

**EXPERIENCES OF GRADUATION OR
TERMINATION FROM A GIRLS YOUTH
COMMUNITY PROJECT**

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**Mini-thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts (Psychology) at the University
of Stellenbosch**



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October 2006

DECLARATION

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



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Signature

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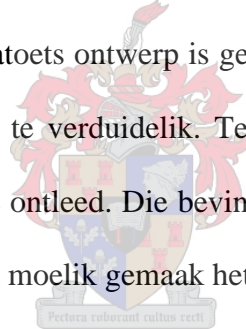
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ABSTRACT

The study attempted to gain insight into the behavioural response to termination/ graduation of a group of ten female graduates from a community intervention programme. The participants, aged between eleven and fourteen years and predominantly from low socio-economic backgrounds, attended the Usiko Girls Youth Community Programme. The eighteen month programme aimed to facilitate their transition from girlhood to womanhood. To this end, the program was conceptualized as having various components including, but not limited to, Initiation, Life skills training, Cultural activities, Camps, and graduation. After the graduation ceremony, which culminated in the termination of the programme for these participants, they returned to the programme, stating different reasons for doing so. A single group, post-test design, utilizing a structured interview was employed with the main focus being the graduation and termination component, to help understand this phenomenon. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Results suggest that the participant's identification with the programme made it difficult for some to terminate.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die reaksie van 'n groep meisie leerders ten opsigte van graduering van 'n gemeenskapsprojek te verstaan en insig daaroor in te win. Tien deelnemers tussen die ouderdomme 11 en 14 jaar, hoofsaaklik van 'n lae sosiaal-ekonomiese agtergrond het die Usiko Meisies Jeugprogram vir agtien maande bygewoon. Die projek het onder andere 'n inlywingsprogram, lewensvaardighede, kampe en kulturele aktiwiteite, sowel as graduering ingesluit. Na die gradeplegtigheid wat plaas gevind het gedurende terminasie van die program, het al die deelnemers teruggekeer na die begin van die nuwe program. Almal het verskillende redes gegee hoekom hulle teruggekeer het. 'n Enkel-groep natoets ontwerp is gebruik tesame met 'n gestruktueerde onderhoud om hierdie verskynsel te verduidelik. Tematiese ontleding en beskrywende statistiek is gebruik om die data te ontleed. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die meisies se identifiseering met die program dit moeilik gemaak het vir party om te termineer.



DEDICATION

Dedicated formally, to the ten young girls, of the first Jamestown Usiko girls Youth Community Project for 2004, who so readily shared their experiences with me. Also, to all the mentors and staff associated, presently and in the past, to the Usiko project as a whole.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you, and my sincere gratitude, to my supervisors Mrs. Sherine van Wyk and Dr. Mario Smith for their tireless work in assisting me to collate and edit this study. I could not have completed it without their expertise, consistency, commitment and understanding.

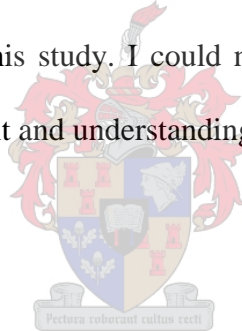


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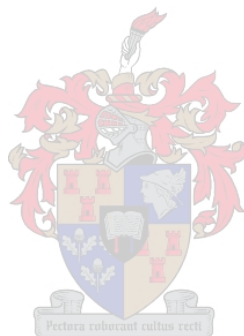
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Table 1. The Jamestown/ Usiko Girls Programme



APPENDIX

Questionnaire utilised for Usiko Girls Youth Programme Research study



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2000 the nursing manager at the Don and Pat Bilton Primary health clinic in Jamestown, Stellenbosch approached the Psychology Department at the University of Stellenbosch to explore the feasibility of providing psychological services in the Jamestown community (Naidoo & Van Wyk, 2003). As a key informant and gatekeeper to this particular community, she posited that many of the illnesses and conditions with which patients presented at the clinic could be ascribed to negative social conditions that prevailed in the community. Issues such as poverty, violence, alcohol and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, neglect and child abuse were indicated, and its negative influences for the mental health, especially that of the children and adolescents in the community, were expressed (Van Wyk, 2002).

In response to this request for services, community meetings were held with key stakeholders in the community, where information regarding the socio-historical context of Jamestown, its needs and resources was gathered. After these community consultations and collaborations, partnerships with key role-players in the community were established and the Jamestown Community Project was launched (Naidoo, 2000; 2002 for a detailed discussion). Curative and preventive mental health services were initiated at the clinic as well as at the primary and secondary schools in Jamestown.

As part of these services, a lifeskills development programme for adolescent girls, namely, the Jamestown / Usiko Girl's programme was initiated in 2002 at the local primary school. The programme had a prevention focus and consisted of weekly lifeskills sessions and one on one contact with an adult female mentor from the community.

In 2003 the first cohort of ten girls were selected and after eighteen months in the programme, they formally graduated from the programme in December 2004. In January 2005 a second cohort of girls from the school was recruited to the programme and the weekly lifeskills sessions were planned to start in February 2005. At the first meeting for 2005, both the graduates and the second intake group of girls arrived at the session, and it was apparent that the first cohort of girls was under the impression that they could continue in the programme. The group facilitator, faced with this difficult situation, could not turn the first cohort of girls away, but attempted to explain to them that their formal weekly sessions had come to an end. It was apparent that this was not a pleasant experience for the girls and some intervention was needed (Personal communication, Van Wyk, 2005). Thus, the primary aim of this study was to gain insight into the motivation of the graduates for returning to the programme and to explore their understanding of their graduation (termination) from the programme.

The remainder of the thesis is organised in five chapters (chapters two to six). In Chapter Two some background information on the Jamestown / Usiko community project is presented. It provides an overview of the different levels of intervention, the establishment of a counselling internship at the primary health clinic, the content of the boys programme and the different facets of the girls programme. Chapter Three provides a literature review on group process, the therapeutic value of groups and the termination processes involved when a group dissolves. Chapter Four provides a conceptual framework for the thesis whilst Chapter Five presents the research methodology including, but not limited to, participants, procedure involved in the data collection and analysis. In Chapter Six the results and a discussion are presented and the thesis

concludes with the limitations of the study and offers some recommendations for future studies and the graduation processes in such programmes.



CHAPTER 2

THE USIKO GIRLS YOUTH PROGRAMME

2.1 Background Information

Jamestown is a small peri-urban community that is situated on the outskirts of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. The dwellings in this mostly working class community are varied in size and architecture; some with a distinct middle-class appearance are situated on the hills, while an informal settlement is built on low-lying ground. The dwellings built higher up afford a spectacular panoramic view of the surrounding vineyards and farming area. The homes in the informal settlement are prone to damp, as the ground becomes water logged and muddy during the cold, rainy winter months. Although this community is situated in what appears to be a tranquil and idyllic location, this scenic beauty could minimise the usually widespread socio-economic concerns, challenges and needs faced by many members in such peri-urban communities.

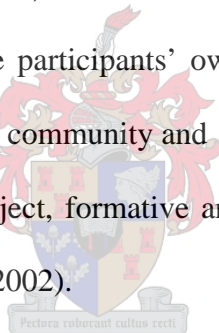
The area adjacent to Jamestown comprises of many opulent fruit and wine farms, which are the main providers of employment to many of the residents in and around Jamestown. Farm labour is often seasonal which leaves many unemployed and destitute during off peak times. The converse of this is that during peak seasonal periods some of these workers seemingly have more finances, are often absent from families and readily engage in alcohol and substance abuse. This continuously shifting framework has devastating consequences for families and especially young people, as the lack of supervision due to absent parents; alcohol and drug abuse by both parents and teens, generate conflict and aggravate an already dire milieu. It was these circumstances and

burgeoning needs that prompted the staff at Don and Pat Bilton Primary Health clinic, to seek assistance from the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University.

