

**Mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context: Exploring the experiences of
Befrienders**

By

THABANG E. TLAKA

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PROMOTOR: PROF M.J. VISSER

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context: Exploring the experiences of Befrienders* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been included and acknowledged by means of complete references.

THABANG E. TLAKA

DATE

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring as a process to develop and enhance the functioning of new members in organisations has become prominent in the last two decades. In various disciplines such as law, education and business, the implementation of mentoring processes and concepts have been embraced. With an estimated two-thirds of the population in sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV/AIDS, health care professionals seem to have also embraced the mentoring process and concepts.

In this study the experiences of lay counsellors, referred to as Befrienders, in a mentoring programme were explored. In addition, the researcher sought to identify potential challenges that Befrienders experienced in the mentoring programme, how they understood the challenges and how these challenges were addressed. The researcher then explored the potential skills that may have been learned within the mentoring programme. The exploration also produced some ideas on how the mentoring programme could be improved. Furthermore, the study seems to have made a contribution to mentoring theory.

In the study, a convenient sample of five formal interviews and two pilot interviews were conducted. The participants consisted of four students, and one staff member from the University of Pretoria. Participants were interviewed for 1½ hours using semi-structured, individual and face-to-face interviews. A thematic analysis was used to interpret the data and social constructionism was used as the theoretical framework to make sense of the findings.

In the findings, five prominent themes were identified, namely: (i) Being mentored (Experiencing the programme), (ii) Interpersonal relationships (Experiencing others), (iii) A developing inner world (Experiencing the Self), (iv) Negotiating boundaries (Managing relationships), and (v) Other issues related to HIV/AIDS (Experiencing the context). It was found, among other things, that the Befrienders constructed their own understanding of the mentoring process, that they used the mentoring relationship with

their supervisor to understand the clients, and that they developed new perspectives as they learned about themselves. Finally, as a result of being mentored and of the process of development, the Befrienders seemed to have developed a deeper desire to do more work in the HIV/AIDS context.

KEY TERMS

Mentoring

Supervision

Counselling

Befriender (Counsellor)

Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)

Centre for the Study of AIDS (CSA)

Student Health Services (SHS)

Social constructionism

Experiences

No More Graves to Bury the Dead

*She gazed upon horror and never flinched
Danced with the darkest of demons yet still stands
Her sweetest melodies are trapped in fantasies
Edged deeply in her bosom, yet...
Constantly purged by a nebulous search for remedies
Africa gazes upon her dead as they bury their dead.*

*She hears the voices, the echoing sounds...
Deep within her, relentlessly screaming:
"Alas! We are the living dead; we are born to die and are dying to live!"
She hears the voices of the future deep within her...
The up and coming, the young and dying, the passionate but dying
There are no more graves to bury the dead.*

*The silent assassin is ushered in by the shrieking mortality rates
Bold and boisterous the butcher stands defiant
Denying Africa a chance to mother...But!
She knows that the hunger within her shall be satisfied...*

*For as she painfully, however soothingly, rocks back and forth
Harming lullabies to silence the restless voices
Through the ashes, she sees that which nobody sees
Through the savage survival story she hears that which no one else hears
The hope, the life and the glory that has dawned upon her
Her essence, her gifts, her sons and daughters*

*And thus enlightened she stands
Knowing that to love the other is to heal the self
And, to heal the self is really to serve the other.*

By Thabang Enoch Tlaka

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Nowhere in the world can we see the tragic effects of hierarchical and spatially contagious diffusion so devastatingly at work as in the continent of Africa. It is the ur-continent for the entire human family,” (Gould, 1993, p. 71).

This study is about mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context and aims to explore the experiences of Befrienders (counsellors) in a mentoring programme. The reader should expect to read five chapters that deal with the various aspects of the study. In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the most important ideas by providing an orientation to the study, presenting an argument on the burden of HIV/AIDS on counsellors and by presenting five points regarding the need and significance of mentoring. The researcher will then mention the aims and potential benefits of the study. The definition of concepts, a discussion regarding the researcher’s background and a discussion of the setting should also be expected in this chapter. Finally, ethical considerations, the division of chapters and a summary will also be provided.

1.2 ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to almost two-thirds of the individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the world and this is during a time when many countries are struggling to respond effectively to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Meiberg, Bos, Onya, & Schaalma, 2008). The heavy load of taking care of people living with HIV rests on the shoulders of caregivers. Caregivers can be health care professionals, lay counsellors, teachers and community members (Van Dyk, 2007). As a means to curb the severity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the heavy burden that HIV places on caregivers, the South African government and UNAIDS have tried various approaches, such as condom use, education campaigns, policy and legislative changes (Chopra, Lawn, Sanders, Barron, Karim, Bradshaw et al., 2009; UNAIDS/WHO, 2007).

These approaches have had some limited success; however, they have not been effective in significantly reducing the infection rates. Alternatively, Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services have been effective in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS. Rohleder and Swartz (2005) report that VCT is effective as a secondary prevention strategy, since VCT has been found to encourage the reduction of risk behaviour and helps people living with HIV/AIDS to cope with their illness. These researchers, however, mention that VCT is not as effective for primary prevention of HIV infection. VCT services are generally operated and driven by lay counsellors and retired nurses (Angotti, Bula, Gaydosh, Kimchi, Thornton, & Yeatman, 2009; Buskens & Jaffe, 2008). Lay counsellors, hereafter referred to as counsellors, are therefore an essential part of the human resource that is implementing VCT services. Counsellors are usually trained by non-governmental organisations, and then expected to work intensely with HIV-related cases.

In order to limit HIV infections and increase the effectiveness of VCT as a secondary prevention strategy, the South African government aims to promote broad-based approaches to VCT services. One of the aims is to encourage as many people as possible to utilise VCT services (Colvin, Fairall, Lewin, Georgeu, Zwarenstein, Bachman et al., 2010). Although there is merit in trying to encourage as many people as possible to utilise VCT services, there are a number of factors that thwart the quality and efficiency of such services. If something is not done to improve the way that VCT services work, counsellors will not be as effective as they can be. The lack of human and financial resources, stigmatisation, management and organisational difficulties are some of the factors that affect the effectiveness of VCT services (Leon, Colvin, Lewin, Mathews, & Jennings, 2010; Mabunda, 2006).

Firstly, when addressing managerial involvement, organisational difficulties and the working environment, one may note that counsellors (may) clash with their colleagues. There seems to be some misunderstanding regarding the relevance, scope of practice and positions of counsellors in the health care system. Rohleder and Swartz (2005) found that there are often conflicting views between counsellors and other health care

professionals functioning in a task-orientated working environment. It is reported that tensions arise because the way in which counsellors approach their work is different from the way other health care professionals approach their work. Intense emotional experiences are not new, as many working environments are known to evoke intense emotional responses from counsellors (Dunbar-Krige & Fritz, 2006). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, for instance, volunteers who generally experience health care work as positive also report that they feel disregarded by other health care workers. They are also frustrated and feel that they cannot cope with their workload (Rödlach, 2009).

Secondly, counsellors have a low ranking in the hierarchy, and are placed in extremely stressful environments compared to other professionals. Counselling is a difficult task because counsellors have to deal with the emotions of clients/patients – without much training (Chirwa, Greeff, Kohi, Naidoo, Makoe, Dlamini et al., 2009). Rohleder and Swartz (2005) report that counsellors are not trained as well as other professionals in the health sector. It is argued that counsellors in South Africa are only trained for short periods of time. Rohleder and Swartz (2005) also report that such training focuses only on specific behavioural aims such as VCT and ARV adherence, as opposed to lessening the affective distress of patients (Evangeli, Engelbrecht, Swartz, Turner, Forsberg, & Soka, 2009). Concerns around training are also reported in other studies. In a study exploring the satisfaction of HIV/AIDS counsellors in the eThekweni metropolitan area in relation to their counselling training, it was found that counsellors felt satisfied with the information they were given regarding HIV/AIDS, but they felt inadequate to counsel an HIV-positive person. The counsellors felt that their practical training could be improved (Hendricks, 2008).

Van Dyk (2007) recommends that counsellors not only need ongoing training but also professional supervision and mentoring. She argues that, although supervision is important, its hierarchical, managerial and evaluative nature has limitations in the sense that counsellors may not be as open to their supervisors. She argues further that counsellors need to have a relationship with professional mentors (e.g. psychologists) with counselling skills. The professional mentor would then be tasked with the welfare of

the counsellors. Mentors as opposed to supervisors can deal with the counsellor's well-being or with issues around the over-involvement of counsellors, and the over-identification of counsellors with patients. Additionally, research on mentoring has shown that those who commit to the mentoring process tend to stay longer with organisations that they feel support them (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). Mentoring is one of the ways that health care professionals can be assisted. This is because, when it comes to learning and development, most professionals agree that the mentoring process and the mentoring relationship are critical (Grindel & Patsdaughter, 2000).

Even though mentoring is useful (Van Dyk, 2007), there is a lack of information regarding mentoring counsellors working in the HIV/AIDS context. Mentoring has been primarily understood as a Western concept and has featured more in corporate settings (Chung, Bemak, & Talleyard, 2007; Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). However, an African approach to mentoring needs to be established, especially if it will help in the fight against HIV/AIDS. A large number of South Africans are HIV-positive, which suggests that interventions are needed on various levels (Dennill, 2009; Meiberg, Bos, Onya, & Schaalma, 2008). Counsellors working in the HIV context need continuous support, as they are confronted with high levels of stress. There is a tendency for health professionals to move towards more attractive areas, for instance emergency care, since working in the HIV/AIDS context can often be too demanding on a person (Grindel & Patsdaughter, 2000).

There are a myriad of other negative emotions that one may experience as a counsellor, and if these emotions are not appropriately addressed, one may eventually become overburdened and consequently suffer from burnout and stress (Kosenko & Ritamaki, 2009). In addition to Van Dyk's argument regarding a need for more counsellor support, Nulty and Edwards (2005) argue that counsellors need professional supervision, regular in-service training and support from managerial members. They report that counsellors experience stress arising from emotional responses from clients, stigmatisation and confidentiality concerns, cultural and social issues and a lack of support from their working environments.

It has been proven and reported that, when a health care provider's quality of work improves, the positive effects ripple into the lives of his/her clients (Thrun, Cook, Bradley-Springer, Gardner, Marks, Wright et al., 2009). One way to improve the work of a counsellor or someone working with the emotions of people is to connect them to a mentor. Shin and Rew (2010) assert that mentoring benefits developing professionals by increasing their professional competence, socialising them to a professional setting and by preparing them for future responsibilities. Mentored individuals seem to experience their work as more satisfactory and thus feel less alienated from others.

Published longitudinal studies focusing on how health care providers' attitude changes over a prolonged period of time while working within the HIV/AIDS context are limited (Thrun et al., 2009). The few studies that exist suggest that increasing the duration and frequency of meetings in mentoring programmes may increase the effectiveness of the mentoring programmes (Shin & Rew, 2010). When efforts are simultaneously directed at improving the skills of a counsellor and the knowledge base of a client with regards to HIV/AIDS, counselling is found to be more effective (Thrun et al., 2009). Furthermore, the relationship between the counsellor and the client in such a context is understood to be calm, and open for growth. Thus, in considering the above-mentioned concerns and ideas about mentoring, this study aims to:

- i. Explore the experiences of counsellors in a mentoring programme;
- ii. Identify potential challenges and successes that counsellors may have experienced personally during their counselling work in the mentoring programme;
- iii. Explore how counsellors understand challenges and potential responses to challenges in the mentoring programme;
- iv. Explore the counselling skills that may have been learned as a result of being in the mentorship programme;
- v. Explore how the mentoring programme can be improved; and
- vi. Advance mentoring theory by contributing to the existing literature.

Thirdly, Chirwa et al. (2009) report that due to the nature of their work and ranking, counsellors are stigmatised, which causes them to experience dissatisfaction and other negative emotions. “Stigma can be described as a social construction of deviation from an ideal or expectation, contributing to a powerful discrediting social label that reduces the way individuals see themselves and are viewed as persons,” (Visser, Makin, Vandormael, Sikkema, & Forsyth, 2009, p. 197). Researchers in Zimbabwe found that health care workers are not only concerned about the stigmatisation but also being infected; they feel stressed and are experiencing burnout. These concerns are heightened because, among other reasons, there is a lack of skills to deal with stigma, fear, stress and burnout effectively (Dieleman, Bwete, Maniple, Bakker, Namaganda, Odaga et al, 2007).

Fourthly, research that can be used to improve the situation is limited. In reviewing past research, it is evident that there are very few studies that pay specific attention to the development of VCT counsellors so as to improve the VCT process (Grinstead, Van der Straten, & The HIV-1 Counselling and Testing Efficacy Study Group, 2000). This means that qualitative research needs to be conducted about mentoring in order to develop a well-rounded and in-depth understanding of mentoring relationships. Also, Johnson, Rose and Schlosser (2007) are of the opinion that research on mentoring has been criticised for its inability to clearly define the concept of mentoring. This has led to much confusion regarding the usefulness of the available research. It is also often not clear whether the type of mentoring discussed in the research is formal or informal, and this makes it difficult to evaluate the exact mentoring programmes that work (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007).

Finally, Eby, Rhodes and Allen (2007) acknowledge the fact that there are various definitions regarding the concept of mentoring. However, they suggest that there are a number of concepts that are prominent in the various definitions of mentoring, namely (i) the existence of a unique relationship between individuals, (ii) some form of learning takes place within the relationship, (iii) there is a process that takes place, and (iv) all parties involved benefit to some extent from mentoring. In the HIV/AIDS context, the

largest part of counselling is done by volunteers with limited training; it is clear that there is a lack of knowledge about mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context. There is also not enough research, evaluation and feedback regarding what is currently happening in the context of HIV and mentoring (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2008).

In summary, sub-Saharan Africa is struggling with a pandemic and VCT services are viewed as one of the more effective solutions in addressing the pandemic. Counsellors, nurses and other health care professionals are an important part of the VCT services. However, there are factors that affect the quality of work and efficiency of the counsellors, and that in turn affects the quality of the VCT services. It is thus suggested that mentoring be further explored as a way to improve the quality of VCT services. This improvement will be the result of improving the well-being of counsellors through using mentors.

1.3 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

- **Mentoring and supervision**

Van Dyk (2005) states that “mentoring is sometimes used synonymously with supervision, but there are important differences. Supervision refers to a hierarchical managerial situation that implies evaluation of the caregiver. Mentoring involves a supportive and equal relationship without evaluation or assessment” (p. 330). In this study, mentoring refers to a nurturing relationship that a counsellor has with his/her mentor (supervisor). At the research setting of this study, the Centre for the Study of AIDS (CSA), mentoring and supervision are terms that are used interchangeably.

- **Lay counsellor/Counsellor (Befriender)**

A counsellor works within a particular framework with the aim of facilitating a process where clients learn how to help themselves. The counsellor utilises specific skills within the context of a special helping relationship to assist the client (Dunbar-Krige & Fritz, 2006). In this study lay counsellors, counsellors, nurses and nursing students who are directly involved or are active members of VCT sites will be referred to generally as

counsellors or Befrienders. The various professionals who are understood to be “counsellors” would have worked as counsellors at one point or another.

- **Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)**

VCT refers to a process where a person/client voluntarily seeks counselling and testing for HIV. It consists of three phases. In the first phase (the pre-test session), a counsellor sits with the client and asks him/her questions in order to determine the reason(s) for testing and to prepare the client for testing. In the second phase (the testing), the client signs a form giving consent for testing and then becomes tested using a rapid kit test (RKT). In the third phase, the counsellor provides the results of the test accompanied by post-test counselling. This process ensures that there is constant support for the client, to ensure that she/he is emotionally and psychologically contained whatever the outcome (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, Netshandama, & Davhana-Maselesele, 2007).

- **Experiences**

The APA Dictionary of Psychology (VandenBos, 2007) defines an experience as an event that one lives through or participates in. This is different from something that is imagined or thought about. It may also result in learning. In this thesis experiences refer to a collective of events that the Befriender consciously undergoes.

1.4 POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE STUDY

The potential value of the study is inter alia the following:

- i. It may assist those who organise mentoring programmes to address the needs of counsellors. As a result, counsellors will become more empowered and thus work more effectively with their clients.
- ii. It may contribute to existing literature.
- iii. It may assist the CSA in improving the quality of the mentorship programme.

