

**A COMPARISON BETWEEN WESTERN FAMILY THERAPY
AND THE 'IMBIZO' SYSTEM USED IN THE BLACK
CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

by

TLHORISO AUDREY SEPENYANE (NKOSI)

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SUPERVISOR: DR M A VENTER

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DECLARATION

STUDENT NUMBER 841-538-2

I declare that *A comparison between western family therapy and the "imbizo" system used in the black cultural environment* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

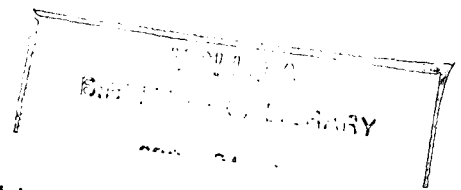

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DEDICATION

Thanks are dedicated to the following:

- To God the Almighty, as it is by His grace that I reached my goals. He has never forsaken me. Thank you, Father.
- To the unfading, sweet memories of my dead father who will always be an inspiration to me. How I wish you could reap what you ploughed.
- To my better half, Butana "Zisto", for your unconditional love, support and faithfulness to your family. Thank you for believing in me. You will always be beautiful in my eyes. Ndoda, I love you.
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SUMMARY

A COMPARISON BETWEEN WESTERN FAMILY THERAPY AND THE "IMBIZO" SYSTEM USED IN THE BLACK CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

by

TLHORISO AUDREY SEPENYANE (born NKOSI)

DEGREE	MASTER OF EDUCATION - EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
DEPARTMENT	EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
SUPERVISOR	DR M. A. VENTER
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The purpose of this study was to compare western family therapy to the “imbizo” system that is used as a kind of family therapy in the black cultural environment.

The “imbizo” system is different from western therapy in its composition. Relatives play a more prominent role than in western family therapy. The imbizo system provides unique support and aftercare to its clients. Unlike western therapy, it requires no payment of fees. The "imbizo" excludes

children while western family therapy includes every family member as part of the system in the therapeutic process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three male respondents from the Nguni ethnic group and one male and two females from the Sotho ethnic group.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT, GOAL AND PLAN OF RESEARCH

1.1 Introductory orientation

It is common practice for families in black communities in South Africa to involve their family members in their problems. This practice is popularly called “imbizo”, which means meetings. The term “imbizo” refers broadly to a meeting between immediate and extended family members where issues are discussed and resolved. Although the term referred initially to communal meetings called by local leaders to address problems in the Zulu groups, it may now be used to refer to meetings, which are called to address family and marriage problems.

The assumption is that the relatives have greater life experience and that they thus have the knowledge and expertise to deal with marriage and family problems. It is also believed that they have the interest of the marriage at heart and are therefore experts in the matter.

Usually the family members from the two parties meet at a common venue

to tackle the issues. The person chairing the meeting will always be a member of the husband's family. Deliberations often involve accusation and blame. There is usually no specific technique used to deal with proceedings but the tendency is rather to tackle the matter head on.

Although the outcomes of such meetings often leave either one or some of the family members hurt and dissatisfied, this process has been in place for generations. It has been successful but in many cases it leaves families shattered. One might find the first cousin's children not talking to the third cousin's children because of the outcomes of an "imbizo" held some years before. Hatred may build up among these children for years. The splitting of families arises, causing more hatred which may affect the next generation.

1.2 Awareness of the problem

This research was initiated as a result of the awareness of cases referred for psychological assistance to the Gauteng Department of Education – Guidance during the years 1997-2000. Most of the problems proved to be family problems and not problems in the child per se, as presented by schools.

A preliminary research project was conducted by interviewing families with problems. The common problem solving strategy used by families was that the uncle, the aunts or the mother-in-law would have tried to address the problems. In most cases the problems were only exacerbated and solutions were only temporary. Some learning problems seemed to be a manifestation of long-standing issues that needed the child's participation in a system which excluded the child.

1.3 Problem analysis

During the awareness stage, the following questions regarding the “imbizo” system were asked:

- What is the role of children?
- What is the role and rights of the wife and mother?
- According to which principles are decisions regarding a family taken?
- How does this helping system compare to known western therapy such as systems therapy?

1.4 Problem statement

From the preliminary literature study and interviews, it became apparent that there are many differences between the “imbizo” system used in the black community and well-known western family therapy models which are commonly in use. It also became clear that there is a difference between the circumstances of the clients in these two groups. The culture, traditions, beliefs and extended family structures all play a role.

The problem statement of this study is as follows:

How does the “imbizo” system as an example of traditional African family therapy compare to the systems theory as an example of western family therapy?

1.5 Goal of study

1. Description of systems therapy
2. Description of the “imbizo’ system
3. Identification of essential elements in family therapy

4. Comparison between “imbizo” and systems therapy according to the above elements

1.6 Demarcation of the field of study

As almost no specific information on this system exists in printed format, printed information was supplemented by:

- interviewing people who have experienced the “imbizo” system;
- the researcher’s experience as intern psychologist with families who have been through the “imbizo” system;
- the researcher’s experience as an African person, a wife, mother and woman who knows the African traditions.

1.7 Empirical study

The research focused mainly on people from the Basotho and Nguni ethnic groups living in the areas of Tsakane, Crystal Park, Daveyton, Kwa-Thema, and Watville, who have been involved in the “imbizo” system. Respondents

from both the Basotho and the Nguni ethnic groups were selected because they use this system.

A qualitative approach to the research was followed and, as a research technique, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted as follows:

- A Nguni woman who had experience of western family therapy
- A Sotho woman who had used the “imbizo” system
- A Nguni woman who had used the "imbizo" system, and whose associates had experienced western family therapy
- A Sotho man who had used the "imbizo "system
- A Nguni man who had used both the “imbizo” system and western family therapy
- A Nguni man who had used the "imbizo' system

The researcher selected a sample group of people who had been involved in one or both of these systems. The researcher happened to be one of the people who had been involved in both systems, and she brought a life experience contribution to the study.

1.8 Study programme

The study comprises the following:

Chapter three	: The “imbizo” system
Chapter four	: Research method and design
Chapter five	: Interpretation of empirical data
Chapter six	: Results, conclusion, and recommendations of this study

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter awareness, statement of the problem, aim of the study and the demarcation of the study were discussed. The next chapter will deal with systems family therapy.

CHAPTER TWO

SYSTEMS FAMILY THERAPY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter systems therapy as a therapeutic technique of family therapy will be discussed. Understanding systems family therapy will allow the researcher to make a comparison between western family therapy and the “imbizo” system. The theory will be defined and explained and aspects such as the presenting clients, the Milan interviewing principles and communication will be discussed.