2.1.2 The Jamestown/ Usiko Community Project

From the initial request to provide psychological services in the community, a range of community meetings were arranged with key stakeholders in the Jamestown area. After a thorough process of situational analysis and consultation, partnerships were established between the community, the local municipality and Stellenbosch University. A partnership was further established with the non-governmental organisation, Usiko, who provided some of the funding to provide the services in Jamestown (Naidoo, 2000). The aim of the project was to render services at multiple levels that had a preventive, promotive and remedial orientation. Counselling and psychological services were provided at the clinic for the community, learners from the primary and secondary schools, and the workers from the surrounding farms. Furthermore, the key informants expressed concern for the well-being of the young men in Jamestown and the surrounding areas. Their concerns were primarily grounded in the increased levels of abuse of alcohol and other illegal substances, increased vulnerability to the influences of gangs and an escalation in antisocial and delinquent behaviour. A clear need for services for the youth and the implementation of appropriate programmes was expressed. Due to these specific concerns, a boy's programme earmarked for "at- risk" male youth was conceptualised and operationalized using the following basic premises:

- ❖ The project would be distractive in nature, utilising a preventive and promotive strategy to develop the skills, potential and vision of its participants, over a nine month period;
- ❖ Young adult males considered “at risk” would be eligible to participate;
- ❖ A rites of passage philosophy would be utilised with the aim of guiding participants sequentially from boyhood to manhood;
- ❖ A wilderness excursion at the start and end of the programme would be employed as a grounding incident to facilitate the rites of passage process;
- ❖ Mentors, recruited from the community, would be allocated to participants to guide them through this process;
- ❖ A community project, of the participants’ own choice, would be undertaken to demonstrate ownership of his community and
- ❖ Because this was a pilot project, formative and summative evaluation would be utilised to assess it (Naidoo, 2002).



The implementation and experienced value of this programme gave rise to enquiry regarding a similar project for young female residents of Jamestown and the surrounding communities. Teachers, community leaders and the nursing staff at Don & Pat Bilton clinic led the inquiry into the feasibility of such a programme.

2.1.3 The Jamestown / Usiko Girls Community Youth Project

A lecturer from the University of Stellenbosch involved with the Jamestown project and a teacher at the primary school in Jamestown, consequently initiated the girl’s programme of the Jamestown / Usiko Community project. Women from the community

were recruited and an information meeting was held in August 2002, at the Don & Pat Bilton Primary Health clinic (Personal communication, Van Wyk, 2005). An informal needs assessment was embarked on, and at this meeting, data was gathered on what the members perceived to be the most pressing needs experienced by the girls within their community. Of the twelve women who attended the meeting, ten volunteered to serve as committee members or mentors in the project. Further planning meetings were held by this committee to give substance to the project, namely to explore the operational issues and to explore the theoretical underpinnings utilised by other similar community projects (Van Wyk & Naidoo, 2006).

From these meetings it emerged that, other than the life orientation curriculum offered at the schools, there were few formal programmes that equip the youth with lifeskills. Further, it was ascertained that premature sexual activity, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, poor social skills, poor school attendance and low educational achievement and a host of other negative social stressors, were the lived reality of many of girls in Jamestown, as well as those living on the surrounding farms. Thus it was decided that a programme should be developed and earmarked for grade seven learners, as these girls are dealing with the challenges of adolescence, the approaching transition to secondary school and to equip them with skills for the journey to adulthood. An appeal for a programme that would provide appropriate sex education, teach conflict resolution skills, create awareness of the dangers of drugs and enable them to cope with peer pressure was emphasised. Although the girl's project would have similarities to that of the male programme, its main focus would be to promote resilience amongst adolescent girls by providing them with opportunities to acquire the necessary skills that would assist in their

development. This would be facilitated via life skills programmes designed to empower and promote the practice of making informed choices, effective coping strategies and promote self-esteem. The programme also sought to enrich the girls culturally and provide them with the opportunity to establish a mentoring relationship with a female mentor from the community. The programme was formulated and conceptualised using five components. Table 1 below summarizes the five components and its constituent parts, namely initiation, life skills, cultural enrichment, mentoring and finally termination (Van Wyk & Naidoo, 2006).

Table 1.

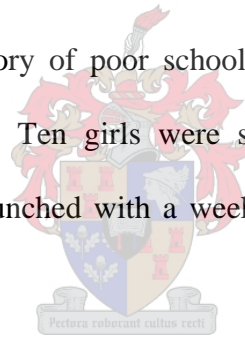
The Jamestown/ Usiko Girls Programme

Initiation	Recruitment First camp Initiation ceremony Welcoming ceremony Allocation of mentors
Psycho-education	Weekly life skills sessions Participatory and experiential learning experiences
Cultural Enrichment	Cultural visits to help broaden participants horizons
Mentoring	Recruitment of volunteers Basic training on mentoring and adolescence Weekly mentoring sessions with mentee Weekly mentoring supervision sessions
Termination	Second camp serves as an immersion process to facilitate termination Graduation ceremony

Below follows a brief exposition of what each component entailed:

2.1.4 Recruitment to the Project

A teacher at the primary school and resident in Jamestown advertised the programme at the school and recruited girls who were interested in joining and participating in this programme. Girls who showed an interest were requested to write an autobiographical essay and motivate why they wanted to be part of the programme. A committee of three members, comprising a psychologist and two teachers who knew the girls closely and were aware of the social circumstances of most of the learners, was instrumental in the selection of the final group of girls. Girls who were motivated to attend regularly, who could work co-operatively and maintained reasonable school performance were selected. Girls whom the teachers knew would be disruptive and not attend regularly (given their history of poor school attendance and behaviour record) were not included in the group. Ten girls were selected and entered into the first programme that was officially launched with a weekend initiation camp on the 28th of February, 2003.



2.1.5 Initiation

The initiation into the programme took the form of an excursion into a wilderness context where the girls were presented with an opportunity for self-reflection. Wilderness was used as a metaphor for the journey within and the girls were requested to reflect on their place in this world, their journey to becoming a woman, and their future. For most of the girls this would be their first camping experience and trip out of Jamestown. Further aims of the camp were to introduce the group members to each other; the women mentors; start building group cohesion; to explore what their expectations are of the

programme; to welcome them into the circle of the programme and also to inform them what is expected from them in the programme. The theme for the weekend was “Circles and Cycles” and activities captured the different cycles of being a woman and the circles that connect the girls to their families, each other as a group, the programme, their community and the environment. Two registered psychologists and an intern psychologist facilitated these processes. The initiation process was completed when, three weeks later, the girls and their parents were introduced to their mentors at a welcoming ceremony in the community.

2.1.6 Mentoring

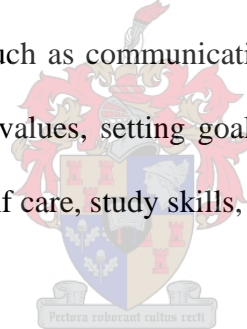
Mentoring formed an essential component in the programme as it has been found to contribute towards positive adolescent development and could provide social support and much needed role modelling during this developmental phase (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Parra, DuBois, Neville & Pugh-Lilly, 2002). Establishing positive mentoring relationships with extra-familial adults have been associated with increased levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy and less likelihood of initiating drug use (Parra et al., 2002).

A psychologist and an intern psychologist offered the mentors training in the developmental tasks of adolescence, basic counselling skills, what the role of a mentor would be, ethics of mentoring and how to engage with adolescents meaningfully. Thereafter, the mentors met with their mentee on a weekly basis for one hour and these mentoring sessions had to be formally documented. Weekly peer supervision sessions that were facilitated by a psychologist were provided for the mentors. These sessions afforded them the opportunity to report on the progress of their mentee, their relationship

and generally to share their experiences and learn from the group around issues pertaining to the mentoring process.

2.1.7 Psycho-education

The psycho-education component adopted the life skills framework as proposed by the World Health Organisation (2001) that identified ten generic lifeskills to promote positive adolescent health and wellbeing. These skills can be grouped into four broad domains, namely, the behavioural, cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal domains (Van Wyk & Naidoo, 2006). The psycho-education program consisted of weekly lifeskills sessions where a participatory learning approach was applied. Themes during these sessions dealt with issues such as communication, peer relationships, self-esteem, assertiveness, exploring personal values, setting goals, managing emotions, gender and sexuality, personal hygiene and self care, study skills, and stress management.