1.5 THE RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND

As an intern clinical psychologist, I have had the experience of being mentored by two people for 24 months (12 months with each mentor). When I was a student clinical psychologist in 2008, I had both a mentor and two therapy supervisors (6 months each). Additionally, in 2009 as an intern clinical psychologist, I had a mentor and two therapy supervisors. As a young professional I found the mentoring process to be helpful with regard to my personal and professional development. The formal mentors I had assisted me in connecting with other professionals and groups who did not only help me to develop professional skills, such as conducting formal presentations, but also helped me develop leadership skills. I was able to network with various professionals at conferences, visit organisations concerned with social development projects and visit places I would otherwise perhaps never have visited. Having both therapy supervisors and mentors initially made it difficult for me to separate the processes since I was still growing personally and professionally. However, with time I was able to separate what I discussed with my mentors from that which I discussed with my therapy supervisors, even though lines were blurred now and then.

Furthermore, as an undergraduate student I participated in a project done in partnership between the University of Pretoria and Florida International University which focused on HIV/AIDS, with a specific focus on parent and adolescent communication skills, condom use skills and sharing of information on healthy living. I generally found the mentoring experience to be positive and this made me aware of my biased views in relation to the mentorship process. As a result I needed to pay special attention to how I approached, analysed and interpreted data gleaned from the study.

1.6 THE SETTING

1.6.1 The Centre for the Study of AIDS (CSA)

The Centre for the Study of AIDS (CSA) at the University of Pretoria was established in 1999. It has since provided a service to the staff, students and community members

associated with the University. The CSA as an organisation has been concerned with HIV/AIDS work since 1999. As a result it has developed numerous projects to improve its effectiveness in addressing the various issues concomitant with HIV/AIDS work. The CSA generally functions as an organisation that promotes awareness, creates a context for discussions and increases knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. This is achieved through research, providing counselling, treatment and support service to the University of Pretoria community. Furthermore, the CSA facilitates seminars, workshops and symposiums for the University's staff, students and other interested parties such as visiting academics.

At the CSA, there is a mentoring programme referred to as the Future Leaders at Work (Future Leaders @ Work), which was established in 2000 and has been successful in achieving certain goals since its inception. The Future Leaders @ Work programme is a mentoring programme which has a counselling component, established in August 2000, that focuses on VCT services. The counsellors who are part of this component are referred to as Befrienders. The Befriender (counsellor) component of the mentoring project has been one of the more important interventions. The existence of a mentoring project at the CSA and my positive experience of the mentoring process have led me to develop an interest in HIV/AIDS work.

The CSA represents a place where the actual mentoring sessions take place. The mentor and the counsellor(s) have group mentoring sessions every two weeks in a group room at the CSA. Individual meetings between the mentor and the counsellor are held twice a year; thus, once in every six months, in a medium-sized office furnished with one desk, three chairs, one cupboard and a computer, individual meetings between mentors and the counsellor would be conducted.

1.6.2 Student Health Services (SHS)

The Student Health Services (SHS) of the University of Pretoria is a clinic that forms part of the University's Student Support Services Department. Currently registered

students are able to attain basic medical services here which are rendered by fully qualified and registered medical doctors and nursing sisters. Students requiring services need only walk in and present their student cards, and they will then be assisted if possible. Alternatively, individuals who need to come for dietary and VCT consultations are required or requested to make appointments in advance. The consultations are free of charge and clients are assured of confidentiality. The SHS is also the place where the Befrienders have their consultations with clients. In this setting the Befrienders are assisted by a sister who has much experience when it comes to working with students that come for VCT services.

Both the Centre for the study of AIDS (CSA) and the Student Health Services (SHS) are located on the University of Pretoria's Hatfield campus. At the SHS the counsellors conduct their sessions in two offices which are close to the doctor's consultation room.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

1.7.1 Research design

A convenient and purposive sampling method was used to identify and recruit the participants from among students and staff members at the University. They were then interviewed for approximately 1½ hours, using semi-structured, face to face interviews, and the questions asked were from an interview guide.

1.7.2 Data analysis

The five individual tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were read, coded, analysed and then arranged into themes. The participants were informed of follow-up interviews where they could review the findings.

The social constructionist paradigm was used as the theoretical framework to understand and discuss the findings of the study. Finally, the findings were discussed and recommendations were made.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dafinoiu and Lungu (2003, p. 187) state that “scientific knowledge and techniques used in the quest for progress can also be used for manipulative or destructive purposes.” As a result, the research study was carried out in a way that adhered to the principles of ethical research. A full discussion is provided in Chapter 3.

1.9 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review. The roots of the concept of mentoring and the importance of mentoring are discussed. Previous research studies conducted and the experiences of counsellors and other Befrienders are explored. Furthermore, the types, stages and programmes of mentoring, together with the various settings, are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on the method of investigation, the qualitative approach, the research design, the participants and data collection methods, and how the data was analysed. The chapter also discusses the theoretical paradigm used in the study.

Chapter 4 reports on the findings that are derived from the data.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the results, which are integrated with theory. The study is reviewed and a conclusion is provided in this same chapter. Limitations and recommendations are also discussed here, and finally, ideas regarding possible future studies to be undertaken are provided.

1.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, it was noted that there is a high level of HIV/AIDS infection rates in sub-Saharan Africa and that the burden of care falls upon lay counsellors as health care providers. It was then argued that not only do the counsellors need training and

supervision, but they also need mentoring. Definitions were provided and the potential benefits of the study were highlighted. The researcher's background and the settings were also provided. Furthermore, the research design and methods, and ethical considerations were given attention in this chapter. In the next chapter, the researcher will focus on reviewing current and past literature on the concepts that were introduced in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“...mentoring is seen as an effective method of enhancing the development of people, precisely because it typically improves both learning retention as well as the transfer of the learned information to real life situations” (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002, p. 6).

In this chapter, concepts, theory and research studies pertaining to the mentoring process are discussed. The experiences of counsellors working in VCT settings and other individuals who have experienced some aspect of mentoring are also discussed. The discussion of the ideas in this chapter will, therefore, proceed as follows: the researcher explores the importance of mentoring by highlighting some of the key issues that have been reported in other studies. The researcher then discusses the type of research, structures and different forms of mentoring. The discussion then moves towards how mentoring programmes are implemented, and finally, the researcher discusses, using findings from previous studies, the experiences of counsellors in various settings.

The concept of mentoring has its roots in Greek mythology: In Homer’s *Odyssey*, a certain King Odysseus had to fight in the Trojan War. As a result, the king had to leave his son, Telemachus, behind. Telemachus was left in the care of Mentor who was a trusted friend, advisor and servant to the king. Mentor had the responsibility of guiding, protecting, counselling, educating and nurturing the young Telemachus (Chung, Bemak, & Talleyard, 2007; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Meyer & Fourie, 2004). Since then, various relationships that are similar to that of Mentor and Telemachus have been understood as important and beneficial, as they not only meet individual needs such as the need for support but also satisfy societal needs (Bozeman & Feezy, 2007).

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

Individuals who have experience in a particular field seem to know more about that particular field compared to those who are new in the same field. Consequently, those who are in the position of knowing, assist those who do not know so as to become socialised in a particular field (Chan, 2008). It is often quite difficult to adjust quickly to a new working environment. Formal education needs to be supplemented with information that is possessed by mentors and co-workers who have been in a specific field for some time. To a large extent, personal development at institutions depends on the quality of mentoring (Chan, 2008). It follows then that beginner counsellors should learn the non-cognitive elements that would be or are shared during mentoring.

Waters (2004) found that the type of mentoring, the length and frequency of mentoring, and the gender-mix of a mentoring pair are important factors. These significantly affect the ability and degree of agreement that can be achieved between the mentor and the individual being mentored. Working as a counsellor can cause burnout where people become emotionally exhausted and thus become ineffective. The emotional support found in the mentoring relationship may address the feelings of helplessness experienced by the counsellor. Often new counsellors may not be aware of their limitations and may find it difficult to maintain appropriate boundaries (Saloner, 2007). The mentor can assist the counsellor to identify, learn about, and integrate difficult matters, and thereby compensate for his/her limitations. This also includes learning how to create appropriate boundaries (Saloner, 2007).

The work of counsellors or anyone in the health profession is sensitive and one needs regular feedback and assistance with the planning of appropriate strategies and goals. The work is difficult as a result of the emotional and psychological toll that the health profession places on a person. There is also confidentiality that needs to be observed, which makes it difficult for the professional to speak about their experiences to merely any person.

Not only is mentorship important for personal development, it is needed for those who work with complex cases. It helps in managing the much needed VCT clinics as a result of the high roll-out of ARVs (Kustner, Meyersfeld, Brouard, & The Adherence Networking Group, 2009). Counsellors are encouraged to engage in an introspective process in order to work on their strengths and weaknesses. This is helpful for the development of the counsellor from a personal point of view. After looking at his/her strengths and weaknesses, the counsellor may decide how to effectively move forward. Thus, in the end the counsellor has played a part in creating a situation where information, power and appropriate career opportunities are gained. The new skills learnt by a counsellor may enhance the counsellor's self-confidence. This study is about mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context and I would therefore like to turn our attention to mentoring in the HIV/AIDS context.

A mentor's role is to provide emotional support, assist the counsellor with personal concerns that may be affecting the counsellor's work, and also facilitate the personal and professional development of the counsellor (Saloner, 2007). It is reported that the number of individuals living with HIV continues to grow, and this growth is further sustained by the provision of antiretroviral drugs. This suggests that there are large numbers of individuals in need of assistance in the form of counselling; however, this need cannot be met due to lack of support and resources (Grindel & Patsdaughter, 2000). In addition, despite the advances in technology and various campaigns being launched, the HIV/AIDS epidemic seems to be causing much damage on the African continent. Glick (2005) suggests that effective and feasible interventions need to be implemented.

Together with the need for effective and feasible interventions, the need to create awareness about HIV/AIDS counselling and testing has become so great that professionals are proposing Provider-Initiated Testing and Counselling (PITC) (Monjok, Smesny, Mgbere, & Essien, 2010). PITC is a process that is different from VCT in that health professionals do not wait for the client to volunteer for HIV testing and counselling but initiate the process on behalf of the client. Alternatively, some

researchers propose that efforts be moved in the direction of couples as opposed to individual counselling (Glick, 2005). HIV counselling involves the sharing of information regarding HIV that can assist the client in assessing his/her risk. It also includes support for those that are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS (Hallett, Dube, Cremin, Lopman, Mahomva, Ncube et al., 2009). Although it is important for people to learn about HIV/AIDS, it is not enough to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. One effective way of dealing with HIV is to know one's status, which requires an individual to undergo proper counselling before and after taking an HIV/AIDS test. In a study focusing on the integration of health services in order to improve the management of HIV and TB, Dennill (2009) suggests that counselling produces good adherence in those individuals diagnosed with HIV and TB. This further highlights the importance of counselling in the South African context and consequently the need to nurture those who counsel others.

2.3 MENTORING RESEARCH

Researchers have for an extended period of time struggled to clearly and decisively define the concept of mentoring (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Although many studies have been conducted in this regard, there is a conspicuous lack of clear mentoring concepts and theory (Bozeman & Feezy, 2007). Furthermore, Bozeman and Feezy (2007) assert that the lack of development of theoretical aspects around mentoring is mainly due to the lack of clear concept explanation, and not necessarily due to a lack of research. Attention has been focused on what mentoring does as opposed to what it really means. Even though this is the case, mentoring as a process to develop and enhance the functioning of new members in organisations has become prominent in the last two decades in the corporate world (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, & Lentz, 2008; Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

Research into mentoring was approached more purposely in the 1980s by scholars such as Kram (1985). Mentoring research has grown significantly during this time (Ensher & Murphy, 2005). Consequently, the traditional idea of mentoring has taken various forms. Although there are some clear definitions needed, the idea of mentoring

is being utilised by various disciplines. Research in the mentoring context is said to need more scientific inquiry, more exploration in non-Western countries and needs to be more experimental in nature (Allen et al., 2008).

Similarly, Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007) claim that mentoring research is usually approached from a Western perspective and as a result, generally promotes a European, Anglo or White culture. The appeal is that other forms of understanding need to be explored. This idea of a traditional, classical and Western type of mentoring is also discussed by Ensher and Murphy (2005); however, these researchers add that other forms or approaches of mentoring need to be explored and discussed even more. Currently, the North American context places a strong emphasis on mentoring in schools, while the European context has a strong emphasis on mentoring in organisations (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Although there are discussions regarding mentoring ideas and research in the African context, mentoring still needs to be well established – particularly in the HIV/AIDS context.

Eby, Tammy, Evans, Ng, and DuBois, 2008 conducted a study concerned with multidisciplinary meta-analysis, where mentored and non-mentored individuals were compared. It was reported that, compared to research approaches in applied psychology, management and social psychology, mentoring research has higher levels of qualitative approaches. It was also established that more experimental approaches are needed. The researchers argue firstly that the process of mentorship has various limitations to deal with. More longitudinal research is needed to fully understand mentoring theory. Secondly, they assert that mentoring as a concept is currently understood differently by various scholars and this discrepancy needs to be addressed. The concept of mentoring is not as well researched in the field of counselling as opposed to the fields of education, law, medicine and business (Chung, Bemak, & Talleyard, 2007; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Furthermore, various disciplines use mentoring ideas in a range of ways and this is noticeable in how different disciplines emphasise certain aspects of mentoring. In addition to conventional ideas of mentoring

one finds that different contemporary forms of mentoring exist, namely e-mentoring, power-mentoring and peer mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

In a qualitative study aimed at reviewing current research methods and future research implications for mentoring, Allen et al. (2008) did not only discover a general lack of differentiation between the various types of mentoring (i.e. between informal and formal mentoring); they also found that researchers have focused more on surveys and cross-sectional methods as opposed to longitudinal methods. When considering the various outcomes of mentoring it is suggested that mentoring be associated with positive outcomes for those involved in the process (Eby et al. 2008). It is also understood that those who have been mentored seem to display increased levels of confidence, and tend to communicate better interpersonally and in their respective working environments (Taylor & Neimeyer, 2009).

As far as research on mentoring is concerned, there are a number of issues one needs to take note of:

- The manner in which the concept of mentoring is currently explained poses a challenge to those conducting research on mentoring.
- Research on mentoring has been taken more seriously in the last two decades and many disciplines use some of the mentoring ideas in a manner that is tailored for the context of that discipline.
- The research that has been conducted suggests that a clearer mentoring definition is needed, and more experimental and longitudinal methods need to be used when conducting research.
- The type of mentoring provided at a school will be different from the type of mentoring provided in a business setting. Similarly, this will differ from the type of mentoring provided in an HIV/AIDS counselling setting.

2.4 MENTORING STAGES AND TYPES

Richard, Ismail, Bhuian and Taylor (2008) distinguish three types of mentoring. Firstly, lateral/peer mentoring, where peers who know a little more than the others share their knowledge with those who may not know as much. This type of mentoring may not necessarily be beneficial for more experienced counsellors. Secondly, there is supervisory mentoring, which may be a combination of mentoring and supervision. Thirdly, mentoring by an external sponsor entails a mentor that comes from outside of the system in order to mentor those that belong to a specific system or organisation (Saloner, 2007).

With the advance of technology, there are new forms of mentoring such as multiple mentoring, which is typified by a situation where an individual has more than one mentor, and e-mentoring, which uses electronic media to facilitate the mentoring process (Butts, Durley, & Eby, 2007). There are, however, some limitations with e-mentoring in that miscommunication may occur, and thus one needs to be careful when selecting a mode of mentoring (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007).

When it comes to the stages of mentoring, Megginson, Clutterbuck, Garvey, Stokes and Garrett-Harris (2006) propose that the mentoring process will go through the following stages: (i) rapport building, (ii) goal setting, (iii) care period, (iv) winding up and, and (v) moving on and reformulating a friendship. The idea here is that when two individuals are working with each other, it usually follows a certain pattern (Richard et al., 2008).

2.5 IMPLEMENTING MENTORING

In this section the focus will be on the theory of mentoring, with specific attention given to the way that mentoring is used in organisations. This includes the structures, programmes and processes that need to be followed when utilising mentoring concepts. The organisation as a context where individuals work and develop plays a major role in how individuals are to be influenced, encouraged and shaped. Kram (1985) proposes

that organisational culture plays an important role in shaping the behaviour of individuals (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Similarly, Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006) report that behaviour within an organisation is either encouraged or discouraged by how others respond to actions. As an example, most individuals in the study done by Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006), believed that receiving support for their learning and development was a factor that made it easier for mentoring relationships to continue.

