bringing them some joy. I love children to smile and laugh it means a lot to me and makes me feel good about myself and makes me extremely happy.” Besides this they concur that giving of yourself is more important than giving material things: **“We don’t need to give them presents to make the children smile.”** Others claim that by *just being available* they are making a difference. **“...we just have to show that we are there for them and they will be happy.”** It is the interaction (of any kind) that seems to be important and some peer counsellors report that in their opinion “any interaction is appreciated: **“...it just amazed me that they enjoyed having a book re-read to them when they were practically reciting the book back to me.”**”

Interaction inevitably led to the formation of specific relationships: **“One of the children had grown closer to me all the time and I feel a sense of pride towards myself because I have managed to really connect with someone.”** In some cases these relationships grew and led to the identification of differences in all people and the fact that they all have unique needs: **“I learned that these children are delicate and each one is unique. Each needs different love and attention...”** Within this diversity some did, however, manage to find common ground: **“She is quiet and sweet and she and I shared a lot of things and I found that we had a lot in common. It was wonderful to learn more about each other”** and expose similarities between peers: **“She likes the same things I do and we both have the same sense of humour.”**

Through reflecting objectively on situations, the peer counsellors are able to identify problem situations and identify intervention strategies for each case. They are also able to get over problems of a personal nature on their own: **“As peer counsellors we also experience stress and personal problems”** and **“Going to Uthando every week enables me to forget about all my problems and just relax and spend time and have fun with the children.”** Another peer counsellor stated that: **“It is amazing how your frustrations can leave you when you are running around with the kids at Uthando... it’s the best therapy.”**

The peer counsellors recognised the importance of creating barriers as counsellors and state that the setting of these boundaries is an important part of the building of stronger relationships: **“...I only gave the pencil to her when she said please and thank you.”** The importance of a positive approach is also stressed and the belief that positive attitudes can be transferred to the children is highlighted: **“I try to have a positive attitude and be as outgoing as I can, so that they can realise that they can have fun with me”** and **“I also learned that a smile could go a LONG way. It put me in a good mood and the children responded to my positive attitude.”** Even with a positive approach some peer counsellors reported limited success with some activities: **“I don’t think I was very successful.”** They did, however, seem to acknowledge the positive side of most situations.

Peer counsellors also learned in this process that hurtful things can happen: **“I was shocked to see someone hit a person who has done so much for the children at Uthando and the following words popped into my mind - biting the hand that feeds you - realising that hurtful things can happen, hopefully next week things will go a bit better.”** They also reveal elements of suspicion in some children at Uthando and realise the effect of excluding some children or even making false promises to them: **“When you say something especially to these kids, make sure, don’t make false pretences and that you do carry it through. These kids have a better memory than most other people I know”**, Making assumptions about the children at Uthando and simple misunderstandings can lead to withdrawal of some of them from the activities: **“...and since one of the peer counsellors does not go regularly... one of the children at Uthando assumed it was my fault and now this child ignores me...”**

On reflection, peer counsellors show great optimism in the future of the children at Uthando: **“My approach towards these kids is optimistic. I know God has a plan for each and every one of them, even if they don’t go to the best schools and have the best opportunities.”** They comment on the resourcefulness of the children at Uthando: **“...even when all the paints were running out she still made use of what she had - not complaining like many**

of us would” and believe in the children’s’ inner strength. They also go as far as to make predictions about the future careers of the children based on the strengths they portray: **“She is a wonderful girl with a great attitude, she is very joyful and sassy - a business woman in the making.”**

4.2.7 Teamwork/collaboration

Peer counsellors reflect that using collaborative work with other peer counsellors can serve as a safety net in the intervention process **“I learned that if you work as a team without any arguments and just enjoy yourself while working, everything will go smoothly and you’ll get the job done quicker.”** Group counselling is one of the strategies that was mentioned by the peer counsellors as important in this regard: **“This taught me to use the people around me for help and not to solely depend on myself.”** Despite this, bonding through both individual and group activities was restricted in some cases as the traumatic nature of building a new family was exposed: **“One of the children had run away from Uthando. I did not understand at first however; but one of the teachers explained that the new family structure is a shock to his system. He is familiar with a broken family who has drunken family members and suddenly he is put into a new family with new rules in place.”**

4.2.8 Desire to serve

The peer counsellors expressed their *desire to serve* and *wanting to participate* in a number of ways. Many of them expressed the desire to interact with as many of the children as possible, not seeming to be satisfied with helping only one at a time: **“This week, I interacted with all the children”** and **“Today I interacted with most of the children, playing simple games...”** The desire to intervene, or the desire to help, in most cases seems to be extremely strong. Some seem to get involved in order to escape from their own personal situations: **“Being with them is like therapy because you forget about all your troubles and work just**

enjoying being with them and it's just a wonderful feeling." Whatever the reason for participating, peer counsellors all seem to want to make a difference in the lives of the children at Uthando. They realise that they are providing a service of great value: **"I feel as if I am giving her a gift, that has no value great enough"** and are able to identify noticeable change in the children: **"Mary never stood out in the beginning for me but she is really awesome now."** It also seems as if peer counsellors have an expressed need to feel useful: **"Since I've gone to Uthando, I always leave there with a smile on my face knowing that we are giving to our community in such a wonderful way."**

The desire to serve is also evident in the peer counsellors desire to make contact with the children at Uthando on a regular basis in order to create the opportunities for the establishment of relationships: **"I just wish I had more time to offer to them..."** It is also evident from the journals that the peer counsellors attempted to identify specific needs and unique qualities in all of the children at Uthando: **"I learned that Nomsa is quite reserved but has a great outlook on life. She sees almost everything in a positive light."**

There is an expressed need for more meaningful interaction that may be used to find new ways to help the children at Uthando: **"Yes, we are doing something now that I know they will use later... - not that what we did before was invaluable - I just felt it was a bit superficial."** Some of the suggestions derived from the analysis of the journals include the creation of more effective group tasks, including both activities and games: **"...it really made me think 'out of the box.'" Games in particular are identified as a strategy to break through barriers: "If he does not open up I am going to use games and pictures to try and help."** Therapeutic elements are identified in a number of activities but are more effective when the children are actively engaged. Peer counsellors are of the opinion that these activities must be well planned and mutually beneficial to both counsellor and child.