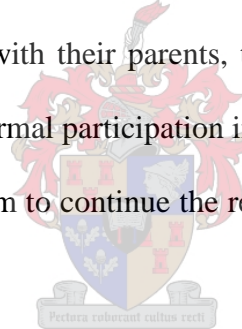


2.1.8 Cultural Enrichment

Cultural day outings to enrich and help broaden participant's horizons and experiences were arranged. These included visits to museums, Robben Island, Table Mountain, Kirstenbosch and day hikes to Jonkershoek. Monthly arts and crafts were arranged and the girls were also introduced to spiritual dancing. This resulted in them performing at a number of functions in the community.

2.1.9 Termination

After eighteen months in the programme the termination process included a final weekend wilderness camp and a formal graduation ceremony in the community. The wilderness camp was held in the Cederberg wilderness area where the activities revolved around termination from the programme. The girls were afforded the opportunity to reflect upon their time within the programme. These sessions, facilitated by an independent group facilitator, provided the girls with the space where they could express what it meant to be part their group in the programme, the challenges and their fears of terminating, the lessons learned and how the programme could be improved. The termination was formalised with a graduation ceremony in the community, where the girls' graduation was celebrated with their parents, the mentors and members from the community. Although the girls' formal participation in the programme came to an end, an open invitation was offered to them to continue the relationship with their mentors in the community.

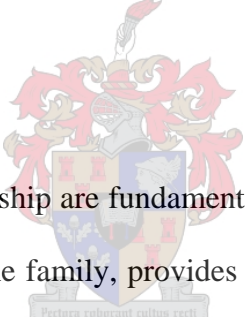


CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ensuing literature review covers Adolescence, Groups as interventions, and Termination. The extant literature on Termination focused almost exclusively on Psychotherapy. The emphasis within different psychotherapeutic modalities was on the planning and management of termination in individual and group psychotherapeutic interventions. Termination in psycho-educative interventions, particularly within community projects was sorely neglected. However, the literature on termination in group psychotherapy, could be extended to the group processes in the psychoeducation intervention in the girl's programme

3.1 Adolescence



Groups and group membership are fundamental to human existence. The first primary group we are born into, namely the family, provides the physical and emotional resources to promote our development. As we develop and mature, the range of groups that facilitates our socialisation, quality of life and the acquisition of a personal identity increase. Gladding (1999) concurs that most people directly or indirectly are connected to groups and contends that 'we truly become human through our interactions in groups' (p.vii). During adolescence, for example, interaction with the peer group becomes more prominent and provides the adolescent with opportunities to experience emotional intimacy, social support, a sense of belonging and understanding, different to that experienced with parents, caregivers or the family.

Adolescence is generally regarded as a period of transition from childhood to

adulthood, it is influenced by cultural factors and the onset varies from one individual to another. It consists of a range of complex processes, namely, physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Newman and Newman (1999) maintain that during adolescence belonging to the peer group becomes important for the adolescent. Membership provides the adolescent with opportunities to acquire a range of social skills needed for social functioning and can facilitate this transition from childhood to adulthood. Peer groups also create the space where adolescents can question, challenge and modify their beliefs and values and also practice the skills needed to verbalise their needs, thoughts and feelings. Erikson (quoted by Gladding, 1999) postulated that such group participation promotes a sense of identity and sense of belonging among adolescents.

3.2 Group as Intervention

Groups for adolescents can range from more informal peer groups where the influence could either be positive or negative, to more formal groups that are structured and have clearly defined goals. According to Gladding (1999), formal groups can include psychotherapeutic and developmental psychoeducational / guidance groups. Counselling or psychotherapy groups for adolescents could be voluntary or involuntary, tend to focus on the demands of this developmental phase and issues that hamper their social functioning and have a change orientation. Such groups usually afford them the opportunity to engage with peers who experience similar struggles and to discover that their situations are not unique (Corey & Corey, 2002). The psychoeducational or guidance group is usually a voluntary group, facilitated by an adult or peer leader, where the focus is on personal growth, development of interpersonal skills and imparting information. Issues such as identity, sexuality,

communication, peer relationships, career goals, study skills, problem solving and decision-making are usually topics for sessions. Such groups are usually of short-term duration, ranging from four to sixteen weeks, are structured around a specific theme, and have a preventative and developmental, as well as a therapeutic focus (Corey, 2000). Generally, in both psychoeducation and therapeutic groups, adolescents facilitate one another's growth and group members help in the quest for self-knowledge and establishing an identity. It provides them a safe place to share personal struggles and where they can develop the adaptive coping skills to deal with the demands of adolescence, foster personal growth, and empowerment and facilitate their quest towards independence.

Groups generally have a life cycle that starts with the screening and selection of the members; the starting of the group, then moves from a transitional to a working stage and ends with the termination of the group (Corey & Corey, 2002). Similarly, Forsyth (1999) asserts that there are five stages of group development. These include the orientation (forming), conflict (storming), structure (norming), work (performing) and dissolution (adjourning) stages. Each of these varies in its duration, has different characteristics and there are specific tasks that have to be worked through during each stage (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Likewise, Corey (2004) states that the initial and final stages of any group process are the most decisive time in the group's life history. The success or failure to negotiate these tasks of each phase can either facilitate or impede the growth of the group to the next developmental stage.

3.3 Termination.

Termination, regarded as the last developmental stage of the group, is just as important as the formative stage of the group and its preparation should already be planned in the beginning stages of the group (Gladding, 1999). According to Corey and Corey (2002) how long termination should last and how many sessions should be allocated to deal with the issues associated with termination, depends on the length of the group's existence, and whether it has been an open or closed group. According to Forsyth (1999) stage five or dissolution involves the termination of roles, completion of tasks and reduction of dependency. This involves the process of disintegration of the group, withdrawal, increased independence and emotionality, as well as regret. According to Corey (2004), the skill of the facilitator and how he/she handles the final or consolidation phase could influence how participants apply the lessons from the group process.

According to Yalom (1985), termination of a group process does not merely reflect the end of the life cycle of the group but 'it is an integral part of the process of therapy' (p. 368). It is the phase that could be a catalyst for promoting change, growth and development for group members. Although termination signifies the final phase of the group process, in effect it is heralding the start of new beginnings for members (Corey, 2004; Gladding, 1995). This phase is synonymous with reflecting on the meaning and benefits gained in the group experience, the new skills acquired and deciding how these could be integrated in everyday situations outside the group. Corey and Corey (2002) agree that during this phase members have to consolidate the learning experience and state what they envisage for themselves after the group has ended.

Yalom (1985) cautions that, although there is awareness among members that the life

of the group is not an enduring one, the ‘timing of termination is as inexact and as individual’ (p. 369) for the group members. Thus, some group members could achieve the stated goals formulated at the outset of the group, others could terminate in the same state that they started the process and some could delay the termination process for varying reasons. Despite the significance of termination, it appears that it is fraught with dynamics and processes (Gitterman & Schulman, 1994; Gladding, 1999; Yalom, 1985).

Termination signifies much more than just the mere ending of a group process, according to Yalom (1985) ‘it is the microcosmic representation of some of life’s most crucial and painful issues’ (p.373). Similarly, Maholick and Turner (1979) suggest that from the cradle to the grave, the entire life journey of human beings encompasses a ‘recurrent cyclical phenomenon of hellos and goodbyes’ (p.584). Separation and taking leave of loved ones, friends or associates with whom one has established close meaningful ties and relationships is an enduring feature of human interaction. Termination is thus a given that is often associated with feelings of anxiety, depression, a sense of loss, sadness, separation and abandonment and ‘a period of mourning is an inevitable part of the termination process’ (Yalom, p. 369). Corey and Corey (2002) agree that grieving could be triggered as the members often remember and revisit previous losses and separation that they have experienced. However, Maholick and Turner (1979) suggest that despite the reliving of previous partings, termination presents one with the opportunity to prepare for and deal with future partings more openly and adequately.

The process of termination appears to become more difficult when the group has established good cohesion, and where emotional bonds between members are strong (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Patterson & Welfel, 1994). For some members termination could be problematic as they tend to regard the group experience as a means to an end, a place where

they can experience emotional intimacy and social interaction (Corey & Corey, 2002; Yalom, 1985). Gitterman and Schulman (1994) in their work with a group of abandoned girls, found that termination not only signified the loss of a much valued group process, but it also evoked memories of all the previous losses experienced by the girls. They found that during the termination phase of the group, the girls would use denial as a coping strategy to deal with the impending ending of the group. However, termination is not only an individual process, but also rather a 'communal affair' (Shapiro & Ginzberg, 2002). Within the group a particular pattern of relationships and attachments have been established not only between the facilitator and the member(s), but also similarly among the group members patterns have been forged that are unique to the specific group. Thus, termination cannot be a matter that is left until the last session; it is a process and an 'important rite of passage that can potentially solidify the patient's gains in treatment' (Shapiro & Ginzberg, 2002, p.319).