2.2 Definition of systems therapy

Systems theory is one of the theories widely used in individual and family therapy. Systems family therapy is mostly based on the principles of systems theory. Systems theory has a holistic perspective. It focuses on the context that gives meaning to events instead of on the individuals only or events in isolation within relationships.

According to the theory there is no linear causation of events. People exist in the context of relationships in which they influence each other. In other words “I am with you as you are with me as I am with you” (Becvar & Becvar 1999: 10). Tyler (1992:16), in support of the above, indicates that the systems view considers the world in terms of relationships and interactions. These relationships should be viewed holistically and contextually.

2.3 The process of systems therapy

In systems therapy people are studied in relation to other family members. To understand each person in the family one has to study how each person behaves in relation to every other family member. It is therefore necessary to examine how people respond to one another in relationships. Becvar and Becvar (2000:12) are of the opinion that systems theory enables us to describe relationships and patterns of interaction.

According to systems therapy, there is no sense in analyzing a person independently. The system has to be looked at as a whole in therapy. All the members should be part of the therapeutic process. Exclusion of some family members can therefore lead to the therapist missing connections in

helping the family. The therapist, according to Becvar and Becvar (1999:2), can choose to work with the whole family, an extended family network, or with subsystems of the family.

Jenkins and Asen (1992:3) maintain that systems therapy focuses on creating new connections between different patterns of relationships as the first stage in developing a therapeutic climate. In other words, the focus is on looking at different patterns in the relations as a way forward in the therapeutic process.

2.4 The referred client

Although the family attends therapy as a unit, they do, however, tend to think that they have come to solve a problem caused by one individual in that family. This person is regarded as a referred client or an identified patient.

In Becvar and Becvar's view (1999:90), the family undergoes therapy when one member is manifesting symptoms which have been labeled as bad behaviour. In systems therapy, the bad behaviour is perceived as a symptom of the family problem. The referred client is seen as the family member who

is motivated and determined to changing the situation. He/she may not necessarily be the culprit or troublemaker in the family.

In most cases the client is the person who is most severely distressed.

He /she may be sending out signals that the family is dysfunctional and may be crying out for help. Vinson (1995:241) maintains that the key to working from the systems approach is to view presenting complaints as symbolizing or indicating conflict and dysfunction in the family system.

The complaints are merely an indication that the family has a problem. They may not necessarily be the actual reason for requiring therapy. The process of therapy and the techniques used will unearth much more.

2.5 The role of the therapist

In systems therapy, the therapist is seen as a relationship therapist whose role it is to use his/her expertise to help people in their marriages and other social systems (Becvar & Becvar 1999:83).

The therapist in systems family therapy is not a judge who has all the answers. His/her role is to participate in therapy with the aim of assisting the family in finding their own solutions to their problems. Becvar and Becvar (1999:85) assert that from the systems perspective the therapist participates through making an effort to help others find solutions.

Becvar and Becvar (1999:88) believe that the therapist must decide the boundaries of the family system that are relevant to the purpose of the therapy. The therapist may decide who to include (people outside the system) and when to include them in the therapy sessions. The therapist also ascertains the kind of techniques and number of sessions necessary.

2.6 Other important systems

According to Becvar and Becvar (1999:84), the family is the primary context, together with an awareness of the other important systems within which family members live and work. Systems such as schools, churches and the workplace are taken into account in the process of systemic therapy. These systems are of great importance because they can influence each other.

The problem could emanate from the family and directly or indirectly affect the abovementioned systems. Problems at home can influence school, for instance. A child may experience problems at home and adopt bullying behaviour at school as a result. This child could be crying out for help. In support of this Vinson (1995:241) regards the individual's behavioural dysfunction (such as bullying) or academic failure as an attempt to resolve painful relationships.

Other systems, such as the workplace, may be influenced by problems at home. When a family member experiences a problem at work, the family system may suffer the consequences thereof. In agreement with this Kasiram (1991: 128) says that it is not only family members themselves who may possess pathological characteristics, "but rather that problematic behavior occurs in relation to the behaviour of others, both within and outside of the family". It becomes apparent that an injury to one member is an injury to most if not all systems or family members.

There are several principles that can be used in family therapy. In this study, the Milan team principles were applied and will be discussed in the next section.

2.7 Interviewing principles based on the Milan team's approach

Milan and his team were the original practitioners of systemic family therapy. They suggested guidelines that could be used in this type of therapy. These guidelines, according to Piercy and Wetchler (1996: 60-61), are hypotheses, circularity, neutrality, extending time between sessions, positive connotation and rituals.

2.7.1 Hypothesizing

In terms of this guideline, the therapist in systems therapy has to develop a systemic hypothesis. The systemic hypothesis is an intelligent guess.

Kasiram (1991:130) believes that the hypothesis involves the making of an intelligent guess about the reasons for the family's present situation. This hypothesis assists the therapist in understanding why the family is

experiencing problems. The hypothesis gives direction to questions that are asked. If the therapist does not have a hypothesis, his/her questions will lack coherent meaning, according to Piercy and Wetchler (1996:50-78).

According to papers from the Fourth National Conference of the South African Institute of Family Therapy (1989:16), the systemic hypothesis provides a focus for the therapist's exploration of the family. As the therapist explores one hypothesis, another is formed, based on the new information gathered.

Hypothesizing about relationship patterns in the family provides a basis for further investigation. The hypothesis then becomes the starting point for any interview. It assists the therapist in organizing the interview and provides him/her with different avenues to pursue.

At a later stage in the process the therapist may change or adapt this hypothesis. On the other hand, the hypothesis may be used as a map to reflect on the process of the session. As the session proceeds the therapist can confirm or reject the set hypothesis, based on the information gathered and his/her observations.

2.7.2 Circular questioning

As far as systems therapy guidelines are concerned, the therapist does not necessarily assume that there is a cause and effect. He/she has to ask questions in order to assist the family. In systems family therapy a special kind of question, namely the circular question, is asked.

Piercy and Wetchler (1996:50-76) define circular questions as interview questions designed to elicit more about the changes and differences in relations and interactions in the family. The therapist also asks questions to determine the family's response to the description of symptoms. One family member may be asked to comment on the interactional behaviour of other members. For example, a child may be asked to describe the relationship between his father and his sister, his mother and his sister, and his own relationship with his sister.

Furthermore, Becvar and Becvar (2000:247-256) describe circularity questioning as questioning that provides information about cliques or triangles in the family. This kind of questioning provides the family members with the opportunity of viewing themselves systematically and

not as individuals. They break their habitual cause and effect thinking and see things as systemic.

According to papers from the Fourth National Conference of the South African Institute of Family Therapy (1989:170), rather than commenting on what the family says, the therapist examines how relationships are linked to that particular behaviour. During questioning, the therapist will note details such as “Who is close to whom?” and “Who prefers to spend time with whom?”