The desire to serve mentioned in this section appears to be focused on *leaving a lasting impression* on the lives of the children at Uthando. The *passion* to bring

about change during the intervention at Uthando is what I have attempted to portray in this section under the heading of “desire to serve.”

4.2.9 Understanding

This category emerged from the data to reveal a deeper understanding by the peer counsellors of a variety of issues. This ‘deeper understanding’ was not foreseen in the early stages of the inquiry but has emerged as one of the most surprising categories. One would not expect such understanding from young children but the peer counsellors at Uthando have stated their opinions on a number of issues in their journals to illustrate their knowledge and understanding of many issues: **“The greatest love is that of meaning which comes from the depth of your heart”** and **“I learned that you can’t treat everyone the same, each person must be treated as an individual.”**

Peer counsellors showed empathy and openness for those less fortunate than themselves: They also showed increasing knowledge of and insight into the world of the children at Uthando. Some *mention viewing the world out of the eyes of the children* and others state that *putting themselves into the shoes of the children* helps them to look beyond the surface: **“I felt I knew what one child at Uthando was going through.”** They also display the surprising ability to relate wisdom gained in the past to current situations: **“I learned that people hide who they are, from you, and that you have to keep searching until you find...”**

Other examples of deeper understanding of the situation at Uthando include the understanding of the language barrier and the recognition of cultural and contextual differences: **“I learned that not everyone understands English”** and **“My approach towards the children at Uthando is relaxed and I speak much slower to those who are younger than me so that they understand what I am saying.”** In this regard they even recognise that personal backgrounds will influence the way the children respond to them: **“I tried to be as gentle as possible with one child at Uthando because I didn’t know her situation in the**

past.” In order to alleviate this problem many of the peer counsellors made an effort to find out about the children at Uthando and identified that there is even diversity within a seemingly uniform setting: **“Learning about one child’s situation and context let me realise that these children are delicate and unique. Each child needs different love and attention.”** For this reason they adapted their intervention and recognised the need to take cultural and other differences into account. Peer counsellors found themselves rejecting class and status differences and learning not to make judgements of any kind: **“I learned that it doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor you can be friends with anyone.”** In order to do this they also had to lose prejudices and preconceptions that may have earlier affected their judgment.

Deeper understanding has also enabled the peer counsellors to adapt to and understand uncomfortable situations and to focus on the positive side of life: **“...even if you have been in an abusive situation and then come to a home like Uthando... you can become happy”** and **“to enjoy small things in life... you can be positive and happy no matter what situation you have come from.”** They acknowledge personal tragic situations of the Uthando children and are also able to deal better with their own personal problems: **“No matter how many problems you have... just take time to relax and always look at life from a positive perspective.”**

Peer counsellors have also made the claim that it is perhaps better to simply *be available* and not to force yourself upon the client: **“what touched me was that Thandi came to me... she was actually crying out for help...”** Finally, they find value in their counselling role at Uthando and understand that they will be expected to “give of themselves” in many cases: **“It is when you give of yourself that you truly give...”**

4.2.10 Self- Awareness

The participants stress the importance of the formation of a self-identity as peer counsellors. They report being aware of *personal growth* due to their participation in the community intervention and of finding comfort in the therapy process. Their developing self-confidence is evident in the way they express enjoyment of the interaction with the children at Uthando: **“I have always loved serving people. I care for people and most of the time put them first... NOT that I am the best person in the world - I just try my best.”** On the one hand, peer counsellors at Uthando gain satisfaction from simple gestures such as smiles, but on the other hand, are also aware of feelings of self-satisfaction about their positive role as counsellors: **“...I learned that I have the ability... being so privileged to work with children, and to show them that there are people who care about them.”**

The participants also identify their own shortcomings, personal flaws, and fears in their journals. Some express that they felt awkward and uncomfortable to be out of their comfort zone: **“This was the first time I went to Uthando. I was uncomfortable to drive through a squatter camp. I was nervous.”** The unfamiliar situations within a strange setting also led to the fear of the unexpected in a few of the peer counsellors. There was also an awareness of their own personal problems and negativity in some cases and the acknowledgement that peer counsellors can also experience stress. Many of these problems included issues with friends at their own schools. On the other hand, peer counsellors also found comfort and escape from personal problems by focusing on their roles at Uthando. By doing so they escaped from these personal problems and busy personal schedules: **“I find myself relaxing with them and I have been really stressed. I just let loose and let my love come out. It’s amazing how your frustration can leave you when you are running around with the children... It’s the best therapy.”** They were aware of the fact that it was necessary to forget about these issues so as not to cloud their judgement during the intervention and also used the time at Uthando as personal relaxation time: **“Going to Uthando is like therapy because you forget about your problems and just enjoy yourself.”**

By being aware of their situation at Uthando, the peer counsellors were able to learn to appreciate life, bring forth positive change, and find a special niche in society.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

As the ten themes unfolded and emerged during the analysis of the data, the realisation of the importance of using peer counsellors as part of an intervention strategy became evident in this inquiry. These findings were discussed in this chapter and supported by direct quotations from the 8 semi-structured journals that were completed by peer counsellors over an extended period of over six weeks.