Termination is often the phase that is approached with mixed feelings not only by the group members but also by the group facilitator (Cowger, 1994; Gladding, 1999; Goodyear, 1981; Kottler, Sexton, & Whiston, 1994). Yalom (1985) suggests that for both the group facilitator and group members 'termination is a jolting reminder of the built-in cruelty of the psychotherapeutic process' (p.373) and the therapist also needs to reflect on his/her own feelings during this phase. He suggests that often the group therapist could delay termination due to a lack of faith in the group member's ability for continued growth outside the group; perfectionism or unrealistic expectations for too much change and of having notions of 'Pygmalion pride' (p. 373).

Yalom suggests that this pride stems from the fact that the group is in some way a creation of the group facilitator, thus taking leave of the group symbolises taking leave of

oneself. This he suggests could evoke feelings of loss and bereavement on the part of the group leader. Avoidance of the difficulty and unpleasant work of termination could be counter-productive and its poor handling could negatively influence members' ability to generalise the benefits of the group experience to their everyday living. Alan (2001) cautions that such avoidance of termination issues could be construed as the abandonment of the group members. Thus it is incumbent on the group facilitator not only to hold and provide structure to this process, but also to deal with the related emotional work (Corey, 2004; Corey & Corey, 2002; Yalom, 1985). Thus, Corey (2004) suggests that during the final stage, a numbers of tasks should be completed. These include the following:

(a) Dealing with feelings. This is done by the facilitator who reminds the group that there are only a few sessions remaining, allowing participants the chance to prepare for termination and achieving successful closure of the group process. Members are often questioned at the initial stage about their fears regarding entering a group programme. During the final stages opportunities should be provided to express their feelings regarding terminating from the group.

(b) Examining the Effects of the Group on Oneself. This facet affords the participant an opportunity to paraphrase what they have learnt from the group experience as well as how they intend applying these new found skills.

(c) Giving and Receiving Feedback. Corey (2004) asserts that the process of giving and receiving feedback is a crucial factor during the termination phase. Although participants of most groups will have included regular sharing of perceptions and feelings, summative feedback provides the group with an opportunity to give an overview of how they experienced the process as well as how they perceived themselves in the group, and where they are in

relation to termination.

(d) Completing Unfinished Business. According to Corey (2004) issues relating to the group dynamics should be resolved throughout the group process and should not be left to the very last session.

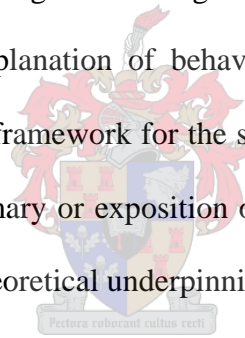
Given all of the above stages are facilitated to the best of both the participants as well as the facilitator's ability, there appears to be no guarantee that there will be no unresolved issues or that each member as well as the facilitator will be completely satisfied or prepared for termination. According to Corey (2004) some of the following characteristics are often still evident no matter how carefully termination is planned and facilitated: sadness and anxiety over the reality of separation; less intense participation as process draws to termination; decisions as to what course of action to take; expression of hopes and fears for each other; and talk of follow-up sessions, accountability and future plan of action.

Baruth and Huber (1985) postulate that throughout the therapeutic process awareness should be created that there will come a time when the facilitator's assistance will no longer be appropriate or necessary. They also expressed that lengthening the time between sessions, for example weekly sessions can be reduced to bi-weekly sessions, then monthly sessions and that this could reduce separation anxiety. Thus, termination should be a significant mutually agreed-upon element of the counselling or group process, this ensures that clients or group members are open for productive change. Effective closing requires thought and planning, and if executed effectively, participants could come away with a sense of completeness. On the other hand, if is not handled appropriately, many of the important issues discussed and accomplished during the group process could become blurred or lost (Jacobs et al., 1994).

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

There are numerous approaches to understanding group process and group interventions. For example, Freud's Psychodynamic theory, Gestalt theory, Functionalism, Transactional Analysis, and Systems theory. Each of these approaches posits a unique perspective on the function and process of groups that will determine the techniques and types of interventions employed. These approaches offer valuable vantage points and ways of understanding the behaviour seen in groups. As mentioned before, the purpose of the present study was to understand a behavioural set of a group of graduates from the Usiko programme. Though we recognize that no one theory provides a comprehensive and sufficient explanation of behaviour, the present study will adopt Systems theory as the theoretical framework for the study. The aim of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive summary or exposition of the theory, but to provide a brief summary of the major tenets or theoretical underpinnings of Systems theory.



4.1 Systems Theory

The term “system can portray a number of meanings but the most general definition of a system is one posited by von Bertalanffy (1968), as quoted in Gladding 1999 (p.293); “*A system is a set of units with relationships among them*”. Set in this instance implies that the unit has common properties, as in the state of each unit being constrained by, conditioned by or dependent on the state of other units.

Systems Theory according to Becvar and Becvar (2000) is a theory constructed from a framework that understands reality as operating according to the principles of

recursiveness and feedback or self correction. The assumptions or principles relating to this framework includes, but is not limited to Circular causality, Holism, Interaction, and Here-and-Now functioning. Below follows a brief exposition of the major tenets of this theory and an illustration of how this might manifest in the present study as quoted in Becvar & Becvar 2000(p.65).

4.1.1 Relationship characteristics. Systems theoretical approaches underscore the importance of relationship characteristics. It asks “what” is happening in an effort to describe patterns characteristic of a specific relationship. Thus in this study it would become important to ask the participants, “what happened.” And to describe behaviourally what transpired in the relationship between the various subsystems.

4.1.2 Recursiveness. It emphasizes reciprocal or Circular causality that is defined as recursiveness, as well as shared responsibility as opposed to Linear causality or an “if-then” approach. Circular causality subscribes to the fact that not only does Usiko have an influence on the occurrence and maintenance of the girl’s group and their subsequent behaviour, but the girls as a sub-group also reciprocally influences and maintained the occurrence of the Usiko programme.

4.1.3 Holism. Systems perspective is holistic in that it describes holistic patterns of interactions or behaviours within a given context; the group process impacted on the girls as well as the facilitators in a very specific manner given the context.

4.1.4 Interaction. Interaction is viewed as a non-causal, dialectical process of reciprocal influence by both parties; the girls are not only influenced by Usiko group but the Usiko group was also influenced by the girls.

4.1.5 Here-and-Now interactions. The focus is on present events and assessing here-and-now interactions. Thus the study would look at what the actions of the girls subgroup were in response to termination and the reactions of the programme to the girls rather than trying to determine whether anyone was at fault for not communicating effectively about termination, or clarifying how graduation from the programme was communicated or facilitated. Similarly, the emphasis is not on the valences or predispositions the subgroup had (individually or collectively) for reacting to termination in the way that they did. The theory does not, however, deny the influence of past experiences on the Here-and-Now.

4.1.6 Subjective Reality. It presupposes that there is no objective reality, but rather a subjective reality that is constructed by our own perception of what is real. Thus the subgroup's perceptions of what graduation or termination entailed/ communicated was more important in understanding their subsequent actions than an examination of the programmatic specifics that were in place to facilitate the termination process and graduation from the programme. Thus the focus of the study was limited to the constructions and experiences of the participant subgroup rather than the programme specifics.

4.1.7 Observation. Systems theoretical approaches posit that the central focus point becomes the observer rather than the observed. What this means is that the researcher in this instance is also recognized as a subsystem that has been authorized by the broader system to evaluate the girls. This impacts on the nature of subsequent relationships, the degree of participation and the nature of participation in the study. The subgroup is no longer the sole unit of analysis, but in the spirit of recursiveness, it is

recognized that there is an interaction between all subsystems, and that the researcher/ research team becomes an additional subsystem that both influences and is influenced by other subsystems.