The therapist further investigates how specific behaviour by one member of the family affects others. For example, she might ask how the father behaves when the referred client’s brother screams. The client may be asked his /her feelings about this. In other words, the therapist’s questioning has as its point of departure the perspective of one member. The questions will then widen to include that individual’s relationships. The individual may also be asked how he/she thinks the other members of the family view the problem. This is referred to as the dyad pattern.

In some cases questioning may widen to include a third person. In this case the third person would be asked how he/she feels about the two abovementioned relationships. This type of questioning is referred to as a triad. This method allows the therapist to note conflicting patterns of behaviours and alliances, as well as to identify domineering and stubborn individuals who might have caused the prevailing situation.

From this background Kasiram (1991:128-131) provides the rationale for the use of circular questions as a means of enabling the therapist to help the family uncover the systemic effects of different behaviours on all family members.

2.7.3 Neutrality

The term neutrality refers to an attempt by the therapist to avoid forming alliances with any members of the family. The therapist should not show approval or disapproval to members of the family: the therapist should not be judgmental or make moral judgements.

Wilkinson (1992:199) describes neutrality as a state of non-blaming, of taking all sides and working with all views. It does not necessarily mean that the therapist will be an inactive participant in the therapy; rather, the

therapist is not biased in his/her involvement. No one in the family should feel that the therapist is taking sides. However, it is not simply a question of taking sides: the therapist should keep a distance so that the family can take responsibility.

Neutrality shows the family that they have the power to address their problems. The therapist is not drawn into the family problems emotionally or otherwise but allows the family to deal with its problems itself. In support of this, Kasiram (1991:129) stresses that neutrality helps the family to appreciate that they are the only ones who have the responsibility to change.

2.7.4 Extending time between sessions

Allowing time to elapse between sessions is crucial when one uses the Milan approach. This allows the therapist to assess whether intervention has been successful. However, the time lapse should not be too long lest the therapist lose track of the family dynamics.

2.7.5 Positive connotation

In positive connotation the therapist relabels behaviour that was previously viewed as negative with a more positive title. This re-orientates the family to view others' behaviour more positively. As explained by Becvar and Becvar (2000:252), symptoms are not criticized or defined as undesirable in any way. Rather, they are stated positively in the context of the family's welfare. Positive connotation allows the members to change without feeling any strain. Things are seen in a more positive light and the family dynamics are thus more likely to change.

2.7.6 Giving directives/ family rituals

The concept of family rituals should be distinguished from cultural or religious rituals. In this instance family ritual refers to an outline task assigned by the therapist to the family.

Instructions include what to do and by whom, when and where. If, for example, the mother criticizes the father in the presence of the children she will be asked instead to praise him, especially when the children are present.

These directives are meant as an experiment and not a permanent arrangement. Tomm (1984:253-271) stresses that there are certainly no

expectations that the activity should become a permanent part of the family life. The strength of family rituals is that they shift the family to a more functional interaction.

Furthermore, the therapist should not take failure for the task to happen as defiance, but to check if it was introduced too early or if it was too difficult. Sometimes possibilities are that the cause for the ritual to be ineffective was that it was prescribed on the basis of inadequate information (Tomm 1984:266).

2.7.7 Level shifting

Level shifting is used as a tool in therapy when all else has failed. The therapist's interests lie in what the family thinks the problem is and what should be done about it. On the other hand, the therapist will go beyond what each member thinks is wrong and what should be done. According to Moursund (1993:184), the therapist looks more deeply at what is it that the family is not talking about or not dealing with. In other words, he/she will formulate a question (level shifting) that will force the family to confront these unspoken issues.

The therapist applies level shifting in an attempt to shift the attention from the symptom. If, for example, the problem presented is that Thabo is not doing his homework, the therapist may ask who spends time with Thabo. That question could prepare the ground for change because now the attention will be not on Thabo but on how the family relates to him. In so doing the therapist has shifted the level from a symptomatic point of view to a focus on the underlying reasons for the behaviour.

2.7.8 Family tasks

An effective way of dealing with family problems is giving the family tasks to write down: what happened, when, with whom, by whom, why, and what they wanted to happen. Each person in the family will describe an incident according to his/her own view.

The family will identify a scribe and a reporter for these events. This task helps the family to develop a sense of ownership of their problems (Moursund 1993:187). Moursund maintains that the family learns to take charge and to develop a sense of competence.

Although Milan's principles are helpful in dealing with family problems, it appears that communication is an essential element of successful family therapy.

2.8 Communication

Communication patterns define the nature of relationships in family systems therapy. Both verbal and non-verbal communication help to define the nature of relationships. Communication reveals how members receive the message and what the receiver does with the message.

The systems family therapist challenges the whole family to look at new methods of communication. McWhirter *et al.* (1993: 231-237) explain that the family develops a systematic pattern of behaviour from living together. According to McWhirter *et al.* (1993:231-237), family patterns of communication and behaviour serve to maintain the system in a state of equilibrium. Once communication breaks down, the family experiences problems and a state of disequilibrium develops.

The therapist observes the family's interaction during sessions. Alliances within the family can be deduced from the seating patterns, for instance.

Non-verbal communication becomes very explicit. Byng-Hall and Stevenson (1991:195-197) have observed that in severe cases, some family members stand up and move around once the person they are fighting with is talking. In some situations the person may simply switch off and do other things, such as nail biting.

Who supports whom becomes evident when one member quotes the same person repeatedly as if seeking approval or support. The therapist can establish the alliances and who controls whom.

Byng-Hall and Stevenson (1991:197) also maintain that it is here that the concept of a family system may be applied, with dyadic interactions and relationships fitting into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

To bridge the patterns within the system that are unhealthy, a therapist's expertise is needed. The therapist needs to highlight the interaction patterns in the family. Once the family realizes how they have been operating, the members become more open to change.

It is imperative to note that different patterns can exist between different people in the same family. Some of the patterns of behaviour build towards developing still other patterns. For example, the father may be used to shouting at the mother when he cannot find things; the mother then withdraws and becomes indifferent for days. This leads to the children doing as they please because no one takes any notice.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter systemic family therapy, based on the Milan approach, has been discussed. Communication and the different guidelines that can be used, such as hypothesizing, circular questioning, neutrality, level shifting, positive connotation, family rituals (directive and non-directive) and extending time between sessions, were explained.

In the next chapter the “imbizo” system will be discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

THE “IMBIZO” SYSTEM

3.1 Introduction

In order to understand the “imbizo” system within the black communities, it is important to investigate how families in the black communities are structured. This chapter seeks to discuss the family in a typical black community, problem solving, the role of relatives, “ubuntu”, family kinship and support systems in general, in terms of the “imbizo” system.