Chapter five will be used for the overview of the study. Final conclusions will be drawn, and deficiencies in the research and recommendations for further research will be discussed.



CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW, LIMITATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

In Chapter 1 it was mentioned that a 'House of Refuge,' which I call *Uthando* throughout this inquiry, was established in 2003 adjacent to the Zandspruit informal settlement from funds raised by pupils from another private school in the area, through entrepreneurial projects and fundraising. At the time of the intervention, where a number of peer counsellors interacted with the children at Uthando, there were 10 children accommodated there. It was stated that developing a community support system is essential to support the children at Uthando, as finances do not allow the luxury of psychologists, therapists and expensive medical care.

The social needs of the pupils in the school were highlighted as a high priority. A number of pupils from a private (donor) school in the area had been trained as peer counsellors and interacted with the pupils at Uthando for an extended period providing basic counselling and learning support. There was, however, no documented evidence of the role that these peer counsellors could play as part of a school-based support team within the community. The research question was, therefore, stated as: **What are the experiences of peer counsellors within an ongoing community project?** The following secondary questions were then formulated to help answer the main research question:

- What theoretical perspectives inform educational psychology and the role of peer counsellors?
- What is the role of peer counsellors in the South African context as indicated in the literature?

The rest of Chapter 1 deals with the aims and objectives of the inquiry, a brief description of the research design, a discussion of the usefulness of the inquiry,

ethical issues pertaining to the inquiry, and an overview of the five Chapters that make up this inquiry.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review that includes the theoretical perspectives that inform educational psychology and the role of peer counsellors in the South African context. Chapter 3 describes the research design that was followed to gather, record and analyse data in this study, in order to answer the research question identified in Chapter 1. In Chapter 4 the experiences of peer counsellors who participated in an ongoing community intervention at Uthando (a house of refuge), as derived from the content analysis of semi-structured journals were discussed. Data that were analysed for this purpose came solely from these journals which were kept by the peer counsellors over an extended period of at least six weeks. The data were already presented in textual format and were analysed by qualitative methods that as described in Chapter 3. Ten categories related to the experiences of peer counsellors that can be useful in promoting change within an ongoing community project were derived from the data.

This Chapter now provides a brief overview of the inquiry, a discussion of the findings, limitations of the inquiry, and recommendations for further research.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Ten themes emerging from the data obtained in the empirical component of this inquiry have been portrayed in the following table. In each case, a definition of each experience has been formulated based on the journal entries themselves and on my personal observation data. These definitions may not exactly reflect the formal definitions found in other sources but have been carefully formulated to reflect the unique nature of the adolescent peer counsellor's experiences at Uthando:

Table 5.1: Experiences of peer counsellors in an ongoing community intervention

EXPERIENCES	DEFINITION
Self-awareness	The formation of a self-identity, and the ability to reflect on personal growth.
Acceptance	A sense of belonging, or feelings of being wanted or needed.
Patience	The understanding that change may take place over time.
Desire to serve	The aspiration to intervene, or the desire to help in order to make a difference.
Understanding	The ability to look beyond surface meaning in order to comprehend situations and contexts. This includes the ability to put yourself in the shoes of another.
Sincerity	The ability to express feelings that are free of pretence
Objective reflection	The ability to obtain deeper understanding of various situations through higher levels of thinking and reflection on personal observations.
Teamwork/collaboration	Working together in partnership with another or others towards a common goal
Trust	Development of an initial trusting relationship between a child and a 'care giver.'
Personal gratification	Deriving feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, enjoyment, achievement, pride, and satisfaction.

The ten themes mentioned in the findings of this inquiry (see Chapter 4 and the discussion above) can be seen as the main experiences exposed by the peer counsellors that are useful in promoting change within an ongoing community project. In some instances, the data obtained in the empirical component of the research as described in Chapter 4 were not mutually exclusive to any one theme and had to be carefully placed into the most applicable theme by identifying slight nuances in meaning that were sometimes difficult to recognize. An example of this is the one quote where the peer counsellor stated “**I need to be more**

accepting of people and their situations.” This was first placed under the theme ‘understanding’ because of the mention of the children’s situations but later moved to acceptance when I realised that this theme was more applicable. Without first-hand knowledge of the context I would not have been in the position to make such a distinction. Participant observation was, therefore, justified.

As with any inquiry of this nature there are, however, a few limitations that must be addressed.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS INQUIRY

Time always play an important role when doing a community project especially when it concerns intervention strategies. It takes a long period of time to train peer counsellors in the first place and secondly to build a relationship with them to be able to plan and install an intervention strategy similar to the one at Uthando. Time is always limited and it does get stressful when you work against the clock.

This is also the type of intervention that is not a quick fix to a problem. It takes a lot of dedication and commitment from peer counsellors and their supervisor to make a success of this planned intervention.

This intervention had to take place according to the schedule as prescribed by the school timetables of the peer counsellors. Within this structure, examinations and sport take first priority. During these times the peer counsellors were not able to visit Uthando.

This inquiry focused on a small group of peer counsellors from a single school in the same general area as Uthando. Even though some of the data became saturated I am still of the opinion that a larger sample would have provided richer data.

Only 8 of the original eighteen peer counsellors completed the reflective journals for the duration of the entire inquiry. Commitment seems to be a limiting factor that may have presented me with a homogenous group of committed and motivated peer counsellors. This may have influenced the data.

The language barrier may also have played a role in how the peer counsellors understood the children at Uthando.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is evident from this inquiry that the involvement of peers in a community intervention improves peer status and has a positive effect on the children at Uthando, but the longevity of the effect of this intervention has not been explored. It is my belief that sustained peer acceptance may require more than a structured group experience like the one I have implemented in this inquiry.