4.1.8 Proaction. The systems theoretical approach attempts to move away from psychic determinism where the person's ability to make decisions is heavily influenced by past experiences and psychodynamic constructions. The approach emphasizes that individuals be seen as proactive with regard to his or her destiny and has freedom of choice in this regard. Thus in this particular study; the participant/ graduate subgroup did not act out of compulsion or past experiences, but were proactive in deciding on a course of action to circumvent their perceived termination or purging from the broader system. Thus as a subsystem they acted to preserve the life and function of their subgroup, as participants, and rejected their new status as a subset of graduates from the programme.

4.1.9 Relativism. Systems theory emphasizes relational aspects, contextual interpretation and consideration, as well as relativism. The strength of this approach, particularly with reference to the abovementioned points, is that it shifts the attention away from postulating what was "wrong, inappropriate or ineffective" on the part of the graduating subgroup. It offers an alternative view that factors in contextual givens and reciprocal relationship patterns relative to the vantage point of any given subgroup.

4.1.10 Feedback: This theory also examines positive and negative feedback as opposed to value judgements. Therefore the impact of behaviour upon the system, and the response of the system to that behaviour are important. For example, the girls returned after graduating from the programme, this behaviour baffled the facilitators and led to another programme being implemented. Thus the present study is an opportunity

for the graduate subgroup to provide feedback to the system in addition to the behavioural feedback evidenced by their return to the programme after graduation.

4.1.11 Communication and Information Processing: Communication and Information Processing is the focal point when thinking systemically and is conceptualised from these three principles,

1. *“Principle 1: One cannot not behave / act.*
2. *Principle 2: One cannot not communicate.*
3. *Principle 3: The meaning of a given behaviour is not the true meaning of the behaviour; it is, however, the personal truth for the person who has given it a particular meaning” (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p.72).*

Therefore the theory provides a useful framework to understand the return to the programme by the graduation subgroup as an action and a communication that has truth and meaning relative to the various individuals and subgroups in the systems. The veracity of those interpretations is not the focus, but gathering feedback and information about those truths and meanings for the graduating subgroup forms the focus and primary rationale for the study.

4.1.12 Relationship and Wholeness: As people and their interaction provide the context it is imperative to also examine the context rather than merely the girls return to the programme in isolation.

4.1.13 Boundaries: Boundaries are conceptualized as the divisions between subsystems and serve primarily to delineate and to regulate the flow of information between subsystems. Boundaries can be *open* (no censoring), *closed* (complete censoring) or *permeable* (selective censoring).

4.1.14 Balance. The concept of balance in the system is of paramount importance. In fact, it is posited that the primary aim of the system and every subsystem is to restore balance and homeostasis. Balance is conceptualized as the amount of openness and closedness (or permeability) of the boundaries between subsystems. Balance leads to a state of Negentropy or a tendency to maximum order whereas imbalances can lead to disorder and Entropy.

4.2 Ontological considerations

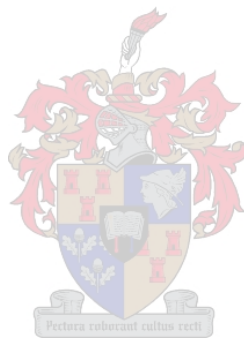
The adoption of Systems Theory as the theoretical framework of the study holds certain methodological implications that will guide the researcher in her execution of data collection and analysis. Below is a brief outline of how the researcher will conceptualize and operationalize systemic ontological considerations:

The researcher will describe *what* is happening (relationship patterns) and examine *recursiveness* and *feedback or self-correction* by observing or asking,

- Who are the members of this system?
- What are the characteristic patterns of interaction in this system?
- What rules and roles form the boundaries of this system?
- How open or closed are these boundaries, or how freely is information transmitted into and out of this system?
- What balance is there between stability and change within the system?
- What is happening here and now?

Conclusion

In summary, Systems Theory affords the research team to adopt a non-judgemental stance towards the participants, and affords for a comprehensive framework that will take into account the reciprocal impact the researcher will have on the research process and subsystems. As a conceptual framework, this theory proves to be appropriate and informs methodology in ways that take contextual givens into account.



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology relates to the strategic framework that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation of the actual research. It is the plan or design that guides the process or “the arrangement of the conditions for the collection and analysis of data in the manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure” (Sellitz et al., 1965, p. 50). It is this format that distinguishes research from mere observation, which is undertaken by many daily. The difference between research and observation is the fact that research is a planned, systematic process, guided by concrete research questions and a research design. Coherent and plausible inferences are drawn after data has been collected and analyzed. This chapter summarizes the research questions, designs, population, sample, instrument, and procedure and data analysis employed in this project.



5.1 Aims

The purpose or aim of the present study was to

1. Explore participant’s conceptualization of graduation program (termination) in the Usiko programme
2. To gain insight into the behavioral responses of participants following the formal graduation/termination program.

5.2 Research questions

1. How did participants conceptualize the graduation programme (termination) in the Usiko programme?
2. What were the aims and determinants of the behavioral responses of participants following the formal graduation/termination program?

5.3 Design

The present study incorporated a summative program evaluation focused on the graduation component of the Usiko programme for adolescent girls. The study sought insight into the participants experience and conceptualization of the graduation programme and process since the graduates returned at the beginning of the following academic year as if they were still active members in the programme. The design implemented to effect the proposed programme evaluation was the Single group, post-test only design. The simplicity of this design makes it vulnerable to internal and external threats to validity since no comparison group or intervention is compared and no random assignment is undertaken (Stanley & Hopkins, 1981). However, the design is deemed appropriate when natural or unforeseen events occur or when the post hoc evaluations were not planned before or during the implementation of the programme or intervention. The return of the graduates to the programme was not anticipated and thus the ensuing evaluation schematically approximates scenarios where the design would be appropriately used. In other words, the return of the graduates to the programme was unforeseen and the ensuing evaluation could not possibly have been planned *a priori*. In this study, the return to the programme and subsequent re-inclusion into the programme

was conceptualized as an intervention and the evaluation (the present study) as the post-test evaluation.

One of the major limitations of this design is that it cannot be utilized to credibly attribute any effects to the intervention/programme due to 1) the lack of objective basis to suppose that the information or lack thereof in the programme caused the changes, and 2) the lack of information at a pre-programme level for the variable of interest (Stanley & Hopkins, 1981), namely the girls' understanding of the concept of graduation. The present study aimed to gain and provide insight into the participant's conceptualization of the graduation programme and how it informed their subsequent behavioral responses rather than an assessment of the effectiveness of the graduation programme itself. Thus this design is appropriate for the present study and does not pose as a threat to the validity of findings yielded by the study.



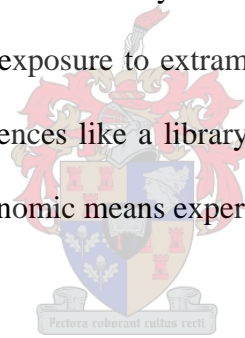
5.4 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised graduates of the Usiko Girls Programme, facilitated at a selected school in Jamestown, Stellenbosch. Graduates completed an eighteen month programme, including a formal graduation component, described earlier in this thesis. As mentioned before, the study came about after the first group of graduates completed the programme and made their unexpected return to the programme. Thus the sampling frame was limited to the ten girls who comprised the first graduate group.

The study incorporated a convenience sample given the limited sampling frame. The non-probability sampling limits generalization of findings, however, the scope of the

study is limited to a phenomenological understanding of the experience of graduation rather than the effectiveness of the graduation programme. Thus this type of sampling technique is deemed appropriate. The final sample consisted of ten graduates who were all returnees to the programme.

The average age of the girls in the study ranged between 11 years and 14 years, who were all in their first year of grade six, at the local Primary school. All the girls come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and most of them live in the informal settlement in Jamestown. Their home language and language of preference is Afrikaans. Due to the low economic conditions, as well as the low levels of education of their parents, it appears that the girls have not only been linguistically inhibited, but it also seems, culturally deprived. Their exposure to extramural and cultural activities together with basic introductions to experiences like a library, educational books and toys, were non-existent due to the lack of economic means experienced by their caretakers.