In her original work, Kram (1985) demonstrated that mentoring may result in two functions: career functioning and psychosocial functioning. In addition, Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007) point to another function of mentoring and that is the idea that a mentor can serve as a model for a young counsellor. These functions suggest that the mentor may either behave in a manner that assists the counsellor to progress in his/her career, and/or behave in such a manner that the counsellor develops a certain level of professional competence and identity. In addition to these three functions of mentoring, Taylor and Neimeyer (2009) suggest a fourth function, namely networking – that is, assisting (an) individual(s) to meet and interact with other significant individuals. Effective mentoring can contribute to objective and subjective contributions such as career success, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007).

The modelling idea is also promoted by Barnett, Youngstrom and Smook (2002), as they argue that a young counsellor can look up to a mentor as a role model. This means that a mentor needs to behave in such a manner which can be emulated by a younger, impressionable counsellor. Further still, Waters (2004) argues that a high quality of psychosocial support is achieved when the counsellor and the mentor agree on important aspects of the relationship. It is important to understand that mentoring programmes have several aims including modelling behaviour, teaching, providing support, ensuring sponsorship and the empowerment of others so that they may become self-reliant (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). One begins to understand that the process of mentoring can ultimately improve and advance the quality of service provided by a specific profession (Houghton, 2003).

Much of the research into mentoring has been mostly about the relationship between the counsellor and the mentor; however, rarely about the organisations in which the pairs or individuals find themselves (Allen et al., 2008). This has been a serious limitation in existing research because, amongst other things, mentoring programmes aim to transform management, touch on a diversity of issues, such as recruiting, preparing and graduating future successors (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002).

Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe and Taylor (2006) assert that, in order to have a useful discussion regarding mentorship programmes, one would have to observe three categories, namely the context, structure and goals. Briefly described, these categories seem to characterise the important aspects of a mentoring programme. The context of a mentorship programme is concerned with the location and/or environment of the meetings such as a school, clinic or business area, and the facilities that are available to the mentoring pair. The structure is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the mentor and the “mentee”, while the goals of the programme are concerned with the specific activities and aims of the mentoring programme.

The training of counsellors by training organisations is an immensely important area of mentorship. In a related study Barnett, Youngstrom and Smook (2002) reflected on the importance and the accompanying influence that teachers, clinical supervisors and mentors have on young mental health professionals. They found that the powerful effects of supervisors and mentors were invaluable and thus need to be encouraged. These researchers further found that the extensive training that mental health professionals receive is not only important, but also necessary. This is due to the understanding that counsellors work with sensitive cases and mismanagement may have serious repercussions. This extensive training becomes more effective when it is supplemented by supervision and mentoring (Barnett, Youngstrom, & Smook, 2002).

As a case in point, Parker, Freytes, Kaufman, Woodruff and Hord (2004) used a group approach to mentoring in order to enable counsellors-in-training to work through the strong emotional reactions experienced during their multi-cultural counselling course.

These researchers found that counsellors could process emotions and improve multicultural competencies more efficiently if they were in a mentoring relationship with a more experienced counsellor.

2.5.1 Mentoring as a concept

Mentoring as a concept is poorly defined and this lack is made manifest in how it is confused with related ideas such as training, coaching and socialisation (Bozeman & Feezy, 2007). These concepts have their own meanings and function in their respective contexts. It is also understood that there are several definitions of the term “mentoring” and this could be a contributing factor to the conceptual problems that characterise mentoring theory (Taylor & Neimeyer, 2009).

The definition problem is not new; Simon, Bowles, King and Roff (2004) mention that it is difficult to come up with a universal definition for the term/word “mentor”. Still, they regard mentoring as important, for they believe that individuals need to be mentored in order for them to grow and advance in their respective professions. Different authors define mentoring in different ways; however, there are some shared aspects in their definitions. Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007) state that “...mentoring in the counselling profession is defined as a process of supporting, teaching, protecting, guiding, nurturing, supervising, and advising someone with the intent to facilitate professional and personal growth” (p. 45).

Mills, Francis and Bonner (2005, as cited in Cummins, 2009) report that “mentorship has been described as career progression, personal development and academic achievements while clinical supervision is the provision of professional support and guidance and advancement through reflection” (p. 216). Meyer and Fourie (2004), however, view mentoring as “a two-way relationship between a counsellor and an individual in which the counsellor helps the individual to overcome barriers to performance and fulfilment” (p. 7). As may be seen in the various definitions, the concept of mentoring is used in various contexts and in various ways. For example, in a

study exploring student nurses' experiences in clinical practice, Saarikoski, Marrow, Abreu, Riklikiene and Özbicakçi (2007) made a distinction between formal supervision and the roles of mentorship. In their study they stated, "The concept of supervision is used here as an overarching concept, which refers to the guidance, support and assessment of student nurses by clinical staff. Supervision can take place with an individual supervisor, or in a group. The term mentor is a sub-concept and a formal supervisory role and is used to describe the role of a qualified nurse who facilitates learning and supervises students in the practice setting" (p. 408).

Seemingly, there is one other concept that is similar to and is often confused with mentoring; that is supervision. Supervision in the health professions, particularly in counselling where it is more collaborative in nature, is understood differently from supervision in other professions such as business, where it is linked more closely to management. The management type of supervision has connotations of a pecking order or top-down approach, which would not be effective in a counselling situation. In counselling, the supervisor-counsellor (supervisory) relationship is generally viewed as cooperative in nature (Walker & Jacobs, 2004). In supervisory relationships, more experienced professionals are expected to supervise less experienced and usually younger counsellors who come from the same profession (Dunbar-Krige & Fritz, 2006). Either in pairs or groups, individuals in a supervisory relationship typically explore topics such as the counsellor's process notes, the client, professional development, specific counselling skills and how the counsellor will be evaluated (Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998).

As seen in the various definitions, the concept of mentoring is used in various contexts and in a variety of ways. Therefore, one can say that mentoring and supervision as concepts are similar and sometimes can be used to refer to one and the same process, depending on the context. These concepts, although similar, are different in the way they are implemented by those who define and use them. The process of mentoring in a counselling context is concerned primarily with the needs of the institution or organisation that is responsible for the counsellors. In other contexts or professions, an

individual being mentored is not necessarily mentored by a mentor from the same profession. Supervision, on the other hand, is broader in scope. It is concerned primarily with the needs of the counsellor who is working with a particular client or patient. The needs of the institution or organisation are not necessarily placed above those of the counsellor. In addition, the counsellor is supervised by a supervisor from the same profession. In this study, mentoring will be defined as a process whereby the counsellor is assisted to develop personally and professionally, with the aim of providing ethical and quality service to the clients who use VCT services.

For purposes of this study it is also important to define counselling, since the study focuses on the experiences of the counsellors involved in VCT. Therefore, we may use the following definition: “Counselling is a process by which a counsellor helps other people to handle difficult situations in their lives so that they are able to find realistic ways to solve their problems” (Perinatal Education Programme, 2004, p 2). Clients who engage with the counselling process essentially learn how to make, own and implement their own decisions whilst personally developing themselves (Perinatal Education Programme, 2004). Furthermore, “Counselling can also be described as a facilitative process in which the counsellor, working within the framework of a special helping relationship, uses specific skills to assist people to help themselves more effectively” (Gillis, 1994, p.2). In this study counselling is therefore defined as a process whereby a lay counsellor (Befriender) engages in a special helping relationship with a client(s), with the aim of assisting the client(s) to cope more effectively with distressful emotional and psychological aspects of life. In this case, the emotional or psychological aspects are directly or indirectly related to HIV/AIDS.

The above discussion can be summarised as follows:

- The concept of mentoring comes from Greek mythology. However, through time it has been adapted to fit specific relationships that have to do with the growth of an individual, group or organisation.

- Different individuals, groups and disciplines use the concept of mentoring in a variety of ways.
- Many attempts have been made to fully define and capture the concept of mentoring. Although there are similarities in the various definitions that are available, much still needs to be done in order to come up with a clear and generally accepted concept that fits different contexts, professions and relationships.
- Mentoring is similar to yet also different to supervision in the sense that mentoring is concerned primarily with the functioning and responsibility of the organisation, whilst supervision is concerned with the development of a counsellor and ethical treatment of the client(s). One would have to admit that in practice, mentoring and supervision are very similar, depending on the setting.
- Counselling is focused primarily on the needs of the client(s) that the counsellor works with.

2.6 EXPERIENCING THE MENTORING PROCESS

Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that individuals who took part in mentoring relationships experienced some form of learning, developed leadership skills and felt supported when it came to career and psychosocial issues. In the following year they reiterate these findings (Eby, Lockwood, & Butts, 2006). However, they add that when individuals feel generally supported in the mentoring process, they are more likely to feel more positive and to stay loyal to the organisation they work for. With time, these individuals are reported as being more likely to earn higher wages, and also to be promoted at a faster pace, than those who are not mentored. Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007) believe that the mentoring process assists an individual to settle in his/her new environment by imparting certain skills and attitudes that will allow them to work effectively in that specific environment. Sometimes mentors ensure that the counsellors receive the necessary acknowledgement when the counsellor deserves it.

However, research suggests that there are differences in how people experience formal and informal mentoring relationships. Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that those who are in “informal” relationships report receiving more career-related and psychosocial mentoring as opposed to those in “formal” relationships. People in “informal” relationships more often than not meet frequently and get along more easily as they tend to have similar interests. This is different in the case of formal mentoring, since most relationships would be initiated as part of the development process and not usually because of the individuals’ interest. Similarly, an individual who experiences his/her mentor as aware, sensitive and respectful of cultural matters, is more likely to have a positive mentoring experience (Chung, Bemak, & Talleyard, 2007).

Alternatively, individuals who have strained relationships with their mentors tend to experience the mentoring process negatively. Allen, Johnson, Xu, Biga, Rodopman and Ottinot (2009) conducted a study to explore the type of outcomes that mentoring produces when individuals who are highly preoccupied with the expectation of special and preferential treatment (Narcissistic Entitlement), are mentored. It was found that such individuals experienced mentoring more negatively as opposed to their peers, had shorter relationships with mentors, less mentoring support in their careers and had lower quality relationships. The studies further showed concerns such as being neglected by a mentor, feeling as if one’s expectations are not met, and also that geographical distance affected the mentoring experience negatively (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Furthermore, those in formal mentoring programmes tend to experience the process/relationship negatively when they perceive their mentors to be disinterested, self-absorbed and/or neglectful. Some mentors experience the process of mentoring as positive because they enjoy increasing the esteem and satisfaction of others, and thus come to view mentorship as a beneficial process (Waters, 2004).

Eby and Lockwood (2005) recommend that when engaging in a mentorship process, organisations, mentors and those being mentored should try to communicate clearly with those involved in the process. In addition, mentors and “mentees” are reported to be matched either through third parties in the form of organisational heads or through

spontaneous combinations initiated by similar interests. The pair should define their goals and also establish a feedback process where there will be adequate monitoring of the mentoring relationship. Communication should be clear and effective so as to convey supportive messages which will enhance the relationship.

In a study investigating how individuals respond to their perceived support for mentoring Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006) found that the more people felt supported by their superiors, the more career and psychosocial support they experienced and thus potential problems were kept to a minimum. Alternatively, there are other factors that affect one's experience of a mentorship relationship. In a study exploring the degree to which "mentees" and mentors agreed on important issues, Waters (2004) found that the type of mentoring, the length and frequency of mentoring, and the gender-mix of a mentoring dyad were factors that significantly affected the ability and degree of agreement that could be achieved between the mentor and the "mentee".

Mentors and "mentees" are often attracted to each other because they share similar interests (Parse, 2008). One may expect to find both negative and positive aspects in mentoring relationships (Allen et al., 2009). Race, gender and sexual orientation are some of the more sensitive factors that can affect how one chooses a mentor. Interestingly, mentoring relationships with male mentors are alleged to be difficult to manage, especially if the other person in the relationship is a female. This suggests that the specific nature of the interaction between the various genders needs to be explored more thoroughly (Simon et al., 2004). Most often one finds that the relationship between the mentor and the "mentee" is a delicate one, as both positive and negative feelings may be experienced. This idea becomes more pertinent since it is not possible to know everything about the mentor or "mentee" before the mentoring process begins, and even after it has begun. The other contributing factor is that in the mentoring context, only a handful of research studies have focused on the personalities of "mentees", including how personality affects one's experience of the mentoring process. Clearly, more research needs to be done in this area (Allen et al., 2009).

Other factors that may affect one's experience of the mentorship process, as proposed by Allen et al. (2009), are those that involve (i) mismatched mentoring dyads, (ii) distancing behaviour, (iii) manipulative behaviour, and (iv) lack of mentor expertise and general dysfunction.

2.7 MENTORING AS EXPERIENCED BY COUNSELLORS

One other factor that novice counsellors struggle with is the ability to strike a balance between caring for the self and caring for their clients (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001). Ideally, when working with clients, counsellors are expected to have the ability to empathetically connect, work effectively with the client and eventually disconnect in a functional manner. This is often not the case, as it is reported that health professionals who work with limited resources, focus more on helping others and thus spend less time on self-care. Burnout is said to be the result of maintaining such behaviour. Counselling others is a stressful profession. Those who have learnt how to deal with this stress eventually tend to manage better (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001).

Situations that may evoke some degree of anxiety in counsellors are those that are characterised by: (i) inadequate supervision and mentorship, (ii) glamorised expectations by the counsellor, (iii) ethical and legal confusion, and (iv) acute performance anxiety and fear (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001). If not managed properly, these situations may end up being regarded as negative experiences by counsellors.

Anxiety-provoking situations highlight the fact that counselling work is intense and requires one to use one's emotions, intelligence and behaviour in a manner that would be useful to the client. Counsellors have to learn how to understand clients, keep up with them and eventually prepare them for how to move on in a way that will prove to be most helpful to the client (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Meeting clients, managing one's behaviour during sessions and how one formulates what goes on in the sessions,

psychologically or conceptually, are examples of other anxiety-provoking situations counsellors may struggle with (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) list seven stressors that novice counsellors often struggle with:

- Acute performance anxiety and fear
- Illuminated scrutiny by professional gatekeepers
- Porous or rigid emotional boundaries
- The fragile and incomplete practitioner self
- Inadequate conceptual maps
- Glamorised expectations
- The acute need for positive mentors

Although the above-mentioned factors may increase the need for a mentor, there are other factors that make it difficult for clients to seek assistance from counsellors. In a study carried out in 11 low-resourced settings in Swaziland, Namibia and South Africa, Karcher et al. (2006) found that consultations with counsellors who felt generally stressed, depressed and burnt out were unpleasant, as clients felt judged, stigmatised and ashamed. As a result, the researchers propose that a different type of training is needed for counsellors. These sentiments are also reiterated by respondents in Macphail et al.'s (2008) study, as they also felt that most health care workers could not make a VCT client feel comfortable and at ease. The respondents felt that the VCT experience would be more pleasant if the counsellors were sensitive and kind.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Firstly, ideas and themes that were discussed in this chapter highlight both negative and positive aspects of mentoring. It has become apparent that there is value in the mentoring process, as counsellors may learn various skills ranging from the ability to work with clients, to reflecting on one's personal growth and learning the workings of an

organisation. Counsellors also learn how to address the emotional, physical and psychological issues that negatively impact on the counsellor's health.

Secondly, the discussion on mentoring research revealed that research regarding mentoring at large has only been taken more seriously in the last two decades. The need to come up with clear definitions of mentoring that would be applicable in many settings and contexts has to be addressed. It is not the lack of research but the type and focus of research that need to be re-evaluated in order to build on mentoring theory. At the moment, this is not the case. Therefore it has been suggested that researchers need to conduct more experimental studies, and longitudinal approaches need to be implemented.

Thirdly, when it comes to the types and stages of mentoring, studies show that lateral/peer mentoring, supervisory mentoring and mentoring by an external sponsor are some of the more well-known types. Alternatively, e-mentoring and multiple mentoring are some of the newer forms of mentoring. But again, the mentoring relationship may begin with the building of rapport and end with a type of reformed friendship between the mentor and the counsellor. This relationship may be facilitated in different situations and contexts, depending on the profession one finds oneself in. It may take place at a clinic or a business area, as is the case in classical mentoring. Organisations also play a role in that they provide a context and culture in which the mentoring pair functions.

Fourthly, in the discussion on counsellors' experience of the mentoring process, a number of factors became apparent. There are those who experience the mentoring process as negative. However, the vast majority experiences the mentoring process as important and enriching. Counsellors who feel stressed and tired struggle to function effectively, and sometimes consultations with them are difficult for clients.