3.2 The “imbizo” system

“Imbizo” is a Zulu term, which refers to a meeting called by a group of Zulus. The king, for instance, calls such meetings with the local leaders to address problems within the community. Other ethnic groups have now adopted the term to apply to any form of meeting to address problems. It is in this sense that the term “imbizo” is used in this study. In some cases and for the purpose of this study it refers to a family meeting to solve problems.

3.3 “Imbizo” as a support system

Many ethnic groups regard the “imbizo” as a support system. The objective of the “imbizo” was and is to keep families together and to prevent separations and divorces. The “imbizo” system is based on “ubuntu”.

“Ubuntu” refers to the way the black community takes care of its own. It cuts across all tribal groups within the black community. The concept of “ubuntu” is the sharing among each other in order to uplift each other, particularly the weak and the needy in any circumstances and collectively. This is supported by Mbigi (1997:2-4) as he explains that “ubuntu” is a collective personhood and collective morality. “Ubuntu” places a great emphasis on helping others.

According to Mbigi (1997:2-4), the term is better expressed by a Xhosa proverb “umtu ngu muntu nga banye abantu” which means that you are what you are because of others. It also expresses the idea that one encounters the collective “we” before encountering the “I”. It therefore suggests that taking

care of others becomes a priority within the community. He maintains that “ubuntu” permeates aspects such as marriage, funerals, sharing and compassion, respect and acceptance, collective work and many more.

“Ubuntu” is a vital component or characteristic of the “imbizo” system. One of the strengths of the “imbizo” is that it is able to maintain interdependence in the families of most black communities. The “imbizo” system stems from the culture of “ubuntu”. According to Vlaenderen (1999:166), a study of young Africans in the Eastern Cape of South Africa revealed that the participants’ perceptions of problem solving were embedded in the philosophy of “ubuntu”.

3.4 Families and “Ubuntu”

“Ubuntu” is one of the major components of black relationships and marriages within the black community. The identity formation of most black people does not develop in isolation. The person sees him/herself as part of a group from birth. An individual is what he/she is because of others. In support of this Bruner (1997:145-162) indicates that the self is an understanding of how to be a person within your community.

The principle of “ubuntu” governs most black families. To be able to identify with others, you should be involved in their lives, including their problems. This kind of involvement in other people’s lives helps one to develop a selfness within one’s community.

3.5 The development of the self in the black community

In the black community the self is viewed differently than it is in other communities. There is a strong sense of interdependence with others. A person is not seen as separate from others but rather in a collective way.

Markus and Kitayama (1991:227-228) call this the interdependent construal of the self. In other words, the self becomes meaningful when seen in the light of social relations.

From her experience as a woman in the black community, the researcher has found that there is extreme sensitivity to the interdependencies among black people. The community regards each individual as one of a whole , or “umfowethu”, meaning my brother.

To such a community, the self is viewed not as closed but as an open field. The people in such a community focus on the needs of others and not on egocentric needs. This leads to the position taken by most black families that one's brother's child is one's responsibility. Hence adoption within families is an obligation and is also expected.

Markus and Kitayama (1991:226-228), in support of this, argue that people are motivated to find a way to fit in with others by fulfilling certain obligations. When a family experiences problems these are not their problems alone, but others (relatives or neighbours) are under the obligation to be drawn in to bring harmony to the troubled family. The interdependence becomes a social phenomenon. In the same way, needy and destitute people were and still are, to a certain extent, easily adopted into families.

In the past the black community had no formal adoption system. The researcher grew up as part of the black community unaware of the concept of orphans and widows. There were no orphans or homeless because children joined the extended family and became cousins.

The researcher's childhood experience in terms of adoption is very different from that of someone in the western system. In the black community there are several aunts and uncles in a child's life. Their relationship to the child is difficult to explain or trace. Yet in terms of identity they are family. They are involved in every aspect of familial rituals and duties. In the past it would be wrong for a child to enquire why there was a new member in the family.

The sense of belonging to a social relationship is so strong that people see themselves in relationships. Sharing in pain and problems is common and expected in these relationships. The communal sharing brings a sense of identity to black people. They tend to be drawn more closely to those who are willing to help and accept them. The troubled person will begin to identify with people who accept him/her. It is with this in mind that, in some cases, the neighbours are consulted on the principle of "ubuntu". In order to go to neighbours or to the "imbizo" people need to share an understanding or have a common frame of reference.

3.6 Frame of reference and trust

The “imbizo” system has a relevant frame of reference for most blacks. The people identify with this system because the delegates of the “imbizo” share the same belief systems as the troubled families. For example, if a family believes that they have a problem because they are bewitched, the “imbizo” delegates will understand their background and where this idea comes from. A western family therapist may not approach the problem in the same way that individuals in the “imbizo” would.

In terms of the frame of reference, Wallis (1988:185-194) urges us to remember that what may be considered maladaptive behaviour by whites may not be viewed in the same way by blacks.

Furthermore, the researcher’s experience as an intern psychologist in the Department of Education has been that when black people go to white counsellors they avoid discussing bewitchment. This may be because they think that the white counsellor will not understand this aspect of the black belief system.

Wallis (1988:185) indicates that most black Americans do not trust counsellors and consider them to be outside their general network. It

becomes clear then why the “imbizo”, as the only available support to those who do not trust other systems, stays popular and prominent among South African blacks.

The question then arises whether this is the reason why most black people still prefer the “imbizo” to western family therapy.

3.7 The “imbizo” as a forum for problem solving and familial rituals

The “imbizo” may be seen as the appropriate forum for addressing problems because the members are not strangers to the troubled family. There is also a strong element of trust between members because they are regarded as part of the family.

The family is perceived as being protective rather than destructive. Among others the ancestral ritual (“mahlabiso”) that was performed on the day of celebration has bonded families. It is believed that the family ancestors can contribute towards solving problems if they are informed by means of a ritual undertaking. The rationale behind this is that when the couple married

the ancestors were informed so as to protect and bless the marriage. If the family decides to consult a therapist who works from a western perspective, such important procedures may be skipped and the therapy may not succeed.

Usually traditional black men feel that they cannot wash their dirty linen in public. Attending western family therapy would thus seem wrong. The family can be trusted to keep their secrets, hence the “imbizo”.

Willis (1988:190) also established that black American men have more difficulty than black women in seeking help. This stems from the notion that black men cannot and will not air their problems in public. Seeking help from professionals may be regarded as a sign of weakness.

According to Willis (1988:187), western family therapy counsellors are considered as just another person prying into their business. This feeling is expressed by some black South Africans. According to the preliminary interview with Nkosi Lucky (2000:Benoni), western family therapy is a foreign phenomenon. Nkosi Jackie (2000:Benoni), the wife of Lucky, indicated that she did not completely trust professional help, that is, western family therapy.