An intervention that involves peer counselling from *within* the children's specific social (and cultural) environment may be an essential component of long term success in similar interventions in the future. This inquiry made use of peers from *outside* the specific social and cultural context of the Uthando children and a further study of this phenomenon using peers from within the community (or even within Uthando) may reveal interesting differences from this specific inquiry.

Normally, parents play a major role in the development of a child's peer relations (Vernberg, Beery, Ewell & Absender, 1993) but in the case of Uthando, parents are absent. The role of the house parents as parents of a defined group of children demands further exploration and research.

A lot of literature deals with the aspect of peer acceptance and very little can be found about the issue of peer friendship. Interventions that enhance peer friendship are very likely to take on increasingly important roles in the development of healthy relationships at this level.

5.5 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS INQUIRY

The experiences of peer counsellors in this ongoing community project have shown that the use of peers as part of the intervention can have a positive impact on all parties involved. Both peer counsellors and the children at Uthando have benefited from the interaction. They have grown and learned from one another, each party overcoming a number of challenges and demands that their own personal situations have imposed on them.

The *experiences* of the peer counsellors in this inquiry can also be perceived as *characteristics* that must be present in any adolescent who wishes to be appointed to the role of peer counsellor in the future. Facilitators of similar community interventions within the local context can, therefore, use the findings of this inquiry as a solid starting point for further exploration. It must be stated, furthermore, that such an endeavour is not an easy project and that a lot of planning, training, and commitment is involved. If initial difficulties can be overcome, the use of peers who display the characteristics identified in this inquiry will surely be valuable in future community interventions.

One of the peer counsellors who has been actively involved in the intervention at Uthando for the past eighteen months has recently been honoured with the *Presidents Award for Youth Empowerment* which was instituted by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1996. A gold medal was presented to the peer counsellor for her contribution to the community intervention at a ceremony in October 2005.

5.6 A FINAL WORD

Inclusion of peers is probably only part of the development of an effective community intervention strategy due to the sensitive nature of the multiple aspects of the social world of the child. Addressing the role of peers and the skills utilised in such an intervention is probably not the only aspect that should be researched, but also the interventions that promote peer friendship and growth of both parties.

Extended interaction using peers, where possible, should also be explored as a more long term solution.

Throughout this inquiry I have hopefully inspired the reader to think about the role that peers can play in ongoing community interventions. This little stone that I have cast into the water will hopefully have a ripple effect and in some way, directly or indirectly, touch the lives of many children in need.



LIST OF SOURCES

- BABBIE, E & MOUTON, J 2001: The practice of social research. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- BANNON, L 1997: Activity theory. Online. Available: <http://www-sv.cict.fr/cotcos/pjs/TheoreticalApproaches/Activity/ActivitypaperBannon.htm>
Accessed 21 June 2004.
- BELL, J 1993: Doing Your Research Project. Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- BLESS, C & HIGSON-SMITH, C 1995: Fundamentals of Social Research Methods: An African Perspective. Kenwyn: Juta & Co, Ltd.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U 1979: The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- BRONFENBRENNER, U 1989: Ecological systems theory. Annals of child development. Vol 6. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp187-249
- CRESWELL, EL 1994: Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. London: Sage Publications.
- DENSCOMBE, M 1998: The Good Research Guide for Small-scale Social Research Projects. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- DENZIN, NK & LINCOLN, YS 2003: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. (In: DENZIN, NK & LINCOLN, YS eds. 2003: Strategies of qualitative inquiry. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. pp. 1 – 45.)

- DE SILVA GONSALVES, JL; 1995: The deconstruction of the American mind: An analysis of the hermeneutical implications of postmodernism. PREMISE. Volume 11 (8). pp11-21
- DE SHAZER, S & MOLNAR, A; 1987: Solution-Focused Therapy: toward the identification of therapeutic tasks. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy. Vol 13, No 4, pp349-358.
- DOLL, WE 1993: A post-modern perspective on curriculum. New York: Teachers College Press.
- DONALD, D; LAZARUS, S & LOLWALA, P 1997: Educational Psychology in Social Context. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- DONALD, D; LAZARUS, S & LOLWALA, P 2001: Educational Psychology in Social Context. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- DOOLITTLE, P, E 2001. Complex constructivism: A theoretical model of complexity and cognition. *Educational Psychology*, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Draft.
- ELS, L & SCHOEMAN, WJ; 2000: Training the Person of the Therapist and co-constructing a preferred therapist-self. Pretoria, UNISA: Production Printers.
- ENGELBRECHT, P; GREEN, L; NAICKER, S & ENGELBRECHT, L 1999: Inclusive Education in Action in South Africa. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- FLICK, U 1998: An introduction to qualitative research. London: Sage Publications.
- GAZDA, GM 1989: Group counselling: A developmental approach. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- GILLIS, H 1994: Counselling young people: A practical guide for parents, teachers, and those in helping professions. Cape Town: Kagiso Education.
- GLADDING, TS 2002: Family Therapy. History, Theory, and practise. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- HENNING, E 2004: Finding your way in qualitative research. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- HOFFMAN, L 1992: A reflexive stance for family therapy. (In. MCNAMEE, S & GERGEN, KJ 1992: Therapy as social construction. London: Sage Publications. pp. 7-24).
- HOMAN, MS 2004: Promoting Community Change. Making it happen in the real world. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- HOOK, D 2002: Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development. (In. HOOK, D; WATTS. J & COCKCROFT, K Eds. Developmental Psychology. Lansdowne: UCT Press. pp 311-322.)
- JAMES, RC & GILLILAND, BE 2001: Crisis intervention strategies. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- JENNINGS, LE & GRAHAM, AP 1996: Exposing discourses through action research. (In. ZUBER-SKERRITT, O eds. 1996: New directions in action research. London: The Falmer Press. pp. 165 – 181.)
- JORDAAN, W & JORDAAN, J 1998: People in Context. Third Edition. Sandton: Heinemann.
- KEMMIS, S 1996: Emancipatory aspirations in a post-modern era. (In. ZUBER-SKERRITT, O eds. 1996: New Directions in Action Research. London: The Falmer Press. pp. 199 – 242.)