Finally, since the study is about the experiences of mentored counsellors who work in the HIV/AIDS context, it should be mentioned that there is a serious lack of research that focuses specifically on the experiences of lay counsellors who work in the

HIV/AIDS context. The easily accessible studies tend to focus on nurses who function as HIV/AIDS counsellors. It is also clear that health professionals realise the importance of progress when it comes to HIV/AIDS and are thinking of new ideas such as Provider-Initiated Testing and Counselling (PITC) as a means to limit the immense effects of HIV/AIDS. We need research that will increase understanding and improve the effectiveness of counsellors in the battle against HIV/AIDS.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter both theoretical and methodological issues are discussed. The research design and method of data collection are discussed. Consequently, the setting, the participants, the data collected, ethical issues and how the data was analysed will be given attention. The researcher will also briefly discuss the relevance of qualitative research and how the data can be used.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory can be understood as an attempt to explain or predict a particular phenomenon. It should be testable, and should indicate whether concepts relate to each other or not (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2005). In this study, the social construction paradigm will be used to understand the Befrienders' experiences.

Rosen and Kuehlwein (1996) describe the social constructionist paradigm as one that is concerned with meaning-making. From an epistemological point of view, truth is neither a product of a single person's mind nor is it found somewhere else in the world. Social constructionism concerns itself with dialogue and culture, as joint interchanges between individuals are understood as the source of meaning in human relationships (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). Therefore, language used by individuals in a relationship creates an opportunity for developing or attaching meaning to situations or experiences. As individuals communicate and describe things to each other they create constructions that assist them to have meaningful relationships (Gergen, 1999).

Shotter (1993) asserts that social constructionists are concerned with the process of how understanding or constructs came to be. Individuals are encouraged to search beyond how things are currently understood, which may be fuzzy and partly understood, and try to reach a deeper understanding of the social and the historical. Furthermore, the social constructionist paradigm has a number of assumptions, inter alia the following:

- (i) Working assumptions are central to the theory, as opposed to set ideas regarding the world and how it functions. By implication, this assumption means that what is currently understood or the findings of this study need to be continuously reviewed and may be subject to change as relationships develop and change.
- (ii) The manner in which we describe our world shapes our future. This means that the language we currently use is important for the perpetuation or destruction of traditions, institutions and/or ideas we deem important.
- (iii) We need to constantly and critically reflect on how we understand our world as this is beneficial for our future. This will prevent us from closing doors to other potentially helpful perspectives. By doing this we will also have room to do things differently if need be.
- (iv) The way we understand the world originates from our relationships with others. Social constructionists hold that for something to be intelligible, negotiations and agreements need to take place since not all interactions are sensible in all contexts. In effect, for anything to be understandable, meaningful and intelligible, those in relationships need to agree that it is. Thus, understanding originates from relationships (Gergen, 1999, 2009).

When linking social constructionist ideas to this particular study it becomes apparent that the CSA may be considered as a specific context where “truth” or “knowledge” is considered to be the result of interactive relationships between individuals or communities of understanding (Cottone, 2007; Young & Collin, 2004). Even more specific is the manner in which mentoring either involves a counsellor and the mentor,

or a group of counsellors engaging with the mentor. What is common to these relationships is that more than one individual is involved at a time. As counsellors interact they use language to describe their relationship with their mentor. This use of language results in creating a context where relationships, as social constructions, are constantly changing as a result of a change in context (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). The language used by Befrienders in their relationship with their mentor may serve to perpetuate or undo what is currently understood to be essential for the relationship. By implication the performances staged by the Befrienders for the mentor as an audience may question, challenge, improve and/or reject the status quo of the mentoring relationship. Again, the counsellors' emotions, behaviour and experiences as embodied performances can be critically and frequently reviewed. This reflective exercise may serve to identify dated understandings and may also bring new perspectives regarding the mentoring relationships as described by the Befrienders. Through interacting with others and by using language, a new reality may be created.

The various sets of social constructions make it possible to not only investigate the Befrienders' experiences before the mentoring and after the mentoring process; it rather also makes it possible to explore the making of meaning by individuals at various stages of interaction with others. When applying social constructionist thinking, the manner in which the Befrienders communicate assists in shaping their knowledge and therefore how they function in the future.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Research design

The explicit manner in which the research strategy was carried out is discussed here. This study is qualitative in nature since it aims to explore how Befrienders at the CSA at the University of Pretoria experience the mentoring process. The manner in which Befrienders describe and express their experiences is important, because it will assist in

understanding not only the social world in which these experiences occur, but are also unique experiences for the Befrienders (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

The CSA is an organisation based on the main campus of the University of Pretoria. This organisation was approached because of its proximity as the researcher found it easier to travel to the main campus. The organisation has a unique programme that focuses on the development of students, university staff members and the community. It does this by creating opportunities for individuals to learn more about HIV through symposiums, counselling and workshops.

The CSA runs various programmes; one of its mentoring programmes is The Future Leaders @ Work, which is made up of different components, such as counselling, education and awareness. Annually, the CSA trains and mentors a specific number of Befrienders (students as lay counsellors). After training, the Befrienders participate in counselling activities such as VCT with students in the health clinic. They then participate in the mentorship programme to assist them to work with clients and to develop as counsellors.

The Future Leaders @ Work programme has established partnerships with regional universities based in Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland, and is looking to expand to other countries such as Malawi and Mozambique. The researcher also approached this organisation because of its involvement in HIV/AIDS work and his experience of the counselling process at the CSA.

3.3.2 Participants

A sample of 7 Befrienders (2 pilot and 5 formal interviews) for the study was then identified from the CSA's mentoring programme, in which Befrienders are trained and assessed individually and in a group format. Befrienders are students registered at the University of Pretoria under various faculties. The participants were mostly full-time students registered for courses in the social sciences, whereas a few students were

from other faculties such as the economic sciences and the medical sciences. To be a Befriender one has to complete a two-week training programme that has been designed by the CSA to deal with basic principles on HIV and related issues. However, many of the participants were involved in other projects such as training programmes or part-time jobs, and one was studying at a different campus. This meant that the researcher had to schedule interviews at times that the participants preferred. Nonetheless, the researcher and the participants managed to agree on interview times and slots.

The following criteria were used to determine the selection of participants. They had to be:

- (i) Registered members of the mentorship programme,
- (ii) Available and interested in the study, and
- (iii) Willing to share information concerning his/her experience of the mentoring process.

The researcher thought that participants who had been mentored for more than 12 months would be ideal for the study as they would have an entire year on which to reflect. In the end, the participants had counselling and mentoring experiences ranging from 1 year to 4 years. The researcher was provided with a list of names of the participants. There were 10 Befriender names on the list. From the group of 10 Befrienders who had been trained and supervised for more than a year, 7 available Befrienders were interviewed as part of this study. Some of the participants on the list were either not working as counsellors or were registered for a course of study that an available participant was registered for. The researcher tried to get a diverse group of participants using gender and course of study, together with the stipulated selection criteria. The only male participant pulled out after initially agreeing to be interviewed. The sample was thus a convenient and purposive sample as a result of not being randomly selected (Babbie, 2005; Spatz & Kardas, 2008).

The Befrienders were informed close to a month in advance about a possible study they would be asked to participate in. The researcher called the participants, informed them

about the study and asked them whether they would be willing to participate in the study. Interviews were arranged with the various participants. All the participants were female and the group was made up of five black females and two white females who spoke various languages, namely English, Afrikaans, Setswana, Sepedi and Swahili. However, all the interviews were conducted in English.

3.3.3 Interviews and development of interview guide

To understand the mentoring relationship between the Befrienders and their mentor, semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method, involving 7 Befrienders as participants. Bernard (2000) argues that semi-structured interviews are invaluable in situations where researchers do not have more than one opportunity to conduct interviews. The interviews were face to face and one on one. In the interviews, the researcher aimed to gather information and to encourage the participants, whilst also building confidence in the participants (Saville, 2008).

Interviews are widely used as a method of data collection, and may be held in a natural setting (Chan, 2008; Whitley, 2002). It is argued that interviews come across as more natural when paying attention to the interaction between the participant and the researcher, as the naturalness of the interaction may still be preserved. Consequently, the fact that a natural interaction between the participant and the researcher is purposefully strived for will assist in creating an environment of openness and trust (Babbie, 2005; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Linked to the idea of trying to understand the experiences of the Befrienders at the CSA was that of creating a context where the discussions were free flowing and as natural as possible (Whitley, 2002).

In this study, social constructionism as a theory is used, and it would be appropriate at this point to highlight the link between the theoretical perspective used and the methodology used. Silverman (2001) argues that an interview session is a replication of what takes place in everyday interactions and thus is a normal part of relating. Gergen (1994) extends this idea further by putting forward the idea that relationships replace the

individual as the primary unit of social life. In effect, interviews symbolise a relationship between two or more people communicating, and thus constructing a reality which then shapes their future (Gergen, 1994, 1999; Silverman, 2001). Interviews also involve aspects of linguistic factors which can produce knowledge in the form of oral information and written text (Kvale, 1996). Once we have interactions that produce information and shape the future we can have meaning because meaning is derived from joint action (Gergen, 1994).

The role of the interviewer in the interview is to maintain the direction of the flow of the interview. One way of ensuring that the necessary questions are answered is to use an interview guide, which will assist in the gathering of data. Face-to-face, one-on-one interviews were used to gather verbal data. The interview guide was developed in such a way that the researcher could ask general questions about HIV/AIDS, the mentoring process and counselling, to more idiosyncratic ideas regarding the counsellor's experiences stemming from the mentoring process, HIV/AIDS involvement and counselling (Breakwell, 2006; Spatz & Kardas, 2008)

The data collection was carried out in two phases on the main campus of the University of Pretoria. Firstly, the pilot interviews were held with two participants, and then formal in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one and face-to-face interviews between the researcher and the participants were conducted in one office at the CSA. The office is located on the premises of the University of Pretoria. The pilot interviews were held to make sure that the interview guide was appropriate to get the relevant information about the mentoring relationship. After the first two interviews, the researcher decided to make two changes.

Firstly, the researcher decided to include a question concerning the counsellors' experience of a session where a client had a positive HIV result. This question was important and useful, because the different participants had strong reactions to this question. Some counsellors were either concerned that students were testing positive or because students were not testing positively. Secondly, the researcher decided not to

follow the interview guide so rigidly so as to allow the participants more freedom to speak freely and thus creating a space for the researcher to ask more in-depth questions.

In a sense, the researcher asked follow-up questions to follow-up questions, and this assisted in gathering more information. Appointments with each participant were arranged separately, in line with the University's calendar, personal schedules and the CSA's project calendar timetables. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

Below are examples of some of the questions from the interview guide:

- ***Counselling questions***

- *In your own opinion, what does it mean to be a counsellor/Befriender? Have you always thought this way?*
- *What has the experience of being a counsellor been like for you?*
- *What are some of the challenges you faced as a counsellor?*

- ***Mentoring questions***

- *In your own opinion, what do you understand mentoring/supervision to be?*
- *If you had to describe to someone what being in the mentorship programme felt like, what would you say?*
- *After taking part in the mentoring programme, do you notice any change in how you (i) think, (ii) feel, and (iii) behave as a counsellor? Explain.*

3.3.4 Data collection process

After the approval of the study by the University's Ethics Committee, the potential participants at the CSA were contacted regarding possible interviews. Although verbal consent had been given to conduct the study with the CSA, a formal letter was delivered to the CSA requesting permission to conduct the study, pending the outcome of the

Ethics Committee meeting. It was stated that the data would only be collected only when all the appropriate bodies (Ethics Committee, CSA and participants) had given express consent.

3.3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative research and analysis is diverse and intricate. It involves the examination and explanation of data in a non-numerical manner with the aim of discovering meaning and patterns of relationships (Babbie, 2005). “Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes” (Marshall, as quoted in Gibson & Brown, 2009: 4).

Audio-taped interviews were transcribed, and the transcripts became the units of analysis. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. The data was coded according to similar themes, and this was done in order to create structure and categories for more effective usage of the data.

In this study the following steps were followed:

- (i) The researcher familiarised himself with the data by transcribing and re-reading the data several times;
- (ii) Codes were created and then used to systematically code the data;
- (iii) Themes were identified and systematically linked with codes;
- (iv) The themes were reviewed ensuring that there was compatibility with codes;
- (v) The themes were defined and named by continuously exploring each theme carefully and capturing its essence; and lastly
- (vi) A report was produced by summarising all the findings in a coherent manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In addition to the steps mentioned above, the researcher tried to do three things, as suggested by Gibson and Brown (2009), which were to examine commonalities within the data, to examine differences, and lastly the researcher tried to examine various

relationships that seemed to stand out in the data. Finally, the advantage of using thematic analysis is that it is flexible and can be used across various epistemologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3.6 Validity/Credibility

Silverman (2005) conceptualises validity in qualitative data analysis as a different word for the truth. In order to ensure that this study is relatively truthful, the researcher has provided a detailed account of what transpired in the interviews. In addition, extensive quotes are used to illustrate what participants were saying. The audio-recordings and transcribed texts are available through the University of Pretoria for those who would like to inspect or listen to them. There were specific, set questions which allowed different participants to respond to the same questions. Audiotapes, scripts and meticulously kept records were used (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

The data was interpreted by the researcher. After the data had been interpreted the participants, in a feedback session, were given an opportunity to look through the chapter and reflect on whether their communications had been interpreted accurately. In the event, where there was any misunderstanding, the researcher and the participant communicated and clarified the misunderstanding. Finally, the feedback session between the researcher and the participant was also evaluated as a way of evaluating factors that have and could have affected the validity of the study (Golafshani, 2003).

3.3.7 Reliability

In order to increase the reliability or stability of the study, the researcher repeatedly listened to the tapes and read the transcripts thoroughly. When contradictions or discrepancies in the study became apparent, the researcher went back through the data again and tried to provide a reason for it. The researcher kept some process notes of the interviews, notes on personal views regarding the research, and transcripts of every session so that interpretations could be as neutral as possible, consistent and reliable. If

there were questions about any aspect of the research, one could then revisit the various notes and transcripts. In order to ensure that there is some consistency, the researcher ensured that when transcribing the data, every aspect was represented. Examples were also used in order to justify interpretations (Golafshani, 2003).

Although the researcher strictly followed the guidelines for qualitative data analysis, the nature of qualitative data analysis is subjective. The theoretical framework and experiences of the researcher will influence his interpretation of the data. In summary, the researcher highlighted the themes and discussed the contradictions. The researcher has also repeatedly examined the data for what is not mentioned and investigated different perspectives that may not be so evident at first glance.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dafinoiu and Lungu (2003, p. 187) state that “scientific knowledge and techniques used in the quest for progress can also be used for manipulative or destructive purposes”. In order to ensure that the processes of data collection were not abused, the participants in the study were given a consent form which served to inform and explain that which they were consenting to. An example of the consent form that the participants signed is given in the appendix. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to ask any questions relevant to the study before, during and after the interviews.

HIV is a sensitive topic and this requires that health workers approach what is discussed with respect and sensitivity. Since personal experiences were shared, confidentiality was important in the interviews. Ethical principles as suggested by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) were strictly adhered to, for example, doing no harm, maintaining confidentiality, gaining informed consent, and ensuring debriefing for the participants (Spatz & Kardas, 2008).

CHAPTER 4

THEMES FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH BEFRIENDERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the individual Befriender interviews will be presented. The researcher has identified five themes that highlight the Befriender's experiences of being mentored. A combination of the prominent ideas within the data corpus and the aims of the research study are viewed together to produce the identified themes. Extracts from the interviews will be used extensively in order to provide not only a general picture of what transpired during the interviews, but also what seemed to be of importance to the Befrienders.

Through multiple readings of the data, the researcher observed that several prominent themes could be identified. The researcher has decided to report on five themes, namely (i) Being mentored (Experiencing the Programme), (ii) Interpersonal relationships (Experiencing others), (iii) A developing inner world (Experiencing the Self), (iv) Negotiating boundaries (Managing relationships), and (v) Other issues related to HIV/AIDS (Experiencing the context). Some of the themes have subthemes that are also reported in this chapter.

Finally, there were five Befrienders whose ideas are represented in this chapter. The researcher has decided to refer to them as Mandisa; Pearl; Amanda; Lethabo and Bongsi. The Befrienders have been given pseudonyms for two reasons namely, to protect their identities and so that the reader may follow the comments made by the Befrienders with ease.

4.2 CENTRAL THEMES FROM THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The mentoring programme at the CSA consists of a number of activities. Befrienders in the mentoring programme are expected to go through a selection process before being a Befriender; Befrienders need to attend training sessions and workshops; and they also need to attend group and individual supervision. The results below are discussed in such a way that the different activities of the mentoring programme are given attention. That is to say, the researcher will discuss the Befrienders' experiences of being supervised and mentored, experiences of becoming a counsellor, the experiences of working in the HIV/AIDS context, and how Befrienders experience their personal growth.