It is apparent that services provided by professionals such as social workers, psychologists, counsellors and other relevant institutions are available in the cultured black community. Yet, most black people still prefer the “imbizo” as a means to address their problems. In most cases they seek help from such abovementioned areas when the situation has been blown out of proportion. Only then is western family therapy sometimes considered as a suitable model for solving problems in the black communities. According to Sebia (2000:Alberton), she would only consider western based therapy if the “imbizo” failed.

Sebia (2000:Alberton) stressed that the family system is always supportive. It contributes positively to saving troubled families in the form of an “imbizo”. She further alluded that the “imbizo” could be very effective if all parties had the correct information. It is on this understanding that the “imbizo” is regarded as a forum for further communication.

3.8 The “imbizo” as a forum for further communication between family members.

Poor communication is a problem identified in most “imbizos”. According to Thekiso (1990:7), the failure of marriage partners to communicate effectively may lead to many misunderstandings. She maintains that support systems must be fully utilized before and after the marriage takes place. The ideal support system in this case is the “imbizo” system.

Thekiso (1990:7) points out further that the root of the problem must be established to avoid focusing on the symptoms rather than the disease. The “imbizo” can in this case be used as a forum for addressing such problems and for improving communication between family members. It is evident that the “imbizo” system has authority as a structure in the black community.

3.9 The authority of the “imbizo”

The “imbizo” has the power of authority. The system has been in place for years and is still functional today. More often than not people adhere to the decisions taken in such gatherings. It is prominent in both the traditional and the non-traditional black communities. According to Sebia (2000:Alberton), when she and her husband experience problems, her mother or mother-in-

law are consulted. If the problem is too serious for these individuals to cope with, the “imbizo” is consulted.

The “imbizo” system has the power to judge and to set rules and regulations during the meetings. Deadlines and protocol are followed. In some cases, depending on the problem, follow up meetings are held.

What gives the “imbizo” its authority is the fact that it takes into account the cultural dimensions of black people. The question is, do western therapeutic models, for example systems therapy, provide room for understanding and considering these dynamics? It is with this in mind that Wallis (1888:184-194) recommends that family therapy should demonstrate an understanding of black people’s values and behaviour.

3.10 .1 Marriage in the black communities and the position of women

To understand customs in marriage and families within the black community, it has to be acknowledged that these are rearrangements of a social structure. When a couple decides to tie the knot, many changes occur in the existing relationships and family structures. Family structures of both

the bride and the bridegroom are influenced by these changes. New social relations such as son-in-law, daughter-in-law and grandchildren are formed.

When the couple marries, the bride's family loses a member while the bridegroom's family gains one. The daughters-in-law may possibly bear children and add to the in-law's family. Relatives and family are also affected by these changes because they now play the role of a support system to the newly weds. This process establishes a new network of relationships.

Phorie (1989:14), in support of this, indicates that new social relationships are formed not only between the husband and the wife, but also between the wife's relatives on one side and between the husband's relatives on the other.

The wife will then refer to her husband's cousins as her own cousins. The cousins of the husband (now hers) will take priority over her own biological cousins. She is challenged to concentrate more on the concerns of the in-laws than of her biological family.

As she becomes closer to the in-laws, she is entitled to sit in on other relatives' "imbizos" as a representative of her husband's family. Her status will change depending on the relations in that particular family. For instance, she may have to go and negotiate "lobola" as the senior daughter-in-law or as the wife to the uncle ("malomekazi/mogatsamalome").

3.10.2 Lobola ("bridewealth") as a binding factor between the families

"Lobola" is the sum of money or cows paid by the husband to the wife's family in the process of negotiations which allow the two families to get to know each other better. "Lobola" also encourages the families to respect one another. It is clear that "lobola" binds the two families together, giving them power to withstand divorce.

Since families and other stakeholders such as uncles and aunts, are involved in the binding together of the two families, they are likewise obliged to try to solve any problems and to save the marriage through the use of the "imbizo". "Lobola", according to Viljoen (1994: 26), involves both family groups. This gives a more binding power to the marriage and provides a strong institution to withstand divorce.

3.10.3 Source of help with marital problems

Findings of a study by Phorie (1989:99) suggest that in the black communities family plays an integral role in the married couple's life. According to Phorie (1989:99,) the study suggested that 80% of black people who acted as respondents sought help from their extended families.

Willis (1988:186) confirms this as he says that blacks consider counselling to be a luxury. They have always relied on a network of friends, relatives and neighbours for help. Willis (1988:187) states further that while the white family utilizes a community institution, blacks turn to their own family or extended family in times of crisis. In South Africa, the "imbizo" system is the available structure.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter the "imbizo" system has been broadly discussed. The authority of the "imbizo", its importance as a support system, the relationship between the "imbizo" and "ubuntu" were discussed. The frames

of reference, the development of the self in the black community, the “imbizo” as a forum for problem solving and further communication between families has been explained in detail. The position of women, marriages in the black community and sources of help with marital problems were highlighted.

In the next chapter attention will be given to the research methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to describe the research design and methods used in this study. Certain aspects of the empirical study, which were briefly discussed in chapter one, will be discussed in more detail. The criteria according which the empirical information will be evaluated will also be discussed and motivated.

4.2 Purpose of the research

The aim of this research is as follows:

A comparison between western family therapy to the “imbizo” system that is used in the black communities according to certain criteria which were obtained from the literature and from the interviews. These criteria will be discussed in this chapter.

4.3 Research statement

How does the “imbizo” system, as an example of traditional African family therapy, compare to the systems theory as an example of western family therapy?

4.4 Research design

A qualitative research method was chosen for the empirical study.

Explorative, descriptive and contextual aspects were incorporated. The researcher chose an exploratory-descriptive research design for this study because there was no printed empirical information about the “imbizo” system used by the black community.

4.5.1 Qualitative research

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:555) define qualitative research as research where natural phenomena in all their complexity are studied. Ary *et al.* (1990:444) indicate that the chief goal of qualitative research is to interpret

human actions, institutions and events in order to reveal the complex patterns of what is under investigation.

According to Creswell (1994:145), qualitative research is descriptive. In other words, it involves the process of the study and the meaning and understanding gained by the researcher. The researcher develops a hypothesis, uses concepts and refers to theories to build up details.

According to Best and Kahn (1993:185), qualitative research is non-manipulative and allows the situation to unfold naturally and allows the situation to unfold naturally.

These definitions provided the basis for the researcher making personal contact with certain individuals to gather their own perspectives and experiences.

Based on the fact that scientific literature on the “imbizo” system is almost non-existent, information was supplemented with interviews and the researcher’s own life experience.