- KERR, MM & NELSON, MC 1998: Strategies for Managing Problems in the Classroom. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- KOHLER, FW & STRAIN, PS 1990: Peer-assisted interventions: early promises, notable achievements and future aspirations. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 10(4), pp 441-452.
- KOTTLER, JA & BROWN RW, 1996: Introduction to therapeutic counselling. Belmont: Brooks/Cole.
- KOZULIN,A; GINDIS,B; AGEYEF,VS & MILLER, SM 2003: Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KRATHWOHL, D.R. 1993: Methods of educational and social science research: an integrated approach. Publisher Unknown.
- KUHN, TS 1970: The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- KVALE, S 2002: The social construction of validity. (In: Denzin, NK & LINCOLN, Y eds. 2002: The qualitative inquiry reader. London: Sage. pp. 299– 326.)
- LECOMPTE, MD & PREISSLE, J; 1993: Ethnography and qualitative Design in Educational Research. New York: Academic Press.
- LLOYD, JW; KOHLER, FW & STRAIN, PS 1988: Redefining the applied research agenda: Cooperative learning, pre-referral, teacher consultation, and peer-medicated interventions. *Journal of Learning disabilities*, 21(1), pp 43-58.
- MARSHALL, C & ROSSMAN, GB 1999: Designing qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

- MCWHIRTER; JJ: MCWHIRTER BT; MCWHIRTER EH; & MCWHIRTER RJ
2004: At risk use: A comprehensive response for counsellors, teachers,
psychologists and human service professionals. Belmont: Brooks & Cole.
- MERRIAM , SB 1998: Qualitative research and case study applications in
education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- MILES, MB & HUBERMAN, AM 1984: Qualitative data analysis: A
sourcebook of new methods. Beverly Hills: Sage publications.
- MOUTON, J 1996: Understanding social research. Pretoria: Van Schaik
Publishers.
- PATTON, MQ 1985: Quality in qualitative research: Methodological principles and
recent developments. Invited address to Division J of the American
Educational Research Association: Chicago.
- PHILLIPS, D.C & SOLTIS, J, F 1998: Perspectives on Learning. Columbia
University: Teachers College Press.
- PROCHASKA, J,O & NORCROSS,J,C; 1994: Systems of Psychotherapy. A
Transtheoretical Analysis. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- SANDS, J; KOZLESKI, E & FRENCH, K 2000: Inclusive Education for the 21st
Century. Belmont CA: Wadsworth.
- SHAFFER, D 1996: Developmental Psychology. Childhood and adolescence.
University of Georgia: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- STAKE, RE 2003: Case studies. (In DENZIN, NK & LINCOLN, YS eds. 2003:
Strategies of qualitative inquiry. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage
Publications. pp. 134 – 164.)

- STRAUSS, A & CORBIN, J 1990: Basics of qualitative research. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- STRAUSS, J. & MYBURGH, SPH. 2002: Research methodology – Study Guide. Center for Distance Education: Rand Afrikaans University.
- SYKES WM 1994: The promise of narrative: panning for gold. *Networker*. November/December, 1994. (pp. 41-48)
- TOPPING, KJ 1996: Researching where adults cannot: Peer education and peer counselling. *Educational Psychology*. 11(4), pp 23-29.
- VAUGHAN, S; BOS, CS & SCHUMM, JS 2000: Teaching exceptional, diverse and at-risk students in the general education classroom. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.
- VERNBERG, E; BEERY, SH; EWELL, KK & ABSENDER, DA 1993: Parents' use of friendship facilitation strategies and the formation of friendships in early adolescence: a prospective study. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 7, pp 356-369.
- VYGOTSKY, L 1978: Mind in society. The development of higher psychological processes. (COLE, M; STEINER, VJ; SCRIBNER, S & SOUBERMAN E eds. and Translators. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.)
- WICKS-NELSON, R & ISRAEL, AC 2000: Behaviour disorders of childhood. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Peer Counsellors

Dear _____

I want to use this opportunity to thank you for your hard work you are doing at the House of Refuge. It is such valuable work you are doing that I want to share it with the university at which I currently study. I want to share with them what you are doing at the House of Refuge on a weekly basis. The aim of this research project is to point out the importance of the use of peers as part as an intervention process to fill the demand for psychological services in our country.

The research project is of a particular nature and your involvement is crucial. To supplement my observation notes, I would also like to learn more about your day-to-day life as a peer counsellor involved with the House of Refuge. I am asking you to keep a little journal in which you make notes about your experiences at the House of Refuge. The journal is self-explanatory. Two pages are available for each school week of a month. At the end of each week I request that you complete the pages for that week. At the end of three months your journal will be collected for analysis and will be returned to me.

REST ASSURED THAT LIKE ALL OTHER RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN THIS PROJECT THAT YOUR ANONYMITY WILL BE PROTECTED.

I value your help very much and I am looking forward to working with you. If you have any further queries do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Yours Sincerely

M.M. LAUTENBACH

University of Johannesburg: Department of Educational Psychology

Appendix A: Reflective Journal

Week ending _____

What did I experience this week at the House of Refuge that stood out for me and what can I learn from it?

Who did I interact with this week at the House of Refuge?

The logo of the University of Johannesburg is centered on the page. It features two stylized human figures in a light orange color, with their arms raised and hands joined in front of them, forming a shape that resembles an open book. Above the figures are several vertical lines of varying heights, suggesting rays of light or a sunburst. Below the figures, the text "UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG" is written in a light blue, sans-serif font, with "UNIVERSITY" on the top line, "OF" in the middle, and "JOHANNESBURG" on the bottom line.