5.5 Instrument

The study utilized a structured interview to collect data. The structured interview was considered to be more containing for the target group given that they would be interviewed about a behavioral response that contravened agreed upon rules for participation in the programme. In addition, the target group tended to be somewhat restricted in terms of language and their general level of verbal expression. The interview protocol was constructed in English with careful attention to the language proficiency of the intended population group.

The protocol underwent three revisions to ensure that questions were clear and unambiguous, at an appropriate level of functional English, to ensure maximum flow between interview questions and the obtained data, as well as to facilitate ease of administration with an interviewer who was relatively unfamiliar to the participants. The final protocol (Appendix A) consisted of twenty questions. The final protocol was translated into Afrikaans and back-translated for accuracy. The individual interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and responses were transcribed and prepared for data analysis.

The structured protocol was utilized in exactly the same manner with each individual in an attempt to assure uniformity. This also ensured that the key elements of the study, namely the concept of graduation would be covered in the same manner with all the subjects. This was done to narrow down the inclusion of other extraneous variables that would detract from the key issues being assessed. The face to face, one-on-one nature of the interviews also afforded the interviewer the opportunity to monitor and gauge other qualitative, non-verbal data such as body language, voice tone and inflection, facial expression as well as clarify language and terminology and understanding by subjects.

5.6 Procedure

Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as underscoring that their participation was voluntary. Prior to their initial inclusion into the programme, the parent(s) or guardian(s) of each participant provided written consent for their participation in the programme. A three-phase plan was developed to optimize rapport

between interviewer and the participants, as well as to reduce the anxiety of the participants given the nature of the topic of research. Phase one was familiarizing the participants with the interviewer. The programme facilitator introduced the interviewer to the participants at a meeting at a local coffee shop. The aim of this meeting was two-fold: familiarization with researcher and building rapport between interviewer and participants before the actual interviews took place.

Phase two entailed a scheduled meeting between the interviewer and the participants at the school the participants attended. The primary purpose of this meeting was for the interviewer to set up individual interview slots with each participant. A secondary function of this meeting was to solidify or strengthen the rapport or relationship between participant and interviewer. This relationship would be increasingly important since the interviews would be conducted in a setting that the participants associated with figures of authority at the school, as well as the programme, i.e. the school. The resultant schedule of interviews was then confirmed with the principal for the purpose of ensuring that the best interest of the participants were served, since the school was the physical site where the research took place. In addition, the principal was responsible for ensuring that an office was available where the interviews would be conducted.

The third phase was the actual interview with the participants. Care was taken to ensure that the schedule was adhered to strictly in an attempt to underscore continuity with the preceding phases and optimize the rapport between the interviewer and participants.

5.7 Data Analysis

The analysis included primarily descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies. Descriptive statistics was appropriate given the small sample size. The data gleaned from the interviews was also subjected to a rudimentary content analysis. The scope of analysis was severely limited as a result of the limited verbal expression on the part of the participants during the interview. This could be attributed in part to the interview process and in part to the level of general verbal expression on the part of the participants, as well as the language in which the interviews were conducted.



CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ensuing chapter is organized to follow the research questions postulated in Chapter Five, research methodology. The chapter aims to answer the research questions by providing a summary of the relevant findings, along with integration with extant literature, methodological considerations and ontological considerations. Ultimately, possible explanations for the findings are formulated in the conclusion. In addition, a brief discussion of the limitations and significance of the study, as well as recommendations for future research will be presented in this chapter.

6.1 Research Question 1.

The first research question attempted to ascertain how the participants conceptualized the graduation programme. To answer this question, seven distinct interview items were formulated. The items addressed five distinct themes namely, 1) How participants were informed about graduation, 2) what their initial reaction was to the concept of graduation, 3) how participants were prepared for graduation in the programme, 4) What graduation entailed, and 5) What personal value was ascribed to the graduation. Below follows a summary of the participants' responses to those items:

6.1.1 How participants were informed about graduation: The participants provided varied responses as to when and how they were informed about graduation from the programme. 70 % of the participants indicated that they were informed about graduation and termination from the programme whilst 30% of the participants claimed not to have

received any communication in this regard.

During recruitment participants were informed that the programme would run concurrently with the mentorship component for 1 year. This timeframe was later extended to 18 months, which implied imminent termination after this period. The timeframe was specifically addressed at the outset to concur with what the literature advises, namely, that although termination is regarded as the last developmental stage of a group, it is just as important that participants are prepared in the beginning stages of the group (Gladding, 1999). Likewise, Corey (2004) states that the initial and final stages of any group process are the most decisive time in the group's life history. The success or failure to negotiate the tasks of each phase can either facilitate or impede the growth of the group to the next developmental stage.

Literature further postulates that participants should be given an opportunity during the final stages to express their feelings regarding termination from the group. The opportunity to reflect upon their time within the programme was afforded to the group during the final weekend wilderness camp, after which a formal graduation ceremony was held in the community together with their parents and other interested parties.

Most of the answers from participants with regard to termination were monosyllabic and resistant to further inquiry, which made it difficult to explore further responses. This could have been due to constriction in linguistic or verbal expression or wariness of punitive repercussions and therefore they were less likely to embroider on their responses. It could also be indicative of the participants' lack of understanding of the termination / graduation process.

It was also difficult to assess the nature of communication within the broader system

or with the facilitators, as the boundaries in this participant subgroup were not explored in this study. Conceptualization of termination in the organizer subsystem (programme facilitator and organisers) could therefore have been implicitly understood by the facilitators, but not necessarily always explicitly communicated to participants.

Of the participants who claimed that they were informed, there was variation as to when and who informed them. 60 % of the participants reported that they were informed formally through agents of the programme, while 20% of the participants learned about it informally or by word- of- mouth. The remaining 20% maintained that they were not informed about the graduation.

The seeming confusion could also be ascribed to a number of factors. Firstly, there appears to have been a number of communication modes within the programme. A teacher at the school who was part of the programme played a varied role, namely as mentor, committee member and as informant about the programme activities. Secondly, the girls informed each other about activities in the programme and through these different modes of communication, it appears that some miscommunication transpired. Thirdly, in their weekly contact with their mentors the participants were also imparted information about programme activities. Further, as the girls' formal participation in the programme ended, an open invitation was extended to the participants to continue the relationship with their mentors. This open invitation could have been construed that they were expected to continue participating in the programme rather than their termination from it. This could be indicative of what Yalom (1984) refers to as 'Pygmalion pride' (p. 373). He suggests that often the group therapist (or programme organisers in this study) could delay termination due to a lack of faith in a group member's ability for continued

growth outside the group; perfectionism or unrealistic expectations for too much change.

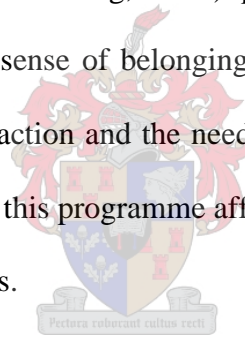
6.1.2 Initial reaction to the concept of graduation: The participants reported mixed initial reactions to the concept of termination/ graduation. 10% of the participants reported experiencing disbelief at finding out that programme participation was being terminated. 20% reported being unable to recall their initial reaction that corresponds to the 20% who claimed not to have been informed about termination. A further 20% reported not understanding what termination or graduation meant for their participation in the programme. 20% of the participants reported that they were unhappy about termination, while 30% reported being accepting of termination. Their acceptance ranged from “being OK” to “being happy” about the termination.

This reaction from the participants once again concurs with what literature suggests, namely, that some group members could achieve the stated goals formulated at the outset of the group, others could terminate in the same state that they started the process and some could delay the termination process for varying reasons. Termination is too often associated with feelings of anxiety, depression, a sense of loss, sadness, separation and abandonment and ‘a period of mourning (Yalom, p. 369) which makes it difficult for some to separate.

6.1.3 Preparation for graduation from the programme: 30 % of the participants reported that they were not prepared in the programme for termination. The remaining 70% of the participants reported being prepared in the programme for graduation; however, there was much variation as to how they were prepared and what they were told in preparation for termination. On further probing, 10% of the participants could not recall how they were prepared for termination whereas 20% reported emphatically that

they were prepared. A further 20% reported that they were given information such as, “we’re going on a camp” or “there would be other girls”, which did not make the implied termination explicit.