4.3 BEING MENTORED (EXPERIENCING THE PROGRAMME)

Under the theme of being mentored, the manner in which the Befrienders defined mentoring and supervision was explored. Additionally, the manner in which the Befrienders experienced the supervision sessions was also explored.

4.3.1 Defining mentorship and supervision

The data suggests that the Befrienders had different opinions and understandings of what it meant to be a Befriender and what it meant to be mentored. It seems they had similar ideas when it came to being supervised. Concepts such as guidance, support, therapy, the passing of knowledge and formal helping seemed to be at the core of what Befrienders understood mentoring to be. Alternatively, the idea of simply being able to discuss that which is negatively affecting the emotions and experience of Befrienders seemed to characterise what was understood as supervision. It seems there were different reasons as to why Befrienders signed up for the mentoring programme. Some Befrienders joined the mentoring programme because they wanted to help others, while other Befrienders joined because they wanted to gain some experience; but still others joined because they thought the programme was something worth experiencing. They

also approached their work in different ways because of their training and educational backgrounds. Below, in describing what it means to be a Befriender, the participant focused on the tasks of the Befriender. Her description is practical in the sense that she referred to HIV transmission.

Amanda: Mostly, I think it means to give the people the knowledge. The knowledge about HIV. And when I say the knowledge I mean transmission, what to do when you are positive, how to stay negative, basically just put it in a package and give it to a student in a way that the student can understand. Remove all the medical jargon and simply to a level where a student, even a first-year student, can understand.

In describing what mentoring is, one Befriender struggled somewhat to make the distinction between how she understood counselling and mentoring. She used time as a differentiating factor.

Mandisa: I think mentoring is being there for someone when they need your help. I think it's helping them you know, Ja, helping. You're meant to help them, you are there for them. It's basically what we do in the counselling session, but this would be on a longer term because this person you would have to see regularly, a mentor.

In the extract below a Befriender described the difference between supervision and mentoring. She assumed individual supervision to be a place where she could focus on her well-being and how it affects the clients, and she saw mentoring as having to do with improving one's counselling skills in order to perform better.

Pearl: I think supervision would be more of your feelings. Um, more of trying to understand yourself and your feelings in relation to your clients are coming from. Whereas mentoring would be more of helping you do what you are doing better. Um like with our supervisions, I think group supervision would be more of mentoring. Whereas individual supervision would be more of like a supervision-debriefing kind of thing.

4.3.1.1 Reactions caused by mentoring and supervision activities

It seems there are both administrative and experiential aspects when it comes to the mentoring programme. That is, there is a clear relationship between the different day-to-day workings of the programme. The responses appear to be evoked as a result of working through the activities that come with mentoring. The Befrienders found that they had to deal with a certain number of individual and group sessions, workshops, role plays, reports to be written and other activities. Befrienders worked as either full-time or part-time counsellors in the mentorship programme. Sometimes Befrienders felt that mentoring was worth doing. It made one feel better and sometimes produced frustratingly intense feelings. For others the intense feelings were evoked by the reports that had to be written. Words such as “hate”, “schlep” and “evil” were used when describing report writing. At other times reports were reframed into a process that was helpful to the Befriender.

Here, a Befriender was speaking about the process of looking through her reports with the supervisor as part of the individual supervision session. Going for supervision was part of the activities in the mentoring programme.

Amanda: Now like, it's still uncomfortable, I won't lie to you, but you come to see it as a necessary, let's just say a necessary evil. You're, you know, it helps you, but it's still not comfortable to one.

The following extract illustrates a Befrienders' dislike for writing reports which she would need to discuss in supervision.

Mandisa: It's just so much admin to go write about the counselling session. And then they ask you how you felt about the counselling session. And when you say good, it's not a good enough answer, they want you to elaborate. It's like Ah! And then you see like five, four or five clients and it's like then you have to write four or five reports. I hate reports. Writing, I hate it.

4.3.1.2 Feelings regarding supervision sessions

Four out of the five Befrienders reported that they often experienced supervision as evaluative, and thus uncomfortable. One Befriender, however, reported that she experienced supervision as generally positive. Despite the general discomfort of supervision, most Befrienders nonetheless recommended it. They reported that supervision was helpful because one can learn some valuable lessons regarding counselling. Next, a Befriender explained why she sometimes became annoyed with how her colleagues approached supervision. She also mentioned that supervision was helpful and that was how it should be understood.

Lethabo: This whole supervision thing and how people think about it kind of annoys me, because as counsellors we should actually see the importance of it. This is now where you become a better counsellor and stuff and you get to learn.

Another Befriender reported that Befrienders did not always feel like attending supervision sessions because the sessions were time consuming. The Befriender also reported that the reluctance to attend the sessions did not occur often.

Mandisa: Sometimes I feel like I am not in the mood for supervision. You know there are days where you feel like supervision, and the days where you feel like supervision takes too long or whatever. But those are far and few between.

4.3.1.3 Skills learned through the mentoring process

A range of techniques were mastered by the Befrienders in order to make them more effective at facilitating the counselling sessions with their clients. They improved their listening and more effective counselling skills. Additionally, Befrienders reported that they had come to understand that clients needed to be understood. They also understood what could and what could not be done in a counselling session. Below, a Befriender spoke about how she did not like giving advice to clients. She would have liked clients to develop a different perspective regarding their problems.

Mandisa: From when I started counselling I'd never ever wanted to give people advice and tell them. I didn't want a client to leave the counselling room thinking they must do 1, 2, 3. They must feel empowered enough and strong enough to change the behaviour, if that's what they need to do or whatever it is that they need to change something about themselves. I was just there for them and to give them a different perspective of what they are going through.

Speaking about how she had become comfortable enough to assist other Befrienders, a Befriender described how she had learned enough skills to the extent that she could be helpful to other Befrienders:

Pearl: I think because a lot of the counsellors come to me for like guidance, because I have been doing it for so long. And I think this mentoring programme, it's taught me a lot and to help them. I don't think I would be able to help them like I do if it wasn't for everything that I have been through with the CSA.

All the Befrienders reported that, through the process of being mentored and counselling others, they had improved in skills such as listening and reflecting. They had learned to communicate more effectively in that they communicated in a more assertive, clear, concise and tactful manner. One Befriender also mentioned that she had learnt to use pro and con lists more effectively to assist clients. Below, a Befriender mentioned how she had learned to hold her emotions back, but used counselling techniques in order to assist a client to arrive at a decision:

Bongi: Ja. When you are in a counselling session, sometimes, not all the time but sometimes, you know some people they were in a situation where they didn't really know should they get out of it or shouldn't they. For instance, like the person would be cheated on, then with the pros and cons list either than me telling them to leave the person or to stay with the person. They would see you know, if I do stay with the person, what would this be like, and if I don't, how would this affect my life? So that works for me. It's actually a very neat technique that I think has ... that I picked up.

4.4 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (EXPERIENCING OTHERS)

Befrienders in the mentoring programme have relationships with different people. As part of the work, Befrienders are expected to see clients, work with colleagues and attend individual and group supervision. In this section of the chapter, data concerned with relationships encountered in the mentoring programme is presented.

4.4.1 Relating to clients

4.4.1.1 Feelings evoked when relating to clients

The relationship with clients (students) is a relationship that is encountered by Befrienders in their role as counsellors. Befrienders facilitate counselling sessions with numerous clients. This means that Befrienders need to be flexible because they need to adapt to the client's style of relating to others. The relationship between a Befriender and a client may evoke different feelings such as excitement, anger, guilt or anxiety. When carefully reading the data, one notices that interactions may cause the Befriender to engage either in a generally enthusiastic, withdrawn and/or attacking manner. The three ways mentioned are the most prominent in the data and are by no means the only ones possible. The following quote illustrates how a Befriender struggled to remain composed in reaction to a "controversial" opinion of a client:

Bongi: Being a counsellor you are supposed to be a person who accepts everything. I'm a person who believes in God a lot, so there've been people who just don't, and obviously I can't say, no, God is the way. Obviously it's counselling, you know, you are supposed to help the person with where they're at. That has been really hard for me because some people would actually say things against Him, you know, "He hasn't done anything for me". "I don't know why people follow Him so much?" and that obviously affected me and it's really hard to keep myself composed in that kind of setting, because I feel He has been a big part of my life.

In the next extract a Befriender expressed how difficult it was to work with clients that opposed being counselled or refused to open themselves up for counselling:

Pearl: I think the most challenging thing or most challenging part of it is to get it. You know, some people they just don't wanna open up. They are there to test, not there to be counselled. They don't want the counselling, you know, and then you like start and they are like very rude to you and you still have to be nice to them. Um and you know, I think those are the people that really need the counselling because obviously they ... were that determined not to get counselling.

4.4.1.2 Intense feelings evoked by clients

The Befrienders did not experience all relationships as positive. It was reported that sometimes Befrienders became angry, scared clients, felt attacked and attacked clients back, called clients names such as “difficult”, “stubborn”, “argumentative”, “irritating”, “rigid” and “closed”. These intense reactions and interactions with clients seemed to be heightened when Befrienders felt emotional, under pressure or concerned with some aspect of their own lives. The difficult life stories told by clients tended to also evoke some strong reactions from Befrienders. The following extract illustrates how tiredness influenced a Befriender not to pay enough attention to clients during sessions:

Lethabo: I was tired, I guess it was because I was just like, I can't really remember what was happening that day, but I think it was the build-up of all the other days, you know. I got tired of um seeing other people and listening to them and what not, you know. I think I was having moments in the room during the sessions were I just like, I just drifted and think about something else you know. And normally when I drift that's when I realise that I am not so fully aware now, I am getting tired and I was like, you know, there are counsellors there. So, I must let it go, I must just chill.

In the following extract a Befriender spoke about her response after a difficult session with a client. She mentioned that she struggled to deal with some “irresponsible” behaviour that the client was engaging in. She also mentioned that she needed to talk to someone after such difficult sessions with clients:

Mandisa: At the end I usually feel horrible, you know, I don't wanna see the next client even though I see files. I need time to myself to recover. Usually I talk; if there is another Befriender there I will talk to them or the nurse, because I can't just come up to the supervisor at that moment. But

sometimes, I usually feel horrible and I don't feel okay or, if I encounter a student who, you know, they tell me that ... you know ... they have partners and you know they are not willing to give up those partners, and they have unprotected sex ... and you know ... they also have random sex with people that they just meet.

4.4.1.3 Creating together with the client

Befrienders and clients mostly have constructive relationships. In some counselling sessions the Befrienders tended to feel that they were making a difference, were leading or guiding and helping the client. They felt confident in having a conversation, meeting new clients and engaging with clients in a highly interactive manner. One Befriender mentioned that the part she enjoyed most about counselling was interacting with clients. Befrienders experienced clients who test negatively for HIV, those who seemed keen to learn about HIV/AIDS, and those who were open to talk about their experiences, as easier to relate to. Below a Befriender spoke about how she tended to enjoy working with some clients:

Mandisa: I think interacting with people. Ja, it's really an opportunity to interact with people in a sense that you are there for them and you get to hear their grievances, and sometimes you help them find the answers for themselves, and all of that. So that's what I enjoy.

4.4.1.4 Counsellors preferred to work with students

The Befrienders mentioned that they found it easier to counsel students than more mature groups of people, such as those who had full-time jobs and families. They viewed older people as more difficult to counsel. A Befriender who had worked for a short period in a different country and also in a hospital setting, mentioned that she preferred working with students on campus as she found it easier to connect with them:

Mandisa: I am more suited to counsel students than I would be to counsel other people. 'Cause after I came back from (Name of country) I was like, I don't think I can do this. Work at a hospital itself and hear those grievances that those people have, and people are looking at you with that "can you help" face. I don't know if I could do that. But here on campus, you know, I feel

comfortable. I feel like I know what's happening. I am aware of what students are going through and all those kind of things. So it's more comfortable for me.

Some Befrienders reported that they would at times not want to see clients because they would either be feeling unsettled, “horrible”, not in the mood, frustrated, or were feeling bad for positive clients, overwhelmed, emotional, or would even feel the need to avoid the next counselling session. Below, a Befriender spoke about the emotional response she had after seeing a client. The extract also shows how the counsellor would beat herself up and question her abilities:

Mandisa: I feel bad about myself, you know, I doubt my counselling skills, I doubt my personality, I doubt my approach, you know. Then I reflect on how was the counselling session, what is it that I said, how did I say it, you know, then sometimes I pick on myself, ag I should have not said that, that way or something like that.

4.4.1.5 Experience helped Befrienders to be less frustrated

After having had some experience as a Befriender, they reported that they had learned to give people time and space to come around. They also seemed to be calmer and more patient with clients. They reported that they were coping better with “high-risk” clients in the sense that they could work effectively and strategically with clients. They also worked more effectively with clients who were willing to minimise the extent of their risky behaviour. Befrienders reported that they were more tolerant of those who refused counselling and those who tended to use vulgar language. In the next extract, a Befriender spoke about how she eventually stopped taking the behaviour of the clients personally. She explained this by comparing it to the process of therapy where clients were concerned with their own struggles and not about the feelings of the therapist. In the end, the Befriender realised that counselling was mostly about the client and not about the Befriender:

Lethabo: So I have learned that people come in there with their own problems and most of the time people can't even see you through their problems. You are just here as a ... what can I say ... as a

... it's just a way for them to get tested. You know, sometimes I think even with normal therapy and stuff you hardly even see your psychologist. I mean, yes the interaction between the two of you is quite important, you know. But when you first come in there with your problems and stuff like that, you are so immersed in them that you can't even see beyond them, you know what I mean? So that's when I have realised, so normally it's like, don't take it personally.

4.4.2 Relating to colleagues

4.4.2.1 Relationships between Befrienders

The second group of people the Befrienders interacted with were their colleagues. This relationship was generally described as helpful; however, there were instances where Befriender-Befriender interactions were intense. Some Befrienders seemed to enjoy the degree of closeness, support and the fact that they could simply talk to each other about how difficult particular sessions were. In the extract below, the Befriender used an analogy of soldiers coming back from war to describe the kind of understanding she had with her colleagues:

Amanda: Whenever they come back, everyone asks them how do they feel, and they really don't know how to say it, but then if they talk to someone who was in the same war or sometimes they don't even need to talk, they just need to be in the same room, 'cause they understand each other, they feel so much better. So I suppose that's exactly the same thing that happens to us counsellors. We don't have to ask "are you sad?", because obviously you are sad.

Here, a Befriender spoke about the relationship she had with other Befrienders because they trusted each other. She highlighted the fact that Befrienders shared a connection with each other:

Pearl: Um I think the Befrienders have such an interesting relationship with each other, you know. And I think it's very strange how that relationship works, because like it's just a thing of trust. Counsellors will talk about anything with any other counsellor, you know, even though you are not

friends, you know. You may be met like once or twice and you see each other once or twice, but you've got this connection already. So I think I enjoy that very much.

4.4.2.2 Support and expectations

For the most part, Befrienders seemed to draw ideas from each other and to use each other as a source of connection and strength. They seemed to learn from each other as they modelled behaviour for each other. Sometimes Befrienders seemed to feel some degree of pressure from colleagues. It could be pressure to simply engage more with colleagues, take on more clients, and to know more than the other Befrienders because of one's experience in the clinic. In addition, some Befrienders felt that they were expected to work harder because they were being paid.

Finally, there seemed to also be an imagined internal hierarchal structure among Befrienders, as those studying in a certain field such as psychology felt that their approach to clients was different from those in other fields. Next, a Befriender spoke about how she was able to advise a colleague about a client who requested the colleague's cell number. The Befriender speaking seemed to feel confident about what she could do as a result of taking part in the mentoring programme.

Pearl: But if it is something like that, rather take his number and tell him you will get hold of him, you know. So I don't think I would be able to give that advice, if it wasn't for the mentoring and what we talk about. Just things like that, little things but then it makes me special, like okay, I could help out that counsellor.

When explaining the difference between how Befrienders with a psychology background approached clients as opposed to those not studying psychology, a Befriender chose to talk about the level of seriousness and the manner in which counsellors spoke as the factors that highlighted the differences between the Befrienders:

Pearl: I think the psychologists, the psychology students, take it a lot more seriously than the other students. I think they don't realise the impact we really do have on the person, even though we're

there half an hour you know with the person that made such an impact on that person's life. How you react to them and how they perceive you, and I think if I can just see how the counsellors talk ... you can hear the difference how they experience their sessions, compared to how I experience mine or how somebody else studying psychology experiences their session.