What did I learn from my interaction with this specific person?

Appendix A: Reflective Journal

Did I make a difference in the lives of the children at the House of Refuge this week? Describe feelings, attitude, approach used in this interaction process.

If you would like to express something unique you experienced this week at the House of Refuge, please do so in the space provided below. You can also add photos or pictures to share with me.



Thank you so much for keeping this journal

Appendix B: Permission from school to carry out research

Mr and Directors of the Board
..... High School
..... Street
.....
Randburg

I am currently studying in the Department of Educational Psychology (Faculty of Education) and I am currently engaged in research, with the aim of determining the role of peer counsellors as part of a school-based support team taking part in an established and ongoing community project. In order to achieve the main aim of the study as stated above it is necessary to state the following objectives:

- To do an extensive literature review in order to reveal the theoretical perspectives that inform educational psychology in general and, hence, the role of peer counsellors.
- To further highlight the role of the educational psychologist and the peer counsellor within the unique South African context by referring to topical and relevant literature.
- To determine by means of the empirical component of this inquiry how peer counsellors see their emerging role as part of a school-based support team within a community-based project.

As you may be aware, the social needs of the pupils at the house of refuge have already been partially addressed by social workers, Christian pastors, and school teachers who have close links withinformal settlement. This does not, however, give much support to pupils experiencing learning, emotional and psychological difficulties. A number of pupils from High School have already been trained as peer counsellors and have been interacting with the pupils at the house of refuge for the past 18 months providing counselling and learning support. There is, however, no documented evidence of the role that these peer counsellors can play as part of a school-based support team. I argue that suitably trained peer counsellors can be utilised successfully to alleviate the demand for counsellors in schools and to address this need at grass roots level.

Society looks to schools for help: to provide a secure environment for children, to foster appropriate learning experiences, and to attend to learning and emotional problems. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity is critical. I argue further that peers can play a major role in meeting these needs. Although peer group influence starts later in a child's life - generally by pre-adolescence - it can be enormously powerful in transmitting culture, values, and norms that influence behaviour. A therapist who fails to consider peers in understanding interventions with young people has a high probability of implementing interventions that are ineffective.

Arising from the need to research the situation, I would like to inform you of the procedure that will be followed in this inquiry. Peer counsellors who consent to be interviewed will be informed of my intention to have the interview tape-recorded for data analysis purposes. These tape-recorded interviews will be analysed (using pseudonyms) and be stored in a locked facility. They will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons. I also

Appendix B: Permission from school to carry out research

undertake all possible means to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by partaking in this study and I will accordingly allocate a pseudonym to all participants to protect their identity and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential. Being indirectly involved this inquiry you will be privy to the outcomes of the research as they emerge.

Accordingly, I hereby request that you sign this document below, in order to indicate that you are *au fait* with the conditions stated above and that you are aware of this research. This letter needs to be signed and dated as it forms part of the requirements for ethical research as mandated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education.

Thanking you in anticipation

MM Lautenbach



I, the undersigned,, do hereby indicate that I have read and understood the aim and reasons for undertaking the above-mentioned research as contained in the attached letter. I hereby give my written consent to MM Lautenbach to continue with the inquiry.

Date: _____

Appendix C: Consent

Dear parent/guardian of _____

I am currently studying in the Department of Educational Psychology (Faculty of Education) and I am currently engaged in research, with the aim of determining the experiences of peer counsellors as part of a school-based support team taking part in an established and ongoing community project.

A number of pupils fromHigh School have already been trained as peer counsellors and have been interacting with pupils at a house of refuge for the past 18 months providing counselling and learning support. I argue that these peer counsellors can be utilised successfully to alleviate the demand for counsellors in schools and to address a variety of needs. The role of the school in the lives of individuals in all their diversity is critical. I argue further that peers can play a major role in meeting these needs. Although peer group influence starts later in a child's life - generally by pre-adolescence - it can be enormously powerful in transmitting culture, values, and norms that influence behaviour. There is, however, no documented evidence of how these counsellors perceive their role as part of a school-based support team.

I would like to invite your child, with your consent, to form part of this study by agreeing to be interviewed and having this interview tape-recorded for data analysis. This tape-recorded interview will be analysed and be stored in a locked facility. Please note that even if you do agree to be part of this study you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons. I will also undertake all possible means to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by partaking in this study and I will accordingly allocate a pseudonym to all participants to protect your identity and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential. In addition, it is my belief that there are a number of possible benefits for you as participant in this study. Being part of this study you will be privy to the outcomes of the research as they emerge and will be given the opportunity to comment on your interview and thus inform the study.

Accordingly, I hereby request that you sign the attached document, in order to indicate that you are *au fait* with the conditions stated above and that you have consequently given your permission to take part in this inquiry and to be interviewed by me. This letter must be signed and dated by the participant and parent/legal guardian as it forms part of the requirements for ethical research as mandated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education.

Thanking you in anticipation

MM Lautenbach

Appendix C: Consent

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS PARTAKING IN RESEARCH TO DETERMINE THE EXPERIENCES OF PEER COUNSELLORS AS PART OF A SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TEAM TAKING PART IN AN ESTABLISHED AND ONGOING COMMUNITY PROJECT.