The variation in responses regarding preparation for graduation could be ascribed to many reasons. As seen above some of these could include misconception, misinformation and mixed messages, pertaining to graduation or termination and its meanings, being conveyed by the programme organisers and among the participants. Further, it could suggest that the participants' have forged a unique sense of identity by being part of this group and programme and it afforded them a unique sense of belonging and group cohesion. Erikson (quoted by Gladding, 1999) postulated that group participation promotes a sense of identity and sense of belonging among adolescents and this could have contributed to their initial reaction and the need to remain in the group rather than terminate. Further, membership of this programme afforded them a range of opportunities usually absent in such communities.



6.1.4 The graduation protocol: Participants were asked to describe what the graduation entailed and how they understood it. Participants described the graduation protocol in varied ways and reported the graduation to have entailed the following: a) receiving certificates (40%), b) reflecting on their potential (10%), d) reflecting on their relationship with incoming group (20%), e) crafting (10%) and f) being told that it was the last day of the programme (10%). 10% of the participants stated that they did not attend the graduation ceremony.

The diversity of responses to this item again highlights the point that participants might not have been clear on which process depicted the actual graduation or termination

process. This could be because there was more than one event to celebrate this process, namely, the weekend camp as well as the graduation ceremony in the community, after which participants were encouraged to maintain their relationships with the mentors. Linguistics as well as denial could also have played a part in their perception of what the aim of the different processes entailed.

6.1.5 Personal value attributed to graduation: 40% of the participants reported that graduation was “meaningful” to them, that they “appreciated it immensely,” and that “it meant that they were now totally finished with the programme.” 10% of the participants maintained that they were not present at the graduation. The remaining 50% of the participants reported general dissatisfaction about the termination of their participation in the programme. Responses included, *‘I did not enjoy it’, and felt like [I] had been switched off and a bit left out, and it appeared that [we] had been written off* ‘Participants also reported not knowing *“that this was the last time they would be together”*, or expecting that there would be continued participation in the programme, albeit in a different form, for example, *“[I] was expecting [us] to get together once a month.”* 10% of the participants reported that they *“understand now [that graduation means finishing with the programme] but not at that time.”* A further 10% of the participants reported that *“it means that we should return.”*

All participants were present at both the last weekend camp as well as the graduation ceremony in the community. The responses were divided as to the personal value they received by the graduation process. This could be attributed to the dynamics and processes of termination (Gitterman & Schulman, 1994; Gladding, 1999; Yalom, 1985).

From these responses it appears that the participants were not 'ready' to terminate from the programme.

It can be hypothesised that participants were possibly reluctant to terminate due to some of the following reasons. Discouragement or pressure from other group members not to do so. A possible feeling of grief and loss in relation to losing the sense of belonging to a group, as well as the loss of status connected to being associated or recognised as a “Usiko” group member. It appears that the participants understood and experienced termination to mean, missing out on all the cultural, empowering and fun activities attached to being affiliated to the programme. It could also suggest that the participants lacked insight into the nature of group processes and procedures and what termination of such group process would entail. Further, the participants’ seeming refusal to be “abandoned” by the project or accepting that new participants would fill their position, unconsciously motivated them to take this and return to the programme. There could also have been a degree of envy and jealousy towards the new participants and the benefits that would accrue to them by belonging to the Usiko programme. It appears that the participants were filled with a sense of loss, having had someone to trust in a milieu where trust is not readily experienced, and then having to relinquish this sense of security. This seems to have been compounded by the lack of recreation facilities or extra-mural activities in their community. Thus, they seemed to not comprehend how they would fill or utilise the time they spent in the programme for the past 18 months.

6.2 Research question 2.

The second research question attempted to identify the aims and determinants of the behavioural responses of the participants following the formal graduation / termination from the programme. In an attempt to answer this question 13 interview items were constructed along the following five themes: a) The behavioural response of participants, b) Expectations of participants, c) Motivation for behavioural response, d) Programme response and e) Feelings and perception about outcome.

6.2.1 The behavioural response of participants: As mentioned before, the graduated cohort returned with the new cohort for the first intended session for the second cohort. To understand this behavioural response of the graduate subgroup to termination, participants were asked to respond to questions about a) the origin of the idea, b) how the 'return' was coordinated or came about, and c) how they communicated this planned action.

a) The origin of the idea: The majority of the participants (70%) attributed the idea of returning to the programme to programme officials. They indicated that they were "*told to come [back]*" by members of the programme committee. However, they did not explicitly state in which capacity they should return. As noted before, graduates were invited to continue their relationship with mentors in the programme, and to act as "*big sisters*" to the new cohort in the programme. 30% of the participants attributed the idea to return to other members of the graduate subgroup.

b) Planning and Execution of the 'return': 30% of the participants reported that programme members "*said that they should return*" whilst 60% decided to return of their own volition. 10% of the participants reported that a member of the graduate subgroup

physically collected or rounded up members of the graduate subgroup on the day that the programme commenced. One participant in particular (10%) claimed that she personally “*told the girls [to] go.*” A further 10% reported not knowing how the return was planned and executed.

c) Communication about planned action: The participants reported that ‘*word-of-mouth*’ communication was the primary mechanism for disseminating information about the planned action. 30% of the participants reported that they “*relayed the message to everyone so that they would know.*” 40% of the participants reported being informed by members of the programme. 20% of participants reported to have been informed by family members or friends.

6.2.2 Motivation for behavioural response: Thematic analysis of interviews with participants revealed eight major motivations for the planned return to the programme by graduates. Below follows a brief exposition of these motivational factors:

a. Recapitulating loss and decreasing negative feelings. 20% of the participants reported that they “*were all unhappy*” after realizing that their participation in the programme had been terminated. The decision to return to the programme was specifically taken in order to decrease the negative feelings associated with termination from the programme. Thus the motivation here was to recapitulate the loss that gave rise to negative feelings. 80% of the participants reported feeling good after they have decided to return to the programme suggesting that the decision alone already succeeded in decreasing negative feelings associated with termination.

b. Meaning attached to programme: Participants indicated that the programme was meaningful to them. For example, “*it was important to [me]*”, and “[*I*] did not want

to stop.” The motivation to return was “*because [I] had learnt a lot from it*” and “*[I] felt that there were more [I] could learn from the group.*”

c. Future contribution: participants indicated that they envisioned being able to make a contribution to the programme and that this future contribution served as motivation for their return. For example, “*[I] wanted to continue working with the other girls*” and “*they needed [me].*”

d. Directive: Participants described being given a directive or instruction from members of the programme to return to the programme. Thus their return was motivated by obedience and deference to perceived figures of authority within the programme. 30% of the participants claimed to have been told by programme members to return.

e. Maintaining relationships: Participants indicated that they established good relationships with members of the programme. For example, “*the mentors were good to [us] and it was pleasant to work with them*”, and “*I trusted them and wanted to work with Usiko.*” The potential loss of these important relationships motivated them to actively seek out means to maintain the relationships with programme members. For example, “*I went [back] because it was pleasant to work with the Usiko ladies.*”

f. Maintaining appearances: Participants expressed concerns about how they would be perceived by others if they did not return with all the other graduates. For example, “*it would not appear good if [I] did not return.*” The need to maintain appearances was experienced in relation to both graduates and programme members. One participant reported that “*she did not want to disappoint the others.*” Another participant stated emphatically that “*she did not want to return as they (Usiko) had not treated them that well.*” However, she returned along with the other graduates when the programme

commenced. Thus the motivation to return was strongly influenced by peer pressure and maintaining appearances with the other graduates. Similarly, one participant reported that she felt if she “*did not return they (Usiko) would assume that the girls were too big for their boots.*”

g. Disbelief in termination: participants reported that they were not convinced or did not believe that their participation in the programme was really terminated. For example, “*I did not believe that we were altogether through with the programme*” and “*I felt that I did not want to leave and that I had the right to be there.*” Thus the graduate’s perception of themselves as worthy of “intervention” or receiving services contributed to their disbelief in the termination from the programme that motivated their return after graduation.