4.5.2 Selection of respondents

Six respondents were chosen for the purpose of this study. Three male respondents from the Nguni ethnic group were interviewed. From the Sotho ethnic group one male and two female respondents were interviewed. The researcher used pseudonyms to conceal the identity of the interviewees and to maintain confidentiality. However, a key preceded each transcript.

Key: R: The researcher

SB: Papasy

PN: Mmayeki

DP: Papadave

PNM: Papaphil

BM: Mmabest

ON: Mamaoni

- A Nguni woman, who has experienced western family therapy, will be called Mamaoni for the purpose of this study.
- A Sotho woman who has experience of the “imbizo” system, will be called Mamayeki for the purpose of this study

- A Nguni woman who has experience of the "imbizo" system, and whose associates have experienced western family therapy will be called Mamabest for the purpose of this study.
- A Sotho man who has experience of the "imbizo "system will be called Papadave for the purpose of this study
- A Nguni man who has experience of the “imbizo” system as well as western family therapy will be called Papasy for the purpose of this study
- A Nguni man who has experienced the "imbizo” system will be called Papaphil for the purpose of this study.

The researcher selected a sample group of people who have experienced one or both of these systems. The researcher happens to be one of the people who has experienced both the systems, and she brings the contribution of life experience to the study.

4.6. Data collection

Information was collected using the technique of semi-structured interviews.

4.6.1 Semi–structured interviews

The researcher used the semi-structured interview to obtain data. The questions are attached as addendum A. The semi-structured interview is a verbal questionnaire used to elicit information from the respondent, remaining open enough to allow for the discussion of unexpected but relevant issues.

Grinnell (1981:262) believes that the semi-structured interview can be used appropriately with respondents who have mostly shared the same experiences. In this study the respondents have all consulted with a system in place to solve their problems (the “imbizo” system and /or western family therapy). According to Grinnell (1981:262), the interviewees should all have been involved in the particular situation.

4.7 Data interpretation

The criteria were identified from the literature study and preliminary interviews. The role that each criterion plays in either the "imbizo" system or systems therapy will be evaluated according to information from the interviews. The rationale for the choice of the criteria will now be evaluated.

4.7.1 The rights of women in the “imbizo” system.

It was imperative for the researcher to use this criterion to establish how gender sensitivity compares in the two systems.

4.7.2 Children's involvement in the “imbizo” system

Children are regarded as a minority group and their voice in the discussion of family matters is an important criterion for fairness in any family therapy system.

4.7.3 The educational role

All parties in family therapy need to be advised and informed. It is assumed and hoped that everybody will grow through therapy, therefore the educational aspect is deemed necessary in family therapy.

4.7.4 Aftercare

Aftercare is an important healing aspect for families with problems and is considered a valuable part of any family therapy system.

4.7.5 Involvement of relatives

The extended family plays an important role in family problems and family dynamics and is considered an invaluable aspect of functional family therapy.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research method and design were discussed. The use of qualitative research was motivated. The selection of respondents and interpretation of data was also discussed, as well as the criteria according to which the empirical information was evaluated.

In the next chapter the data will be interpreted.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the research design was discussed. Data was collected through the medium of semi-structured interviews. The objective of these interviews was to enable and encourage the participants to express their views and concerns regarding the “imbizo” system in relation to western family therapy. In this chapter the data will be interpreted according to the criteria mentioned in chapter four.

5.2 Interpretation of interviews

The key that was used for pseudonyms is repeated here for the sake of data interpretation.

Key: R: The researcher

SB: Papasy

PN: Mmayeki

DM: Papadave

PNM: Papaphil

BM: Mamabest

ON: Mamaoni

5.2.1 Children's involvement in the "imbizo" system

What is the role of children in the "imbizo" system?

SB: *"To me children are not directly involved but they get to learn about the outcomes. They learn to respect the norms and values of their particular tribe. I don't remember an event where children were involved in the 'imbizo'."*

DM: *"Ok. Children would normally not be involved, unless if maybe the things that are going to be discussed there involved them directly. You would not involve children when the 'imbizo' is called because of the nature of the domestic problems. For example, the father or the husband is not doing right things to the wife and then the wife is complaining that this man comes*

late. He doesn't do this, and I'm always involved alone with this. We blacks we have a lot of respect for children. We do not just call them if it's a stage that they are not yet ready to experience such things. You know."

(Continues) "... If it's a family quarrel you definitely won't involve them, unless they are directly involved."

PNM: "Well, normally in our custom, we do not involve them much. Unless, if maybe we just want some information and we call the child in just to see whatever they have to say and we dismiss them."

BM: "No, they are not involved."

*R: **Why not?***

BM: "Under age children are not supposed to be there because (pause) the information would leak outside and they'll not grow up with a good spirit. Ja, they will not be disciplined. They

will also behave like adults. Of which there is some confidentiality that children are not supposed to hear from. It will affect them even in schooling they will become dropouts. ... Ja, that's the belief. Children must not be involved in the issues of adults."

PN: "We don't call the children. (Pauses) Because we do not want our children to hear what we are going to talk about. What the problem is."

ON: "Mmm, much as I was not involved in the 'imbizo' but (pause) children were not involved in 'imbizo' because most of the problems which were discussed were family matters, so in our culture, we don't involve children in marriage issues."

ON: "It.... it has to do with our culture. Our culture is just like that to say you do not expose children to things, which might discourage them from getting married. If children come and listen to all those problems they end up saying I don't want to

get married and it may affect the children emotionally, they are too young to listen to that. That's what we believe."

Summary: It appears that in the "imbizo" system children do not have a significant role in family therapy. They may only be called in if the issues involve them. It is considered unacceptable in the black community to include children in such deliberations until they are mature enough. Mamaoni stresses that it is a cultural custom not to expose children to adult problems. She maintains that such experiences may have a negative influence on children's attitudes to marriage. They may also be affected emotionally and academically. Mamabest also supports the notion that children may end up behaving like adults. All the respondents are of the opinion that children should not be involved in the "imbizo" system.

Systems family therapy has a completely different view of children's involvement. According to this type of therapy the whole family (including children) have to come together to

address their problems as they are considered a part of the system.

5.2.2 The rights of women in the “imbizo”

What are the rights of women in the "imbizo" system?

SB: "It depends on the family kind of upbringing. Men are still battling to come to terms that women have rights and they need to be given a chance. There is subjectivity in making decisions. Decisions taken are more favourable to men than to women."

DM: "Uh ... They've got rights in the sense that they (hesitates) might come and lay a complaint. They can lay a charge maybe against the husband, or the neighbour. (Pause) They have every right to (pause) to be there if they are witnesses or if there is something that involves them directly as well."