4.4.3 Relating to supervisors

A third group of people that Befrienders related to in a significant way within the mentoring programme were those who supervised them. The supervisor was from the mentoring programme, while the sisters assisted the counsellors at the campus clinic. The manner in which the Befrienders related to the supervisor seems to be both emotionally intense and specific. When Befrienders felt vulnerable, incapable, exposed, weary, insecure or anxious, amongst other feelings, the supervisor seems to have provided emotional and practical support.

In the next extract a Befriender spoke about how, in the beginning when she started working as a counsellor, she used to select simple cases to take to supervision. She did this because she did not want to expose her feelings of incompetence. She further mentioned that she would still hand in the cases that seemed easier to talk about:

Amanda: Honestly at the beginning, I would for individual supervision, I would choose my most simple cases to present because those were easy to deal with or be like, oh it was an okay session. Well if I'm to be honest with myself, if I was to be asked now to share my cases, I would probably still choose the easier case, then that would get finished quickly, but I suppose she knows we would do that, so now she physically gets our reports and then we physically have to go through each one. So now you don't have the option of choosing what report to go back, so now you would have to go through it. I suppose it's a good thing because then you have to deal with all, whatever issues which came up. Or else, if you were told to choose, you choose the easier ones and just keep the issues you are supposed to deal with. I suppose they would keep piling up and eventually they would blow up and cause a whole mess.

Next, a Befriender who found the comments of the supervisor helpful emphasised that the mentoring process helped her too:

Mandisa: It did, for me it did help. You know, 'cause I needed to be reassured. I needed to hear from somebody who is experienced why they thought I was a good counsellor, even though I thought I was horrible, you know. And it's something that I need to work on for myself. But the mentoring definitely did help.

4.4.3.1 Support and crisis management

Sometimes there seemed to be a level of respect coupled with anxiety, as some supervisor-Befriender interactions created a situation where the Befriender felt empowered. In other instances, the Befrienders found themselves in difficult positions and would have liked the supervisors to intervene right there and then. In the next extract, a Befriender spoke about the connection she felt that she had with her supervisor (mentor):

Lethabo: Ok, the first one it's great, because it's in my line of work and here I have someone that is there, has been through everything that I am going through, and so I have a point of reference every time. I can also come and ask her questions, always tell her stuff and what not, you know. So it's nicer for me because of that, because she is a clinical psychologist and that's what I wanna be.

Speaking about how she needed assistance with what she thought was an emergency, a Befriender explained how a session took longer than normal and how the sister at the clinic eventually helped her:

Mandisa: I wasn't expecting such a reaction, you know; I know you can expect anything, I wasn't expecting her to be there for an hour and a half. Not that testing HIV-positive is not traumatic. It is, you know, for some people a traumatic experience, but I didn't know if I could cope being there with her for an hour and a half, and I didn't know what to tell her. So, you know, the sister helped me. She would come in as well and just talk to her and all of that. She would give me a break talking to her. Ja.

4.5 A DEVELOPING INNER WORLD (EXPERIENCING THE SELF)

4.5.1 Becoming self-aware

4.5.1.1 Lessons gained whilst developing awareness

Initially, it seemed that most Befrienders chose to counsel clients because they had the desire to help people, and counselling is one way in which they could do so. Some signed up for counselling because they would have liked to gain some experience that would assist them later in their studies, such as in psychology. Yet others just stumbled upon the opportunity and took it. A Befriender made a comment about how she felt that being a Befriender had widened her horizons and given her a more realistic perspective on life. She expressed that getting involved with the different aspects of the mentoring programme had assisted her to grow and to develop different ideas.

Lethabo: I was working at (Name of previous workplace) when I came here, yes, and they said in psychology if you really want to be in psychology do stuff in the community, you know. We wanna see that you are involved and you are working with people, so then that's why I came here. So I came here, a very quiet little girl. Yes, it's a shock. I think through all the activities that I got involved in I started to gain a voice. I had these rigid ideas on how things should be and this perfect life that I had in my mind, and those ideas started to evolve, you know. Instead of being on some "no you can't have sex before marriage", I was like, you know, "hey, if that's what you wanna do, that is what you wanna do," you know?

Another Befriender mentioned how she became involved with the programme. She pointed out that, although she did not set out to join the programme, being part of the mentoring programme has been a worthwhile experience in the sense that it contributed positively to her life:

Amanda: No I think I'm glad I did it, or actually I am glad I was given the opportunity to do it, because, like I said, I think I am better for it and it's not something that I would have decided, it's not something you come to campus and decide, okay, I am going to do this and this subject and then

I'm going to do a mentoring programme. It's something that finds you along the way. It's not you finding it; it's something that finds you. So, I suppose that's when you go into that whole faith-destiny thing. Something that you basically ... it's not a planned thing, but when it does happen you realise it was a good thing when it did happen.

4.5.1.2 Being aware of one's limitations and the feelings that follow

At the beginning of their counselling work Befrienders seemed to be generally excited about working as counsellors at the clinic. Initially, many were preoccupied with doubts as to whether they were following the proper procedures or not; that is to say, they were concerned about whether they covered every point they were supposed to cover. The initial positive feelings seemed to turn into doubt as some started feeling “stupid”, or “not good enough”, and started doubting themselves or their abilities. Some Befrienders started becoming painfully aware of how limited they were in some ways, some realised that they had unresolved issues with family members, and others learned that counselling others may evoke intense feelings and reactions within themselves. In the midst of some doing well at school and learning about others, the Befrienders learned that they were not as prepared as they thought they were. Below, a counsellor reported that sometimes the counselling sessions would remind her of some personal struggles she once had. These types of reactions would surface in one-on-one sessions with clients. She would then feel exposed in front of the client:

Mandisa: I think yes. In a sense that I know that I have always had issues, but I was faced with them in the counselling room you know. I mean on a daily basis I feel like I am not good enough and all those kind of things. I am doing horribly at school or whatever, but when I was on a one-to-one basis with somebody, it just felt too personal. Like, this person can see I am not good enough.

4.5.1.3 Feeling tired and depressed

There were those who started questioning their abilities to such an extent that they wanted to quit. Others realised that they felt tired, frustrated and irritable. Also, a full-time counsellor became somewhat uncomfortable with the number of clients she had to see, missing her breaks and not having time to recover from all the school work and the

counselling. In the next extract, a Befriender described how managing the different aspects of her life including counselling, became so overwhelming that she felt depressed:

Bongi: So around that time it got really, really heavy for me because I didn't care about school anymore. All I did was sleep, the normal signs of depression, but at the same time I felt worthless and helpless, because I couldn't help people and people still called and it wasn't necessarily that they wanted to know how I was doing, it was more how I could help them. So I had to kind of separate myself from them.

Here, a counsellor expressed how she moved from being excited to see the clients to feeling tired and not desiring to see the clients:

Lethabo: At the beginning of the year when I started full-time, I was so excited. Ja. So and now the novelty effect has worn off and now I am like, "no gosh, I am tired".

4.5.1.4 Maturing and learning to trust one's abilities

Learning about oneself did not come with negative feelings only. Some counsellors could integrate what they learned as part of their personal development. Befrienders reported going for therapy, learning that counsellors needed to focus on the needs of the clients, and not to be preoccupied with meeting their own needs during the sessions. They started gaining trust in their abilities, became empowered and not afraid to try new things. In the next extract, a Befriender expressed how being mentored could become both empowering and uncomfortable at the same time. She pointed out that feedback was important for one's growth:

Amanda: In some cases it feels empowering to learn about it, in some cases it is uncomfortable, 'cause then when learning about something, like in my case, learning about HIV and learning about, like knowing the facts and knowing you can tell someone this and be basically an authority on it. That's very empowering 'cause then you know it's for yourself. But then, learning how you feel or about a particular situation can be a bit uncomfortable, 'cause then you don't realise this is how you

feel until someone puts it to you that this is how you come across, then you realise, oh my goodness I am uncomfortable with this, I'm uncomfortable with such and such a situation. So you realise, you learn about yourself and sometimes learning about yourself is very uncomfortable, because you have this idea of yourself which is not necessarily true. You find the actual idea and sometimes it contrasts with what ... what you are and what you think you are ... so it's not ... sometimes it's not too comfortable a procedure.

4.5.1.5 Being comfortable with oneself

With time, introspection, therapy and supervision, the Befrienders seemed to have learnt not only about counselling but also about themselves. They learned about their limitations and they learned new coping skills. Befrienders reported that they were less likely to feel offended, they found it easier to connect with others and to embrace the challenges they faced, as these had turned into learning opportunities. In the extract below, the Befriender expressed how she had become more comfortable with herself. She mentioned that being comfortable with herself flowed into other relationships as well:

Pearl: I think I am a lot more comfortable with who I am than I was when I first started. That is a bit difficult to explain, but I think being more comfortable with myself means I am more comfortable with other people. In the beginning, like, I had to make sure everything was perfect, everything was ... Ja like you sit there, hanahana, I sit here now, it doesn't matter. Just as long as that person is comfortable, then I am fine, Ja.

4.5.1.6 Emotional, behavioural and cognitive changes

It seemed that a clear emotive, behavioural and cognitive change had occurred within the Befrienders. This affected how they did their work. Some Befrienders reported a change in how they were "more realistic than idealistic". Below, a Befriender expressed how she had learned about herself. She seemed to have positive feelings regarding her learning:

Pearl: I think the best part is that I get to learn more about myself. You know, I think that stands out the most. The more I am here the more I learn. You know, it's not like just how to deal with people and whatever. It's how to deal with myself, you know.

In the next extract, a Befriender spoke about the various emotions one may go through whilst in the mentoring programme. She pointed to the fact that, even though the mentoring process might have felt like a roller-coaster ride, one still learned something from it:

Bongi: It's one of those you actually have to experience because you will have your up days, you will have your down days, you will feel like some things you're learning from, you will feel like some things are not really necessary, they shouldn't be part of it. And these are things you will be feeling while you are going through it, but once you are through the other side and you are looking back, you realise that every experience you have had, bad or good, mild or you know really intense, it actually helped you shape up to the kind of person you really are – whether you are a mentor or a “mentee”.

4.6 APPRECIATING NEW PERSPECTIVES (A CHANGING WORLD VIEW)

4.6.1.1 Changing one's perspective

As the Befrienders began to learn about themselves and adapted accordingly in various ways, they also seemed to progress from a growing understanding of themselves to a growing understanding of others and of the world that they lived in. The Befrienders seemed to get in touch with, and were challenged by, new world views. As a result, they made attempts to embrace other perspectives regarding the understanding of other social relationships. The Befrienders reiterated that a counsellor should have an open mind. In the next extract, a Befriender spoke about how she was challenged to do and think about things differently. The Befriender was surprised to learn about her own misconceptions:

Amanda: I suppose it just has to do with my own personal feelings where, because like I said, when your way of thinking is challenged you have to sit down and restructure your way of thinking. And if you have been brought up thinking something all the time and you suddenly decide oh-my-goodness! this could actually be different, it takes you a bit of a while to ... to stabilise basically. But it was doable, I suppose.

4.6.1.2 Developing an open mind

It was made clear that other Befrienders felt that they were initially judgemental, had a poor understanding of sex and sexuality, and were intolerant of people who did not share the same religious or belief systems. Also, a Befriender had prejudices towards certain clients who did not come from the same conservative background and some other groups of clients who came for HIV testing and counselling. Most Befrienders seemed to have become open-minded and are more able to realise their own prejudices. Befrienders reported that being in the mentoring programme and counselling others had taught them how to accept people as they are, interact with different types of people, to look at the world as a “grey area” and not as a place where there is only one way of doing things. Some Befrienders reported that their mindset with regard to sex and sexuality had changed drastically and that they were more open-minded now. Attending workshops, learning and interacting with people and clients who held different views from the counsellor, were some of the reasons that seemed to have encouraged the Befrienders to develop an appreciation of that which was perceived as different to them.

In the following extract, a Befriender expressed how she learned to be non-judgemental and not to judge people based on their appearance:

Pearl: I think I have learned definitely to be non-judgemental. To look at someone and just like, oh because they dressed a certain way, they must be like this. I think that has definitely changed. I have learned to do that, that the outside is definitely not a reflection of what is on the inside. So I think that’s the biggest thing that I have really learned.

Below, a Befriender spoke about the different workshops that they often attended. She pointed out that these workshops prepared them to work with clients in an effective manner. The information they received as Befrienders also assisted them to develop an open mind with regard to what other people considered as normal sexual practices:

Mandisa: HIV is an STI, but you know, because we are there so much, we focus on HIV. You know, there are other STIs because clients would tell you about other STIs or you can bring it up and ask them about other STIs. You know, it just gives you more information to be able to answer those questions, to be able to give more information. You talk about sex, sexual behaviour, different sexual practices, you know, and also sexual orientations, all those kinds of things just to make the counsellor more comfortable with sex and the sexual practices and behaviour that people have, so that if you are sitting there and somebody tells you that they enjoy having sex with a dog, you don't go HUH!!! A DOG? You know that's so. You are aware that there are people out there who have different sexual practices and behaviours, you are more comfortable to talk to them about it and it's also to get more information.

4.6.1.3 Respecting individuality

Some Befrienders mentioned that they had learned to let people grow at their own pace, and to respect people for approaching life in ways that worked for them. In the next extract, a Befriender expressed in a colourful way what she thought about expectations. She pointed out the fact that as a Befriender in the mentoring programme at the CSA, she had learned to take people and situations as they were. She was also open to the fact that what was accepted as “okay” today would not necessarily remain the same tomorrow:

Lethabo: I have managed to come out of my box, that this is how things should be and that this is how they stay. I think one thing I have learned is that, ja (Name of friend) likes to say this, but um everything is just a grey area here at the CSA. The only black and white is the biology of the virus and after that everything else is just grey. You know, what I have realised though taking from what she said about the grey area, it's actually more of a spectrum of colours, you know. Some people are green and some days they are going to be yellow.

4.7 NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES (MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS)

4.7.1.1 Drawing a line between roles

The Befrienders were expected to wear different “hats”, for instance, counsellor, colleague, friend, family member or student. Negotiating these roles seemed to be more challenging than the Befrienders had anticipated. Some mentioned that they often struggled to effectively establish boundaries when it came to their scope of practice. This seemed more apparent in the boundaries between being a student and a counsellor, or being a counsellor and a psychology student. Befriender work seemed to also slip into the private lives of the counsellors.

In the following extract, a Befriender spoke about how she had to be aware of the degree to which she intervened in the lives of her clients. She pointed out that her supervisor tended to warn her about exploring potentially difficult areas of the client’s life:

Lethabo: To some extent, I always have to be aware that I mustn’t bring in psychological terms and I mustn’t try to go deeper into things that don’t need to be going, delved deeper into, you know. Like (Name of supervisor) says, I might get a person into a state and I won’t be able to bring them back, you know, ja. So I must always, always be conscious of that.

When asked whether her counselling work affected her personal life, a Befriender mentioned that HIV does cross her mind but not all the time. In the extract the Befriender pointed out that she had developed some degree of sensitivity towards topics pertaining to HIV/AIDS. Here, she relayed an example of how her awareness of HIV as a counsellor affected her personal relationships:

Pearl: Not in every day, you know, but we will be talking about something and for some reason my cousin says I talk about HIV too much. But I mean that’s what I do every day, that’s what I am involved in every day. So he will say something like “we were in a fight” you know, the blood splattered and like *sweech*, something like triggers in me like back to HIV mode you know. So I

wouldn't say I think about it every day all day. But I think it does cross my mind like, you know, I think HIV you know, especially in relationships or if you are talking about someone in a relationship, you know HIV has to come up anyway. Ja.

4.7.1.2 Managing the counselling session

Some struggles with boundaries seemed to come from the process of counselling, implying that the counsellors needed to understand when to take breaks from seeing clients, how to handle stress and how to manage emotions effectively. Alternatively, the number of different roles that Befrienders had to play seemed to have benefited them personally, as some have learned to communicate more freely and assertively, or have learned how to create boundaries, and some have even started the process of therapy.

In the next extract a Befriender spoke about how she struggled to take breaks. Although she and her supervisor/mentor had spoken about this, the Befriender expressed that she struggled to take care of herself whilst in the process of seeing clients. She expressed that the breaks were refreshing but that she struggled to manage her time:

Lethabo: Ja , they would. Obviously at twelve o'clock (12:00) there is that feeling, "I am tired, I need a break now". I can hardly take breaks. Taking a break is quite difficult, because there are always clients. There is always someone who is going to come in, and stuff, you know. So there are, if I could take breaks, yes (Name of supervisor) says I must take breaks. It seems so impossible. I'm like thinking if you were here with me every day you would realise why I can't take a break, you know. So it would, it seems impossible to take a break, so I think if I could take more, a break maybe for like 30 minutes. That then would ... I would become more refreshed and for the next, for the afternoon part, then I am more refreshed and I've got that mood that I had in the morning, ja.