I, the undersigned, (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms),
parent / legal guardian of do hereby
indicate that I have read and understood the conditions for participation in the
above-mentioned research as contained in this letter. I hereby give my written
consent that my child may be interviewed by *Mrs MM Lautenbach* noting the
conditions below that:

I, the undersigned (participant),, do hereby
indicate that I have read and understood the conditions for participation in the
above-mentioned research as contained in this letter. I hereby give my written
consent that I am willing to be interviewed by *Mrs MM Lautenbach* noting the
conditions below that:



- the interview will be recorded on tape and that the researcher undertakes to store the tape/s of the interview in a locked facility.
- participants will not be harmed in any way by participating in the research.
- participants will be afforded the opportunity to comment on the findings from the interview.
- participants will at all times be fully informed about the research process and purposes.
- consent to participate in the research will be obtained on this letter signed by both participants and parents/guardians.
- participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons (voluntary participation).
- all possible means will be undertaken to ensure that participants are not caused any detriment by partaking in this study and a pseudonym will be accordingly allocated to all participants to protect identities and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential.
- participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.
- faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual participants.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Appendix D: Ten themes arising from the data

Objective reflection	Desire to serve	Understanding	Self-Awareness	Teamwork / Collaboration
<p>Choosing to observe from a distance</p> <p>Learning from clients</p> <p>Learning from experiences</p> <p>Learning and growing together</p> <p>Making meaning from facial expressions</p> <p>Identifying learning opportunities for counsellors</p> <p>Recognising the need for caring interaction</p> <p>Learning from each other</p> <p>Identifying happiness as an important factor</p> <p>Identifying children's happiness as major factor</p> <p>Relating success to happiness & enjoyment</p> <p>Equating clients happiness to making a difference</p> <p>Realising that giving of yourself is more important than material things.</p> <p>Acknowledging that just being there can be enough</p> <p>Identifying role of just being there is very important</p> <p>Experiencing that being there is enough</p> <p>Just being there will be enough</p> <p>Claiming that just being there is enough</p> <p>Making a difference by simply being available</p> <p>Identifying formation of specific relationships</p> <p>Identifying growing</p>	<p>Wanting to participate</p> <p>Trying to interact with all children</p> <p>Attempting to interact with entire group.</p> <p>Wanting to help many children, not only 1</p> <p>Showing desire to intervene</p> <p>Desire to help others</p> <p>Desire to help and serve brings personal satisfaction</p> <p>Wanting to make a difference.</p> <p>Wanting to make a difference</p> <p>Providing service of great value.</p> <p>Seeing noticeable change</p> <p>Feeling useful is important</p> <p>Using activities to escape from personal pressures</p> <p>Making contact with clients</p> <p>Creating space to establish relationships</p> <p>Identifying specific needs</p> <p>Finding unique qualities in all children</p> <p>Identifying uniqueness of individuals</p> <p>Identifying uniqueness of clients</p> <p>Seeing positive aspects of clients of all ages.</p> <p>Finding unique characteristics in everyone</p> <p>Finding differences in personalities</p> <p>Claiming greater impact on personal life than clients</p> <p>Finding new roles as tutor</p>	<p>Showing empathy & openness</p> <p>Showing empathy for the less fortunate</p> <p>Increasing knowledge of clients.</p> <p>Increased insight into life problems</p> <p>Viewing the world out of the client's eyes is important</p> <p>Putting themselves into another person's shoes is important</p> <p>Looking beyond surface</p> <p>Relating wisdom from the past to current situation.</p> <p>Showing understanding of language barrier</p> <p>Misunderstanding of games with different cultural meanings</p> <p>Recognising cultural and contextual differences</p> <p>Acknowledge need to learn more about various situations & contexts</p> <p>Realising that personal backgrounds influence clients</p> <p>Finding out about background of children</p> <p>Identifying diversity of clients</p> <p>Showing lack of understanding of various contexts</p> <p>Showing a need to take cultural differences into account</p> <p>Losing prejudices and preconceptions</p> <p>Rejecting class and status differences</p> <p>Learning not to judge</p> <p>Realising that every</p>	<p>Formation of self-identity</p> <p>Feeling good about her role</p> <p>Feeling personal growth</p> <p>Finding personal comfort in the therapy process</p> <p>Developing self confidence</p> <p>Enjoying the interaction</p> <p>Enjoying individual interaction</p> <p>Expressing enjoyment of the process</p> <p>Identifying personal ability to interact with children.</p> <p>Gaining satisfaction from smiles</p> <p>Stressing feelings of self-satisfaction</p> <p>Acknowledge positive role as counsellor</p> <p>Identifying passion for children</p> <p>Identifying own faults</p> <p>Identifying personal flaws</p> <p>Exposing personal weaknesses</p> <p>Feeling awkward and uncomfortable out of comfort zone</p> <p>Uncomfortable feelings with unfamiliar situations</p> <p>Identifying the fear of the unexpected</p> <p>Overcoming own personal negative feelings</p> <p>Acknowledgement that peer counsellors also experiences stress</p> <p>Finding comfort & escape from personal problems</p> <p>Forgetting about personal problems</p> <p>Acknowledging personal problems</p> <p>Escaping from</p>	<p>Using collaborative work with other peer counsellors as a safety net</p> <p>Identifying the importance of group activity</p> <p>Learning from group activities</p> <p>Bonding through individual and group activities</p> <p>Proving that any interaction is appreciated</p> <p>Interacting with children is important</p>