PNM: "Mmm. (Long Pause) It's a bit ... difficult... (Continues). Um, here in our custom, women normally were not given much right to say things but gradually we involve them. They were

actually treated almost like the children, they just come and give whatever evidence is needed and then told to leave.

... It was like that, men always wanted to be on the upper hand when they discuss the woman, the woman must not be there."

BM: (Laughs) *"The rights of women are also to take part and to say something. Ja, according to the new Constitution."*

R: ***In the past?***

"No, when you were a woman you were not supposed to say anything. Only the father because it was believed that the father is the head of the family."

R: ***BM, are you saying the "imbizo" yesterday (In the past) is not the same as now?***

BM: (Nodding yes) *"It is not the same."*

R: ***Are there a lot of changes now?***

BM: *"Ja, there is a lot of change now. Woman can now say something."*

PN: *"No. Women don't have many rights, because sometimes they are blamed (pause). They usually blame women because they say we must obey our husbands, because our husbands are the heads of the house."*

ON: *"If you talk 'imbizo' traditionally, men suppressed women, men are always right. Take a case of a man who's having an affair. That man is always right, they'll tell you it's our culture. The woman must just remain (pause) committed to one man but they will never say a man must be committed to one woman. In my language we have a saying that says 'monna ke selepe...o hlala a gaula yonke indawo' It means that a man is an axe, so you use an axe (pause) in the field where there are so many trees. He can cut any tree he wants (he can have more than one woman)."*

Summary: It appears that in the past women had no rights at all. They were treated like children. Of all the respondents, only Papadave indicated that women had rights. He said they could come in to

the “imbizo” to lay a complaint. It seems that their rights were limited to complaints. Papaphil maintains that it was customary to deny women any rights. Women were also discussed in their absence. However, the situation is gradually changing.

Mamabest clearly indicated that in the past women had no rights but that currently they have rights according to the South African Constitution. The researcher came to the conclusion that in the past the "imbizo" system was culturally oppressive of women. It seems to be viewed more positively now because women also have rights. Western family therapy is different from the "imbizo" system in that it allows all members of the family to be involved in therapy, including women.

5.2.3 Aftercare and the benefits of the “imbizo” system

Do you think that the “imbizo” is a helpful system?

SB: "To date, I would say to a particular level, it is helpful, because my understanding is that (pause) things that are not

settled out of court lead to a person going to prison or convicted."

DM: "I think it is a helpful system. Because most of the time when people are there, they would advise you and give you examples of some other people. How happily they are married and why don't you do the same and so on and try to cheer one another. Mmm (nodding)."

PNM: "Well, I found it working quite well. Ja, in the sense that, you know, when we are there as a family, whoever has defaulted comes to accept it in an acceptable way because, he feels that it's something from the family. Otherwise that person will be an outcast if he doesn't ... doesn't follow what the family does."

PN: "It's OK.. When you have a problem immediately you can reconcile with your husband ... it is very, very good thing."

ON: "Eh, the advantages are that, sometimes we don't have money it gives a person an opportunity to talk.. (Pause) The main

problem is we don't talk about our problems. I've learnt that if you have a problem and you discuss it with somebody you feel better."

"(Pause) Maybe there is nothing wrong with 'imbizo', maybe if we can convert 'imbizo' and include people with proper qualifications."

Summary: According to the respondents, the "imbizo" has unique aftercare characteristics. People can address problems in a way that keeps the family intact. There is a clear feeling that the "imbizo" system fosters reconciliation. The main aftercare functions of the "imbizo" is that its assistance does not require funding. It is a freely given service. People can consult and talk about their problems as indicated by Mamaoni. It was strongly expressed that, because it is a case of the family addressing the problem, people have a sense of caring and belonging. According to the respondents, the nature of the "imbizo" system seems to be helpful and user friendly. It is more direct than systems therapy. Western family therapy may be a helpful system, but because

the fact that strangers lead the process it may be problematic for the black community. However, as indicated in the literature study, western family therapy addresses problems in a professional way compared to the “imbizo” system, and therapists are professionally trained to deal with emotional problems. Another difference that may be a disadvantage of western family therapy is that families do not always have funds for psychological services, whereas there are no financial implications for a family who approaches the "imbizo".

5.2.4 The educational and advisory role that the “imbizo” plays

What are your thoughts on the educational role of the “imbizo”?

SB: “The families sit and the case is looked into. Based on merits of the case both parties then agree to advise, educate, inform and take a stance on the situation. Some issues are solved amicably.”.

In our African culture woman are not supposed to be beaten: if there's woman battering that they've observed from the side of the wife, during the session of ('imbizo') reporting the man would be educated, trained and reminded of his manhood. He would be reminded of his responsibilities that are vested upon him."

BM "But at least we did get some (pause) clues on how to deal about it."

PNM: "Well, in that meeting it means whatever the problem is will be put across to the other members. An explanation will be given as to what (hesitates) third person has done and (pause) then people will come out with their views ... eh ... to try to give advice to the defaulted."

DM: "Ok, my role was to come and listen and then to maybe give advice to both parties."

Summary: It seems that the respondents believe that the “imbizo” system is educational and helps to provide advice. The respondents also feel that people can get clues on how to address their problems from the “imbizo”. Men are also educated in the process of the deliberations. Western family therapy does not give advice but assists the family in addressing their problems by using techniques and therapeutic tools.

5.2.5 Involvement of relatives

Can you tell us what you understand by the “imbizo” system?

PNM: “Eh.... my understanding of the “imbizo” system (pause) is that ... eh eh... eh in our custom if I may put it, if there is a problem that is affecting maybe the family, then they would call uncles, brothers, sisters (pause) set up a date to come and try and resolve problems which may be there.”

PNM: “... now, when we are there as a family, whoever has defaulted comes to accept it in an acceptable way because he feels that it’s something from the family.

Almost in the African culture you find that the aggrieved party would then call, if you are a woman married to me, you then go to my family especially my mother and father and indicate the case. Both parents deal with these disputes at this stage. But if it goes to an extent that the particular level cannot be resolved, the family of both parties are drawn in. This includes the wife's family members as well."

ON: "I'm not sure whether my answer will be correct but 'imbizo' to me is in my language Sotho, it's 'lekgotla' whereby we get a number of people who are experts and we use those people as our advisors. (Pause) If you have family problems we usually go to those people and they give us advice."

PN: "'Imbizo' is when you call (pause) your family, your husband's family and meet with my family. If there is a problem between my husband and me, we call in our elders who must solve this problem."

BM: "If somebody has a problem the way of solving the problem is to call an 'imbizo' to get a idea from some people who are not one

sided (meaning biased). It involves the family. They call in the aunt and uncle and grannies and grandfathers, mothers."