In the next extract, a Befriender expressed how the emotional experiences of a client disturbed her. She mentioned that she struggled to contain herself and thus ended up crying on campus as she was feeling very exposed.

Bongi: Like I said, I internalise people's things, so the second person who came to me was a rape victim. I ... you know, I ended up actually crying on campus. Um it's just not cool crying on campus, you don't do that, and it was actually my first time crying on campus and I have already been on this campus for three years. I don't know, it made me feel so exposed. It made me feel ... I was feeling bad for that person so it really made me feel different.

In the next abstract the Befriender expressed how she learned to be assertive and thus learned how to set and manage boundaries when she worked with the clients:

Amanda: I have learned how to phrase things in a different way to still get my message across but to get it across without offending another party. I have learned to ... when the need arises, I have learned how to state what I mean. I have learned how to state what I want to say and in a situation where it's about asserting myself, whether or not I offend that person or not, I have learned how to do that. 'Cause like, for example, in the VCT room you get clients who are very domineering? So you learn how to assert yourself without ... basically you learn how to assert yourself in an official way without being all childish about it.

4.8 OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO HIV/AIDS (EXPERIENCING THE CONTEXT)

Although Befrienders were asked to comment on the status of HIV/AIDS counselling in South Africa, they expressed some ideas which were telling about the context in which they were working. Some of the Befrienders spoke about some of the projects that they would have liked to participate in. The first extract shows what a Befriender felt South Africans think about HIV/AIDS, from a Befrienders' perspective. In the extract the Befriender expressed that sometimes society has over-emphasised only certain aspects of HIV/AIDS such as the medical issues as opposed to the social issues, and she thought that was the reason why South Africans are struggling to deal with HIV/AIDS.

Mandisa: I think a lot of South Africans aren't afraid of HIV in the sense that, I think, they are aware that it's there and there is a whole lot of stigma attached to it. But I still feel like not a lot of people are afraid of it or take it into consideration, you know, that it ... because of the increase you know in

the infection rate. I am aware that, I do know that South Africans are aware of it, but I think because of the social stigma and how HIV is transmitted and all of those things because of the social aspects of HIV, it's not as, you know, it's not taken up as seriously as it should be. You know it's related to so many things. It's not a medical problem; it's a medical and a social problem. And I think that, we've ... you know dealt too much with the medical issue without taking into consideration the social issues of HIV, and that's why we are in the situation that we are in.

In the following extract, a Befriender mentioned that in general, South Africans fear HIV/AIDS. However, she said that precautionary measures were taken when it was too late:

Lethabo: I can tell you mostly what the youth thinks, as much as they become more precautionous about their sexual activity because of HIV, but at the same time it has not reduced the amount of sex they are having. Umm, everyone fears it. Ja, but sometimes they fear it a bit too late, like after the incident where you could have contracted it. So ja it's ... I guess the general view is that it's something to be feared, it is deadly, but it's nothing that is going to stop us from living. Ja.

4.9 SUMMARY

In this section the following themes: (i) Being mentored (Experiencing the Programme), (ii) Interpersonal Relationships (Experiencing Others), (iii) A developing inner world (Experiencing the Self), (iv) Negotiating boundaries (Managing relationships), and (v) Other issues related to HIV/AIDS (Experiencing the context), and their respective sub-themes are summarised in point form as an effective way of highlighting the main issues.

4.9.1 BEING MENTORED (EXPERIENCING THE PROGRAMME)

The theme of Being mentored focuses on the process of being mentored. It touches on the administrative and experiential part of the mentoring process. It also focuses on what is understood by the concepts of mentoring, supervision and counselling.

4.9.1.1 Defining mentorship and supervision

- Befrienders seemed to have different ideas of what mentoring was. They did, however, share similar views on what supervision was, as many used ideas such as guidance, support, therapy and the passing of knowledge to describe supervision. Being able to talk about the issues that Befrienders struggled with seemed to be at the core of what supervision was.
- As far as mentoring and supervision are concerned, it seems that both administrative and experiential processes were considered as important.
- Being a Befriender means different things for different people.
- Befrienders reported that they had learned a number of strategies and techniques that helped them to become more effective counsellors. Listening and reflection skills were improved. Report writing, and pro and con lists were some of the strategies that they had learnt.

4.9.2 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (EXPERIENCING OTHERS)

Interpersonal relationships are a set of relationships that form one major theme which focuses on the nature of relationships that the Befrienders had with each other, their clients and supervisors.

4.9.2.1 Relating to clients

- Befrienders interacted with clients and these relationships seemed to evoke various relational styles and emotions. Befrienders reported that they responded differently to different clients.
- A university campus as a setting seemed to be preferred over hospitals or other settings where most of the clients would be mature adults, that is to say, people with families.
- Clients who were perceived as difficult, argumentative or narrow-minded seemed to evoke intense emotional reactions from the Befrienders.

- Befrienders reported that they had learnt to become more patient and understanding. They also mentioned that they understood that counselling was more about the client than about the Befriender.

4.9.2.2 Relating to colleagues

- Relationships with colleagues were generally experienced as helpful and supportive. However, there were instances where Befrienders felt pressurised and frustrated by their colleagues.
- Befrienders who studied psychology tended to feel that they approached counselling sessions more effectively than their colleagues who were registered for other disciplines.

4.9.2.3 Relating to supervisors

- Befriender-supervisor relationships were characterised by a sense of respect and supportiveness. At other times, the relationship seemed to evoke feelings of instability and anxiety where Befrienders tended to feel exposed and inadequate.
- During stressful times Befrienders would have liked the supervisors to be available to assist them with what they perceived or experienced as a crisis or an emergency.

4.9.3 A DEVELOPING INNER WORLD (EXPERIENCING THE SELF)

A developing inner world is a set of developments that form one theme which is concerned with the personal development that the Befriender undergoes. Here, a Befriender would experience a range of emotions, successes and failures that she has to integrate within herself. These experiences take place within the mentoring programme.

4.9.3.1 Becoming self-aware

- The desire to help others, gaining experience in preparation for one's career and simply "stumbling" into the mentoring programme were some of the reasons students gave when trying to explain the reasons for having registered as a Befriender.
- In the initial stages of being a Befriender it was reported that feelings of anxiety and self-doubt seemed to preoccupy the mind of the Befriender. Many questions seemed to come to mind as the process of learning about one's self was grappled with.
- The many questions, various frustrations and feeling overwhelmed may cause some people to want to quit being a Befriender.
- There seemed to be clear personal gains as Befrienders tended to feel less anxious, to feel more empowered, were less likely to be offended, and were more willing to engage with the process of therapy and to face challenges.
- There seemed to be significant cognitive, behavioural and emotive changes experienced by the Befrienders.

4.9.4 APPRECIATING NEW PERSPECTIVES (A CHANGING WORLD VIEW)

- From a growing understanding of the self, the Befrienders seemed to be aware of a developing awareness and understanding of others. They also tended to develop a new understanding of the context within which they functioned and this helped them to keep an open mind.
- From a poor understanding of concepts such as sex and sexuality, Befrienders seemed to have learned more about these concepts. From being less tolerant and judgemental, Befrienders seemed to embrace more easily ideas and people who were perceived as different from them.

4.9.5 NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES (MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS)

Negotiating boundaries as a theme is concerned with how and to what extent Befrienders played their various roles. Here the idea was to also flesh out to whom and when relationship boundaries were drawn and negotiated.

- Befrienders reported that they played many roles, for instance counsellor, friend, colleague, student and family member. Sometimes Befrienders seemed to struggle with effectively drawing the line between their many roles, and this often ended up affecting their personal lives.
- Sometimes the lack of setting up boundaries seemed to be pronounced in instances where Befrienders struggled to handle stress, or to manage their emotions effectively, and were struggling to take breaks.
- On the other hand, there seemed to be some personal benefits from being a Befriender as most were learning to communicate more effectively and assertively, some were able to create healthy boundaries in their personal lives and some engaged in personal therapy.

4.9.6 OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO HIV/AIDS (EXPERIENCING THE CONTEXT)

This theme is concerned with other issues in the context of HIV/AIDS that have some influence on the experiences of the Befrienders.

- The Befrienders felt that students struggled to change their behaviour and were also tired of hearing about HIV. Befrienders would have liked help to be exposed to other issues and projects concerned with HIV/AIDS.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, the limitations to the study, recommendations for further research and a conclusion will be found. The discussion in Chapter 5 is organised according to the themes presented in the previous chapter. The theoretical framework is used to provide a structure and foundation for a meaningful discussion concerning current and past research. Relevant methodological issues are also discussed in this chapter. This will assist in understanding the study in a holistic manner.

5.2 SUMMARY OF STUDY

In this section of the chapter, ideas of Chapter 2 (literature review), Chapter 3 (methodology) and Chapter 4 (results) are discussed in an integrated and meaningful way. The themes discussed in Chapter 4 are used as the headings of this section.

5.2.1 Being mentored

At the CSA, the term “supervision” is used interchangeably with the term “mentoring”. When Befrienders say they are attending a supervision session they are in essence attending a mentoring session. That is, if a mentoring session is understood as a session where Befrienders discuss matters concerning their well-being, and supervision as a session where skills, techniques and counsellor conduct is discussed (Van Dyk, 2007). Befrienders, therefore, are mentored and supervised at the same time in the same session. This implies that each Befriender will decide on how to use the time during individual and group supervision in a manner that will benefit him/her best. This finding is partially consistent with literature for two reasons. Firstly, researchers have

also struggled to clearly and decisively define the concept of mentoring (Bozeman & Feezy, 2007; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). This implies that some people use the mentoring session in a way they perceive as useful. Secondly, the practice at the CSA is different in that supervision and mentoring in other settings such as hospitals are taken as separate processes which are conducted at different times.

At the CSA, the Befrienders and the supervisor used their time together to discuss the reports that were written after each counselling session with clients. It was found that most Befrienders experienced ambivalent reactions to the supervision sessions. Firstly, the Befrienders strongly disliked the idea of writing reports and discussing them in supervision. They felt the written reports were time consuming and required a significant amount of emotional resources to complete. They also strongly disliked discussing the written reports in supervision. They felt the individual supervision sessions were heavy, intense and emotional. They attributed this difficulty to the fact that they felt inadequate as counsellors and also felt inadequate in answering some of the questions that were posed to them. In supervision, they had the opportunity to learn a few things about themselves. Some of the things they learned were how one was limited in counselling skills or was judgemental or had particular unresolved issues. Learning about the self in supervision was difficult and caused some of the Befrienders to dislike the sessions or even to try and avoid them. Secondly, the Befrienders felt that, even though supervision was difficult, they would recommend it to the others and would not want to see it done away with. The positive reaction to supervision can be attributed to the fact that learning about oneself is beneficial. Although learning about oneself is difficult, it is this newly gained knowledge about the self that assisted some of the Befrienders to become even more effective counsellors. They understood themselves and this assisted in understanding others. They became comfortable with themselves and this in turn allowed them to become comfortable with others. They learned how to listen to, hold and deal with difficulty, and this prepared them for their counselling work with VCT clients.

As the researcher, I found it challenging to explore the experiences of the participants in a mentoring programme when the participants referred to their mentoring sessions as supervision sessions. In the literature, the concepts are defined differently. During the discussion, we could not use the definitions of the concepts from the literature. The practical definitions as implemented in the relationships with the Befrienders, as sessions implementing both supervision and mentoring, are used here. Also, there is a general understanding of what mentoring is. Many studies have been conducted and it has been established that there is a conspicuous lack of clear mentoring concepts and theory (Bozeman & Feezy, 2007). The manner in which mentoring and supervision are defined and understood by myself, the Befrienders and the literature has influenced the findings of the study because ideas were at times confused. In this study, it was found that, although Befrienders spoke about the concepts differently from the literature, what happens in practice has elements of both mentoring and supervision. However, these processes have not been separated in the functioning of the mentoring programme at the CSA.

5.2.2 Interpersonal relationships

The world becomes real and meaningful in the context of relationships, because in relationships there is co-creation and agreement (Gergen, 2009). The findings of this study suggest that there were three relationships that the Befrienders discussed, namely relationships with clients, relationships with colleagues, and relationships with mentors/supervisors. The mentoring relationship affects how all the other relationships are understood. Firstly, it was found that clients were discussed in supervision so that Befrienders could develop an understanding with regard to how to deal with different clients in different situations more effectively. During the mentoring process Befrienders developed the skills to form and maintain helpful relationships with clients and colleagues. These findings were similar to those of Houghton (2003), as it was found that the quality of service delivered by people who have been mentored tends to improve.

Colleagues are currently part of the mentoring process because Befrienders rely on one another for support and attend group sessions together. In these sessions Befrienders enter into dialogue with each other about shared experiences. This results in collaboration to create a shared understanding on issues they experience. The result is that they learn to understand each other and their clients, and develop a conceptual framework and the necessary skills to be more effective counsellors. These findings are similar to those of Eby, Lockwood and Butts (2006), as these researchers found that behaviour in organisations is encouraged or discouraged through the influence of the rest of the members in an organisation. The colleagues, however, provide an environment where individual differences are respected. This affects how the individual being respected, will treat her clients and colleagues.

In essence, a significant portion of the relationship between the mentor and the Befriender is dedicated to having a conversation about the Befrienders' relationship with the client, the colleagues and the self. Within the mentorship relationship a Befriender has an opportunity to explore his/her individual growth and struggles, but he/she also works with a supportive and challenging group which is helpful in shaping the Befrienders' understanding of relationships. This finding resonates with that of Barnett, Youngstrom, and Smook (2002), who suggest that training becomes more effective when supplemented by mentoring and supervision. These findings also resonate with those of Eby et al. (2008), which suggest that there are positive outcomes for those who are in the mentoring process. Since the findings of this study resonate with most of the literature discussed in Chapter 2, as a researcher I would assume that the mentoring process at the CSA has been somewhat effective in achieving its goals.

5.2.3 Appreciating new perspectives

“The notion that there are multiple ways to describe a particular event or relationships comes to life in the practice of reflecting from different perspectives” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 169). The findings in this study suggest that Befrienders learned to become more self-aware. At the beginning of their counselling work they had certain

ideas or stories about the world and how it functions. Some were judgemental towards their clients, as Karcher et al. (2006) described, and sometimes became frustrated with some of the behaviour the clients engaged in. The mentoring process has assisted them in developing new stories about themselves, their clients and the context within which they live. Initially, some of the Befrienders thought that they understood more than their clients did. However, when they reflected on their experiences during the mentoring process, Befrienders seemed to be able to tell new and richer stories about themselves and their clients. Befrienders grew in confidence and started communicating better. The Befrienders were similar to the participants in the study of Taylor and Neimeyer (2009). Similarly, Befrienders also became more settled with themselves, their clients and their work, as described by Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007) in their study.

It should be mentioned that the Befrienders went through a difficult process before developing the ability to retell their stories. They first had to realise that they lacked some knowledge, and the skills to communicate that knowledge effectively. They were also placed in a situation where they had to challenge a number of misconceptions that they previously held. Through this difficult process some Befrienders wanted to quit, had emotional breakdowns on campus and struggled to cope with all their commitments. The opening up of the Befrienders' minds was a difficult process and demanded much maturing from them as counsellors. Also, it was found that some of the Befrienders developed a different perspective regarding the HIV/AIDS context within which they were working. Some of the Befrienders initially expressed their frustrations in the mentoring sessions about contexts where clients seemed not to change their behaviour, and this frustration seemed to be one of the dominant stories during the mentoring sessions. With time, it seemed that Befrienders learned to change their views and they became less frustrated about matters they could not control. The mentoring process assisted them to better understand themselves and their clients. As a result client behaviour could be spoken about in a different, coherent and meaningful way because the Befrienders understood things in a different way.

5.2.4 Boundaries

The findings suggest that the Befrienders played a number of roles, to include counsellor, friend, colleague and family member. If a Befriender's personal life was understood as the dominant narrative, the other roles that he/she played could be understood as minor narratives within the dominant narrative. The findings of this study, as in (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001), suggest that in the beginning of their counselling work, the Befrienders struggled to establish effective boundaries in relationships with themselves, other counsellors and the clients. As a result, Befrienders may think about their work at home when they should have left it at the clinic. Some struggled to focus on studying as they would be preoccupied with a story that a client told them. The mentoring process was helpful in the sense that Befrienders learned to pay attention to the minor narratives in their lives. They learned to conduct themselves as counsellors and to construct new ways in which to pay attention to the other roles and narratives. This means they did not become preoccupied with one role that they played, but ended up being able to make the other narratives just as important as their dominant one. By implication, Befrienders learned to set appropriate boundaries with time, as a result of being mentored.