Appendix D: Ten themes arising from the data

<p>relationships Identifying differences in all people Recognising different and unique needs Finding common ground Exposing similarities between peers Solving own problem situations Identifying a problem situation Identifying intervention possibilities Recognising the important role of creating barriers as counsellor Setting boundaries are important Building stronger relationships Stressing importance of positive approach Believing in transference of positive attitudes Reporting limited success in some activities Acknowledging the positive side of all situations Learning that hurtful things can happen Ignoring the opinions of friends Identifying some suspicion in some children Suggesting that no false promises are made Understanding the effect of excluding some children Assumptions and misunderstandings can lead to withdrawal Building a new family is traumatic Identifying the need to adapt to a new</p>	<p>Finding new ways to help children/clients Expressing the need for more meaningful interaction Creating more effective group tasks Getting to know the children by playing games Proposing group activities and games Finding some success in talk Identifying games as a strategy to break barriers Identifying role of games in therapy Finding therapeutic elements in activities Suggesting encouragement & support as important tactics Learning more about the children through engaging activities Planning activities for interaction Using conflict intervention as platform Using engaging activities Stressing mutually beneficial activities Allowing clients to find their own solutions Identifying that it is up to the client to show dislikes and likes. Identifying resourcefulness of children/clients Encouraging independence is important Letting clients take control Leaving a lasting impression on lives Bringing about change through intervention</p>	<p>person is unique Realising that everyone is different and unique Finding unique qualities within clients Identifying strengths within clients Identifying clients strengths in not giving up when approaching an obstacle Adapting to uncomfortable situations Acknowledging personal tragic situations of clients Downplaying traumatic event Realising that peer counsellors get stressed Being available rather than forcing yourself on client Finding value in tutoring role Realising that she must give of herself Just being yourself is the most important Realising that material things are not important Identifying the need to grow out of old materialistic mind set Turning interaction into play session Identifying children in need of love Showing affection through hugs Identifying sparkling moments in her interaction Finding sparkling moments within clients as part of the process</p>	<p>personal problems Escaping from busy personal life Forgetting about your own problems are important Exposing conflict of interests with personal life situation Escaping from personal life and problems Facing problems with friends outside home Escaping from every day life to be with friends Using interaction as personal relaxation time Identifying the need to take care of self Learning to appreciate life Being positive brought forward change Wanting to be successful Finding a niche in society Finding a special niche for the day</p>	
--	---	---	---	--

Appendix D: Ten themes arising from the data

<p>family structure</p> <p>Exposing eagerness of children</p> <p>Identifying measure of success</p> <p>Feeling optimistic about the children's future</p> <p>Predicting future roles through current strengths</p> <p>Amazed at resourcefulness of children</p> <p>Underestimating children</p>				
---	--	--	--	--

Acceptance	Patience	Trust	Personal gratification	Sincerity
<p>Feeling excited about being accepted</p> <p>Feeling accepted by children</p> <p>Highlighting acceptance by peers of same age</p> <p>Not seeing age as a barrier</p> <p>Finding that age does not matter</p> <p>Feeling sense of belonging</p> <p>Creating a sense of belonging</p> <p>Feeling wanted by the children</p> <p>Feeling wanted</p> <p>Easily forming relationships</p> <p>Feeling understood by clients</p> <p>Rejecting languages as a barrier</p> <p>Letting go of personal biases and prejudices</p> <p>Forgetting personal biases</p>	<p>Patience play an important role</p> <p>Using patience in a facilitating role</p> <p>Seeing that change can happen over time</p> <p>Increasing empathy over time.</p> <p>Identifying challenging tasks & need for patience</p> <p>Finding it difficult to break through the exterior barriers</p> <p>Coaxing children from their shells</p> <p>Being able to effect changes in children</p> <p>Learning some patience</p> <p>Building new relationships</p> <p>Creating a space for the clients to be themselves</p> <p>Building clients self confidence</p> <p>Trying new ways to create relationships</p> <p>Getting to know the group</p>	<p>Focusing on building trust relationships</p> <p>Establishing trust in relationship</p> <p>Creating trust relationships</p> <p>It is about establishing a trust relationship</p> <p>Stressing mutual trust</p> <p>Developing mutual trust</p> <p>Creating specific bonds.</p> <p>Creation of personal relationships.</p> <p>Finding strategies to build trusting relationships</p> <p>Forming a bond with the children</p> <p>Equating friendliness to increased trust.</p> <p>Increasing trust & shows of affection</p> <p>Stressing role of loving/caring environments</p> <p>Trusting is very hard for some children</p> <p>Making new</p>	<p>Stating enjoyment of the intervention</p> <p>Effectively engaging with younger children</p> <p>Emphasising enjoyment of the activity</p> <p>Expressing enjoyment of interaction</p> <p>Expressing excitement about activities</p> <p>Affirming excitement due to visits</p> <p>Stressing self-satisfaction</p> <p>Gaining satisfaction from giving</p> <p>Feeling satisfied with learning support</p> <p>Gaining satisfaction from children's appreciation</p> <p>Identifying sense of fulfilment</p> <p>Overwhelmed by joyful interaction</p> <p>Identifying feelings of accomplishment</p> <p>Stating sense of</p>	<p>Stressing gratefulness to be involved</p> <p>Identifying genuine gratitude</p> <p>Feeling privileged to work with children</p> <p>Expressing humility & respect for clients</p> <p>Humbled by cries for help</p> <p>Humbled by experiences</p> <p>Realising importance of personal relationships</p> <p>Revealing personal feelings through interaction</p> <p>Starting to relate to children; not us and them anymore</p> <p>Learning not to judge or make assumptions</p> <p>Confiding that giving does not have to be a physical thing</p> <p>Seeing the importance of selfless relationship</p> <p>Putting client first</p>

Appendix D: Ten themes arising from the data

	<p>Creating a space for finding solutions Letting children find positive aspects about themselves</p>	<p>connections with individuals</p>	<p>accomplishment Expressing great personal sense of achievement Planning an intervention is useful and fun Enjoying having fun with the children Showing pride in being involved Seeing physical evidence of successful intervention</p>	<p>before self Put the children first and not self Exposing selflessness as NB quality Creating caring environment Realising that any caring interaction makes a difference Exposing caring within group Highlighting affection as important Missing clients when away Expressing commitment Showing admiration for clients overcoming diversity</p>
--	--	-------------------------------------	--	--