SB: " When you look at the system that we used in our culture, a person would learn from that particular incident. There is a question of forgiving one another. In such cases you begin to win one another. No matter how badly affected the person is, there will always be forgiveness. The system was trying by all means to unite us and to help us emerge as... as a community or as a family."

Summary: The family involvement, as in relatives, is very important in the black community. The "imbizo" system stems from family gatherings with the view to helping the families to survive. It is evident that all respondents feel that the involvement of relatives in their familial problems was significant. The respondents alluded to the fact that the "imbizo" system tries to unite the family, irrespective of the offences committed.

From the interviews conducted the researcher gathered that the elders are viewed as people who are experts in solving family problems.

The respondents are of the opinion that relatives may not be one sided because they have the family interest at heart. Western family therapy, by comparison, has an option of including relatives where necessary. Although the therapist is not under any obligation to bring relatives on board they can be included if they have a significant role to play. The western family therapy system may also use the family tree to trace the problem back to earlier generations.

5.3 Conclusion

Different views of the respondents, based on the criteria given, have been analyzed. The “imbizo” system was compared to western family therapy. There appear to be differences pertaining to all the criteria. These will be discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS STUDY

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter an analysis and summary of the data collected during the empirical research was made. In this chapter, conclusions based on the previous chapters will be provided. Important points will be highlighted and their implications discussed.

6.2 Summary of chapters

6.2.1 Chapter 1

The research problem statement 'how does the "imbizo" system as an example of traditional therapy compare to systems theory as an example of western family therapy' was stated. The study, therefore aimed to describe the systems and the "imbizo" system, to identify the essential elements in family therapy and to compare the "imbizo" system with western family therapy.

6.2.2 Chapter 2

In this chapter a literature study of systems family therapy as a technique of family therapy was discussed. The theory was defined and explained and aspects such as presenting clients, the Milan principles and communication were discussed. Communication in the western family therapy is completely different to the “imbizo’ system. The western family therapy encourages all family members to communicate freely. The ‘imbizo’ system does not encourage children to communicate freely or involve them into discussions.

6.2.3 Chapter 3

The "imbizo" system was discussed. The authority of the "imbizo', its importance as a support system, and the relationship between the "imbizo" and “ubuntu” were discussed. The position of women, marriages in the black community and sources of help with marital problems were highlighted. The frame of references, the development of the self in the black community, "imbizo" as a forum for problem solving and further communication between families were explained in detail. The ‘imbizo’ has a special way of

creating a structured development of the self to its people. Most of the people in the black community see themselves as a group more than as individuals. Ubuntu is one way of sustaining the togetherness found within this community

6.2.4 Chapter 4

The purpose of this study was to compare the "imbizo" system as an example of traditional therapy to systems therapy as an example of western family therapy.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six people who had experienced the "imbizo" system, including two who had experienced western type therapy. The data was evaluated according to five criteria, which were identified from literature and from preliminary interviews.

6.2.5 Chapter 5

Views of the respondents were analyzed according to the criteria. The "imbizo" system was compared to western family therapy.

6.3 Findings of empirical research

The "imbizo" system appears different in its composition. Relatives play a prominent role compared to western family therapy. There were few commonalities in the two systems.

According to the analysis it was evident that the female respondents felt that as much as the "imbizo" was good it was also gender insensitive in comparison with the systems therapy. Most male respondents acknowledged that women were treated like children. However, they felt that there had been an improvement in the system recently.

Findings are highlighted according to the criteria used.

According to the criterion children's involvement it was found that children do not have a significant role to play in the "imbizo" system. It seems unacceptable in the black community to include children until they are mature enough. The belief is that they may be emotionally and educationally

affected, to their detriment. Systems therapy has a different view of children's involvement. The whole family, including children, has to come together as a system to address problems.

According to the criterion the rights of women it was found that women were excluded and had no rights in the "imbizo" system. If they had any rights at all, they were limited to complaints. The "imbizo" was culturally oppressive of women. The men would discuss women in their absence. Women were treated like children. However, the situation has gradually changed. The "imbizo" is viewed more positively now because women have rights too, according to the South African Constitution. Western family therapy is different from the "imbizo" system in that it involves all members of the family in therapy, including children.

Using the criterion the educational role, it was found that people felt that the "imbizo" system was educational and beneficial in terms of providing families with advice. Western family therapy is more non-directive and does not advise but seeks to empower the family by addressing their problems using techniques and therapeutic tools.

According to the criterion aftercare, the "imbizo" system has a unique system of aftercare. People can address problems in a way that keeps the family intact. The "imbizo" fosters reconciliation. Its assistance does not require funding so it has no financial implications. People have the sense that of belonging and caring because it constitutes family. Western family therapy addresses problems professionally: the therapist is professionally trained to handle emotional problems. But, it also has financial implications, which is often a problem to black families.

The "imbizo" system seems to be different in its composition. The involvement of relatives play a prominent role compared to western family therapy. The black community seems, however, to accept western family therapy although its frame of reference is different from their own. This may be the reason for people opting to use both systems, depending on the needs at the time.

6.4 Shortcomings of this study

There are a few shortcomings that the researcher would like to highlight. Some of the shortcomings presented themselves during the empirical investigation.

- There was no documented information about the “imbizo” system.
- Interviews were presented in English and some respondents could not express themselves adequately. A possibility exists that they could have expressed themselves better in their own language.

6.5 Recommendations for further study

The issue of gender insensitivity in the “imbizo” system is so wide that the limited nature of this study could not give this issue adequate attention.

There is therefore a need for further research on the role of women in the “imbizo” system, both in the past and today.

Further research should consider the effects of literacy and improved educational accessibility in the black community. Attention should be given to the financial barriers presented by western family therapy as opposed to the “imbizo” system.

Lastly, there is a need for an understanding of both systems in order to reach out to all communities.

6.7 Conclusion

The qualitative empirical research that was conducted may assist professionals in understanding why there may be a need to include more than one family when addressing family problems. The western family therapist will be cautious of which issues to discuss in the presence of black children. The researcher hopes that this study will assist western family therapists to better understand the black community dynamics in terms of family problems. It should also be noted that the 'imbizo' system can and should include women as important and equal stakeholders.

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ADDENDUM A

Interview questions

The following questions were used as guidelines in conducting the interviews:

- Can you tell us what your understanding of the “imbizo” system is?
- Have you been involved in the “imbizo” system before?
- How do you find the “imbizo”?
- Do you think it is a helpful system?
- If yes, why?
- If not, why?
- What is the role of children in the “imbizo” system?
- What are the rights of women in the system?
- Have you used western family therapy before (psychologists/social workers/counselling)?
- If not , why?
- If yes, how do you find it?
- Have you had an opportunity of being involved in both systems (“imbizo” and western therapy)?
- What is your opinion of the two systems?