5.2.5 The researcher's experiences

Social construction as a theoretical framework demands that I, as the researcher, discuss my part in the conceptualisation process. I would also have to give an account of the development of shared meanings with the participants and how I went about interpreting the information that I was given. Firstly, I found the interviewing process to be an occasion where new ideas were formed and different questions could be asked. In trying to understand what the Befrienders understood as mentoring or supervision, I found that I, as the researcher, together with the participants created and learned new things. I learned that not all counsellors in the same context understood the counselling process in the same way. This drove me to fine-tune the way that I asked the questions. I had to be more detailed and specific

with my questions. I started asking shorter questions, but exhausted a subject before moving on to the next. Also, I tried to stick to the questions in the interview guide.

Secondly, during the interviews I had some very strong emotional reactions to some of the comments made by the Befrienders. I did not agree with some of their views on clients, for instance that clients needed to be scared or attacked when they were not changing their risky behaviour. I felt that there had to be a better way to deal with the clients than what some of the participants were mentioning. As a researcher, I could not voice my opinions and this frustrated me. I also became very concerned about the different conversations that the participants had. That is, participants would speak about each other and about supervision in negative terms to me, but would not be open to each other about it. It seemed to me that there was a lack of frankness from the Befrienders' side towards their supervisor and some colleagues. This made me want to protect the information that they gave me because I felt that it would place them in a difficult position if they had to explain themselves. My feelings were justified after the feedback session, because all the Befrienders were concerned about what their supervisor would feel after seeing the results chapter. This leads me to my third point.

During the feedback session, the Befrienders and I as the researcher, engaged in a conversation about the results. Questions about the lack of frankness were asked. This conversation led the Befrienders to come up with useful suggestions. They felt that their supervisor should know what they really thought, although most of them would not want to be the one to tell her. They mentioned that an external person may be useful in assisting them in talking about what they really felt. It made me want to organise a discussion session where some of the issues could be addressed.

Fourthly, the Befrienders seemed to find the process of supervision somewhat painful, but also rewarding. These feelings resonated with me as I also found the process of supervision frustrating yet rewarding. This helped me to understand the process of growth better. I could understand some of the Befrienders' struggles with

learning about themselves. Perhaps, this may be one of the reasons that I felt they needed to be protected. In the final analysis, I thought the Befrienders' struggle with written reports, supervision and their colleagues was something familiar to me. This made me approach the interpretation of the results in a cautious manner, perhaps almost too cautious, as I did not want to impose my thoughts on the results. My approach as a researcher changed from someone who was simply observing to someone who thought deeply about the struggles of those in the counselling context.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The researcher pursued the following aims:

- (i) Explore the experiences of Befrienders in a mentoring programme;
- (ii) Identify potential challenges and successes that Befrienders may have personally experienced during their counselling work whilst being mentored;
- (iii) Explore how Befrienders understood challenges and potential responses to challenges during the mentoring programme;
- (iv) Explore the counselling skills that might have learned as a result of being in the mentorship programme; and
- (v) Explore how the mentoring programme could be improved.

The findings of this study can be used to provide the CSA with feedback on the current mentoring process and to advance mentoring theory by contributing to the existing literature.

5.3.1 Experiences of Befrienders

The Befrienders reported experiencing a range of emotions, including but not limited to excitement, anxiety and frustration. The Befrienders spoke about their development as counsellors, their experiences with others, their experiences with themselves and how they learned to appreciate new perspectives. In this study, as the researcher, I was able to explore the Befrienders' experiences in the specific mentoring programme. This

included how the Befrienders felt about the sessions, the content of the sessions, what was expected of them, and what they felt they could realistically achieve.

It seemed that the Befrienders generally found the mentoring process helpful. From simply desiring to gain experience or wanting to help others, the Befrienders seemed to have developed into young counsellors who could work effectively in the clinic on campus, counselling clients. At the initial stages of the programme the Befrienders seemed to struggle somewhat to effectively set boundaries and to work effectively with the clients. However, through being mentored and with the passage of time, the Befrienders seemed to grow in confidence and seemed to have settled in the understanding of what they needed to do as counsellors. This finding is similar to that of Chung, Bemak and Talleyard (2007), who are mentioned in the literature review chapter. Currently, Befrienders still become somewhat frustrated with clients who are unwilling to change their behaviour. During the interviews, I as the researcher, had some strong reactions when some of the Befrienders spoke about how they responded to clients. I wondered whether some Befrienders were trying to shock me during the interviews; however, I later observed that some Befrienders were really challenged by clients and initially struggled to come up with an effective response. Next, I discuss the challenges and successes that the Befrienders experienced.

5.3.2 Challenges and successes

The researcher aimed to identify potential challenges and successes that Befrienders may have personally experienced during their counselling work and through the mentoring process. The findings suggest that the Befrienders experienced a number of challenges that can be described as follows:

- a. Difficult clients**, which refers to people that the Befrienders found difficult to work with. These people either did not comply with the recommendations of the Befrienders or held views that were detrimental to their own health. This group of people would also struggle with changing their behaviour, would have

multiple partners, would become very emotional and/or become too demanding. Initially, Befrienders did not possess the necessary skills to work with such clients; however, through the mentoring process they seemed to learn the skills to tolerate and to better work with clients who evoked strong reactions from them.

b. They experienced difficulty **establishing firm boundaries**. The Befrienders struggled or were unable to create effective relational boundaries that would ensure that the relationship between the Befriender and the client is protected emotionally. The struggle to establish firm boundaries also included the ability to separate professional work from negatively affecting their personal life. Some Befrienders struggled to draw the line between their personal difficulties and the client's difficulties. Some struggled to manage their time and relationships with friends and families, which at times resulted in emotional distress for the Befriender, demonstrated in emotional breakdowns on campus, seeking therapy or wanting to quit. As the researcher, I observed that the setting of boundaries is more difficult when one starts working as a counsellor. The participants indicated that it was through the mentoring process that one gains the necessary confidence, skills and understanding to set up boundaries.

c. Communicating during supervision refers to the struggle of effectively communicating one's true feelings and desires during and after the supervision/mentoring session. Befrienders reported that sometimes they would withhold information during the mentoring session because they did not want to be uncomfortable or felt that they did not want to take up too much time speaking in front of others. Some of the Befrienders did not want the others to focus on them too much. Some Befrienders felt that they would not express their true feelings because that would mean they would have to deal with it or that their weakness would be exposed. Others felt very uncomfortable with someone (the supervisor) knowing them so intimately. Also, some felt vulnerable and did not like to talk about their own feelings in front of the other Befrienders.

All the Befrienders were given an opportunity to read through the results chapter. They also had an opportunity to discuss their thoughts in a feedback session with the researcher. All the Befrienders felt that the researcher had understood them and had articulated their thoughts correctly. The Befrienders were surprised by how they agreed with each other concerning supervision sessions. They felt that supervision was often difficult, tedious or time consuming. They disagreed with one another about their current feelings towards counselling. Some felt they were tired of counselling, whilst others still felt excited about counselling. All the Befrienders asked whether their supervisor would see the results. They were concerned that the findings would upset her. The Befrienders admitted that they were not frank when communicating their thoughts to their supervisor. When she asked for feedback they usually said that supervision was going well. But when they were by themselves, they complained about how they had to search for cases in order to make supervision interesting.

As the researcher, I observed that there were two conversations that the Befrienders engaged in. On the one hand, they told their supervisor that the mentoring process was going well, and then on the other hand they moved on to complain to each other about the duration of the supervision, the lack of “interesting” cases to present and the time consumed by sessions.

5.3.3 Learned counselling skills

The researcher aimed to explore the counselling skills that may have been learned as a result of being in the mentorship programme. The findings suggest that the Befrienders learned a range of skills. All the Befrienders reported that their listening skills had improved; they learned how to be assertive, how to articulate their thoughts well, and how to manage their thoughts, feelings and opinions. Some reported learning how to connect more effectively with clients and how to patiently work with those they experienced as difficult. They reported that they had learned how to conduct counselling sessions by using techniques such as pro and con lists, and by managing their time

better. They learned how to behave in a professional manner and how to take care of themselves.

Also, some Befrienders learned to become reflective. To talk about the skills that they had learned in the manner that they did allowed the counsellors to construct or deem the relationships with their clients and supervisors as real, intelligible and meaningful. This suggests that the Befrienders were able to speak to their mentors in a constructive manner. Together they were able to come up with plans and actions that were important to assist the Befrienders and clients that they saw. This further implies that they learned a new language of counselling and relating to people. In doing so, the Befrienders learned to change their conceptualisation of themselves, their clients, and their relationships – and the result was that they created a future and an environment that may prove to be helpful in assisting clients. In a sense, the tools and techniques took on a new meaning or understanding that facilitated how assistance was translated from conversation to application in the counselling room.

5.3.4 How the mentoring programme can be improved

As the researcher, I aimed to explore how the mentoring programme can be improved. The Befrienders generally experienced the mentoring programme as effective. They went on to say that the mentoring programme met all their needs. The Befrienders however, felt that the process could be more interesting. They desired more participation with regard to the running of the CSA. This could include activities such as promoting HIV/AIDS prevention on the University campus and off campus. It seemed they would have liked to have had more collaboration with other institutions that were working on the same projects.

The Befrienders also felt that the programme could be improved by inviting an external person to conduct annual feedback sessions. In the end, the Befrienders had contradicting views regarding how to improve the programme. On the one hand, they felt that the group supervision sessions could be improved by making them more

interesting. But also, the Befrienders struggled to communicate their feelings and thoughts more honestly to their supervisor. One Befriender mentioned that expressing her true feelings and thoughts would not only upset her supervisor but would also require that she explained her thoughts and thus do something about it. The Befriender recognised the problem; however, the solution required active participation from her side. This Befriender was not willing to take part in the research/interviews because of the emotional strain, and she felt she would have to pay. This reaction was similar to one discussed earlier in this chapter, where Befrienders struggled with supervision sessions and yet they also found them to be beneficial.

5.3.5 Advancing mentoring theory

This study aimed to advance mentoring theory by contributing to the existing literature. The findings suggest that this aim has been met to some degree. This study is unique because many of the HIV/AIDS studies conducted in the past were directed at nurses, while many of the mentoring studies conducted in the past focused on business and other professions. This study has grappled with defining concepts such as supervision, mentoring and training. Additionally, this study raises questions for further research, such as what exactly is the difference between mentoring and supervision. For the mere fact that this study asks questions, it becomes meaningful, as questions seek clarity with issues that had been ignored or that were taken for granted. Furthermore, the findings of the study may contribute to a serious problem (HIV) that is affecting the African continent.

The above discussion can be summarised as follows. The five aims of the study have been met to some extent. The experiences were explored, the challenges and successes were highlighted, ideas were formed around changes, and responses to the changes were identified. Specific skills that were learned have been identified, and some ideas on how the programme can be improved were discussed to a limited extent.

5.4 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Firstly, the data was interpreted by the researcher who was very involved in this study. This could have influenced the validity of the research findings. It would have been a good strategy to include another data interpreter to enhance the validity of the interpretations. Due to a lack of resources other interpreters could not be included.

Secondly, this study is limited in the sense that it was conducted on a university campus where the counsellors had access to psychologists, nurses and other professionals who can function in a supervisory capacity. The counsellors had a resourceful environment where they could arrange for supervision or undergo therapy without any financial burden or time constraints. Additionally, the professionals assisting the counsellors were skilled and were usually available. Many other lay counsellors outside of this setting do not have the necessary human capacity, financial resources and time on their hands. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the other lay counselling settings with fewer resources. In such contexts, counsellors may not have the resources to deal with their own feelings or the challenges they may experience in dealing with their clients. This may negatively affect their counselling work.

Thirdly, and linked to the previous limitation, only seven participants (females) were interviewed (two pilot interviews and five other interviews). These people were selected because they had more than one year of experience as Befrienders and were willing to participate in the study. Data collected from this limited number of participants cannot be generalised to other settings. However, this was an exploratory study and did not seek to primarily produce findings that can be generalised to other settings.

Fourthly, during the feedback session the Befrienders were quite concerned about the frankness of their comments in the results chapter. All the Befrienders wondered whether the supervisor would see their comments. All the Befrienders also mentioned that their comments in the research interviews were true, and were concerned that the supervisor would need to see the comments. They felt that they could not be the ones

to tell their supervisor about what they really felt. This has become a limitation in the sense that there are many questions one could ask about the reasons why they struggle to communicate with their supervisor; perhaps the Befrienders were concerned about something they were not mentioning. It could be that they were trying to shock the researcher. One can only speculate at this point, and therefore these findings of the study need to be evaluated with a critical eye.

Finally, the semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded even though one Befriender felt uncomfortable with this arrangement. She did, however, continue with the interview. This is considered to be a limitation because she seemed to have been too cautious and wary during the interview. On the other hand, most Befrienders spoke freely and openly about their experiences.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Based on all that has been discussed, the researcher would firstly recommend that the study be replicated, with all the limitations taken into consideration. This will be helpful as it will add or contradict the findings of this relevant study. However, one needs to also consider that the findings are context- and person-specific.
- “Mentoring” and “supervision” as concepts in the HIV/AIDS context would need to be researched further as this will assist in the delineating of roles and functions. This will ensure that the research can be effectively carried out and that the scope of practice of those who subscribe either to mentoring ideas or supervision, can function within their defined boundaries.
- It seemed that the mentoring programme at the CSA was working well, according to the Befrienders. The only recommendations here would be to increase the frequency of individual supervision sessions and to have frank conversations with the Befrienders about what to expect from supervision and from the programme as a whole. This will assist in increasing participation from the Befrienders and

will prevent the confusion of roles and the frustration they sometimes experienced.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In the beginning the researcher, using examples from literature, suggested that HIV/AIDS is a problem in South Africa and on the African continent at large. He then proposed that certain aspects of VCT could be improved and used to curb the severity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The suggestion was to improve the quality of counselling by mentoring the counsellors more effectively. As a result, this study was used to explore the experiences of the Befrienders (lay counsellors) in a specific setting. It was found that the study has largely met its aims, although the findings need to be carefully considered while keeping in mind the limitations.

Through the literature review it was established that mentoring as a concept and practice is used in various settings. However, it became apparent that the concept of mentoring is understood differently in different settings. It also became apparent that supervision as a concept is often confused with mentoring. In some circles such as the mentoring programme that was explored in this study, supervision and mentoring are often confused and are sometimes taken to be one and the same thing. At the same time, mentoring is also understood as a useful process that has added value and understanding to the Befrienders' lives.

The findings of this study further suggest that Befrienders have important relationships with each other, with their clients and with their mentors. The Befrienders in this study went through a range of experiences in these relationships. Some were negative but many seemed to be positive as they felt that, although there were times when they were frustrated, they generally found the experience fulfilling. The Befrienders seemed to have developed on an emotional, psychological and professional level. Lastly, it seemed that the mentoring process had prepared the Befrienders for the future, as many of them were planning to take what they have learned forward into their careers.

When considering that the researcher has been able to explore the specific aims that were set out at the beginning of the study, one can say that the study has met its aims. The findings of the study are also similar to those that have been described in the literature and this shows that the study was useful. In addition, the study has been able to highlight some concerns that the Befrienders had with the mentoring process which they somewhat struggled to express. Although the mentoring process was helpful, the Befrienders felt that it could be made more interesting because at the time they found it tedious. After considering the limitations of the study and the findings that are supported by literature, I as the researcher, would say that the study has been useful and has contributed to the process of understanding the experiences of lay counsellors.

As a final thought, I would like to use a quotation by a participant to point out that some participants found the study to be useful. One participant said that she felt it was important that the CSA should receive feedback because some things needed to change at the CSA. Although she mentioned that she had learned to become an more effective counsellor, she felt that the study was important. During the research interview another Befriender voiced how she felt about being interviewed and on her role as a counsellor. This participant reflected on the interviewing process and linked it to the mentoring that she had received. This quote highlights the reflective skill that she had developed:

Pearl: ...talking to you, then I realise that some things I say ... then I am like, why did I do that? Why did I say that, you know? So. Ja. It's kinda like even this is beneficial. So I think just talking is beneficial.

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