Habit: For participants, attending the Usiko programme became habitual or routine. Their termination from the programme meant that their routine was interrupted. Thus they returned because they were habitually used to coming to the programme. For example, “*I went as I was used to going.*” From the afore-mentioned responses it appears that the membership in the programme formed an integral part of the participant’s sense of identity and the impending dissolution evoked a sense of loss and related feelings of abandonment. These feelings they countered by asserting themselves and manifesting a sense of agency, some of the skills they appeared to have learnt in the programme.

6.2.3 Participant expectations: The findings suggest that participants had two primary expectations about their return to the programme: Firstly, 70% of the participants expected that it would be the same as before graduation. For example, “*I thought that we would go and camp the following week.*” Secondly, 20% of the participants expected that

the new cohort would join their group and be introduced to them. For example, “*I thought we were going to meet the new girls*” and “*I expected that more girls would join us.*”

6.2.4 Programme response: The Usiko Girls programme responded to the unexpected return of the graduate subgroup by allowing them to be part of the group that was scheduled for that day. The facilitators of the programme then introduced a ‘new’ component whereby the graduates could attend monthly sessions to remain part of the broader programme. Despite the extension on the part of the programme, participants seems to have had mixed reactions to the programme’s response.

Some participants felt that program members “*were too busy*” with the new mentees to respond to or even be surprised by the unexpected return of the graduates. Others interpreted the “*lack of behavioural and affective display*” suggesting surprise at their return to indicate that the graduates were expected. Participants experienced difficulty making sense of the variation in the responses of the respective programme members, and the default interpretation was, that those who appeared less surprised or interested, were more focused on the new mentees. In short, participants were not convinced that they received a warm welcome from everyone despite the fact that they were allowed to stay in the programme.

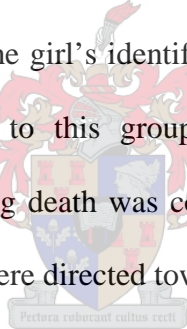
6.2.5 Feelings and perception about outcome: As mentioned before, the graduates were allowed to stay for the first session with the new cohort and were subsequently informed that they would meet separately once a month. The findings in this section summarize the participants’ feelings and perceptions about the outcome of their planned return to the programme.

60% of the participants felt that they were successful by returning to the programme and that *“it was worth the effort”*, because they were allowed to stay in the group and ultimately in the programme. Participants expressed that *“it was like before, because [they] were in the group again”*. They also reported that being introduced to *“the new kids”* suggested that they were part of the programme again. Similarly, being allowed to participate in the programme for that day *“showed that they (Usiko) cared about [them]”*. Participants reported that they learnt new things in the group that created the impression that they were expected. The participants reported being *“happy to see one another”* that they interpreted to indicate that the group had been reformed. Participants also reported that they were *“happy that [they] got an opportunity to speak”*, and that they felt *“good that there were no arguments.”* Thus, success was construed as being able to become part of the programme again in various ways, including the cohort/ group being reconstituted.

40% of the participants felt that they were not successful and that they *“had not achieved anything.”* They infer failure from a number of indicators. For example, *“the mentors treated them differently”*; *“most of the girls had lost interest, because they were treated poorly”*; and *“[feeling] bad because [they] were scolded for speaking too loud.”* Participants also reported feeling *“uncomfortable as it appeared that [a mentor] did not want them in the group”*. Finally, participants reported being *“unhappy about the process and became angry.”* In short, failure appears to be primarily inferred from how the situation was in the past and how it was now *“different”* to their expectations of life as per usual.

6.3 Conclusion

In summary, the ten girls who participated in the Usiko Girls Youth Programme appeared to have experienced the termination component in a manner that was totally unexpected. Besides being unexpected, it highlighted the importance of the final stage of any group process and how it should be managed from the outset in an agreed upon manner. It also focused the attention on the subjective nature of communication and its openness to various interpretations. An important lesson regarding termination in especially resource poor communities seems evident from this study. Programmes, such as the Usiko Girls Youth Community project, seem to become an important aspect of the participant's world resulting in termination becoming more challenging for some than others. Finally it also appears that the girl's identification with the programme and their sense of cohesion and belonging to this group was somewhat threatened by the impending termination. This seeming death was contrary to the integrity of their social system and all efforts of the group were directed towards the maintenance of the system.



6.4 Limitations

The limitations of this study are outlined as follows:

- (i) The small size of the sample studied, coupled with the fact that the sample was one of convenience, rather than randomly selected, renders it limiting and extremely difficult to generalize to other similar programmes
- (ii) The reality that the study only assessed, documented and described termination from the perspective of the ten girls, rather than all who participated in the programme limits it.
- (iii) The design used for the study is limiting in scope, as a single, post-test only design

leaves one with no pre-test collateral to compare it with.

(iv) It is also limited in the fact that the sample used was with girls of a specific economic, cultural and social background rendering the outcomes described not necessarily generalizable or applicable to another economic, cultural or social community.

(v) The lack of triangulation limits the researcher from “homing in” on a correct understanding of the phenomenon that occurred.

(vi) The subjective nature of the study limits it in terms of replication to other programmes within the broader Usiko group.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

It is evident from the study that termination is an integral part of group processes, be it in a group therapeutic intervention or a community project. The research indicates that it should be addressed from the onset of any intervention. Thus it is recommended that in future the programme facilitators should address termination right at the outset of their new intake of cohorts into their programme. Termination should also feature throughout the life cycle of the programme. This will create awareness with the participants that their participation is limited to a specific time and facilitate termination. Furthermore, the numerous levels of communication in the programme seem to lend itself for miscommunication among the participants and the programme facilitators, thus contributing to the already difficult process of termination. This should be addressed in the programme by having a formal communication structure.

To make the study more relevant one could also research the termination component from the perspective of the facilitators and all key role players who participated in any

way in the termination/graduation process. Future research could also include studying termination from the perspective of the boys in the male component of the Usiko programme, the same girls in a different life stage (Senior Secondary as opposed to Primary school). An assessment could also be made of the impact the project has made and is making on other systems within the community (example; family members, other young girls the participants are currently in contact with etcetera) to ascertain implementation and inculcation of lifeskills learnt during the 18 months.

6.6 Significance of study

This study is relevant in describing the termination or graduation component from the perspective of the participants of the Usiko Girls Youth Community Project. It is also a pilot or benchmark study for further research in the Usiko Girls Youth Programme. It utilized a Systems approach which required that a set of units with relationships amongst them be observed not only from the observer's point of view but also from the observed. Communication and Information processing is focal when thinking systemically and the three principles it is conceptualized from, makes it specifically relevant to any study involving human dynamics. It gives the Usiko Girls Youth Programme facilitators feedback and insight into the real life world of the girls. It highlighted the fact that the girls identification with the programme appeared at the centre of their difficulty to manage the transition from being part of the programme for 18 months to terminating. The study can help the Usiko programme organizers to ascertain what mechanisms can be utilized or developed to help smooth the transition from the programme to termination.

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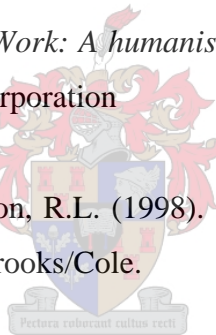
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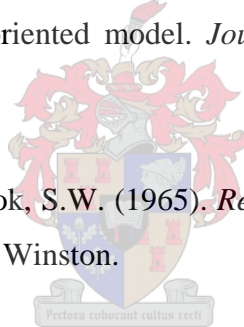
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APPENDIX A:

Questions utilised for Usiko Girls Youth Programme Research study

1. When was the first time you heard about the graduation?
2. How did you hear about it?
3. Recall what your initial reaction was to the idea of the graduation?
4. How were you prepared within the programme for the graduation?
5. What did the graduation entail?
6. What did it mean to you personally?
7. Explain why you returned to the programme when it reopened in 2005?
8. How did you know when the programme would reopen?
9. How did the idea originate to return to the programme?
10. How did it happen that you returned as a group?
11. How were you informed or did you find out about this planned action?
12. What feelings were evoked in you that prompted you to return to the group?
13. How did you feel once you decided to return?
14. What did you expect would happen when you returned to the group?
15. What actually happened in the group when you returned?
16. How did you feel about this process?
17. How did Usiko react to your unexpected return?
18. Do you think your action was successful? Motivate? In which ways?
19. How do you feel about what you accomplished here?
20. What do you understand by the term graduation?