

Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education

Edited by

Allucia L. Shokane,
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Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education



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Disciplining in Social Sciences Series
Volume 1

Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education

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**Allucia L. Shokane
Jabulani C. Makhubele
Lisa V. Blitz**



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Peer Review Declaration

The publisher (AOSIS) endorses the South African 'National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum Best Practice for Peer Review of Scholarly Books.' The manuscript was subjected to rigorous two-step peer review prior to publication, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the author(s). The reviewers were independent of the publisher and/or authors in question. The reviewers commented positively on the scholarly merits of the manuscript and recommended that the manuscript be published. Where the reviewers recommended revision and/or improvements to the manuscript, the authors responded adequately to such recommendations.

Research Justification

This scholarly book is the first volume in the book series Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences. The book series editor is Prof. Mogomme Alpheus Masoga (University of Limpopo, South Africa). The volume editors are Dr Allucia Lulu Shokane (University of Venda, South Africa), Prof. Jabulani C. Makhubele (University of Limpopo, South Africa) and Prof. Lisa V. Blitz (Binghamton University, USA). The book provides a reflection on social work education with a slant towards an Afrocentric approach. It aims to facilitate strong reflective thinking and address local realities about social work education on the African continent as well as in broader global contexts. The first volume focuses on issues around aligning theory, research and practice in social work education. The book makes a significant contribution to the scholarly understanding of opportunity to sustain the academic discourse on social work education. Social work as a profession and a social science discipline is dynamic, and it ought to meet the challenges of the realities of the societies in which it serves, given the history of the changing society of South Africa from apartheid to democracy. Over the years, social work education and training has undergone tremendous curricular changes with the enactment of White Paper for Social Welfare and the national review, respectively, by the South African Council for Social Services Professions (SACSSP) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for the re-accreditation of all Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programmes in South Africa fulfilling the prescripts of the *Higher Education Act* (No. 101 of 1997, as amended) and *Social Service Professions Act* (No. 110 of 1978). It is worth mentioning that the curricular changes will also continue with the current reviewing of *Social Service Professions Act* (No. 110 of 1978), as amended, which is underway in South Africa.

The target audience of this book comprises social work educators in the academies and specialists in the field of social sciences. The content of the book is based on contributions from original research and, concomitantly, the authors' research is entirely their own. The contribution of the volume editors was solely of editing and providing guidance. Each chapter has undergone a rigorous review assessment process for the core qualities of scholarship that we deemed necessary for readers to have confidence in the trustworthiness and importance of the ideas and messages presented in the book. The co-editors evaluated each submission for originality, integrity and accuracy, relevance, credibility and hermeneutics. This book is really ground-breaking! The Afrocentric perspective on social work practice contributes to the current discourse on decolonisation of social work teaching and practice. From a methodological perspective, the book is premised on multi-, inter- and trans-disciplining in social sciences. It covers aspects of social work education and practice through research (narrative, qualitative, African methodology, secondary data analysis, etc.), engendering values and ethics, report writing, supervision in fieldwork as well as exchange programmes and international service-learning. A number of concepts such as cultural competency, cultural awareness and sensitivity are addressed.

We hereby declare that this work is an original research and confirm that no part of the book was plagiarised from another publication or has been published elsewhere unless proper referencing and acknowledgement was made.

Prof. Mogomme A. Masoga - Series Editor: Faculty of Humanities, University of Limpopo, South Africa.

Dr Allucia L. Shokane - Lead Volume Editor: Department of Social Work, University of Venda, South Africa.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| ABCD | Asset-based community development |
| ASASWEI | Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions |
| BSW | Bachelor of Social Work |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference |
| CHE | Council on Higher Education |
| CICW | Centre on Immigration and Child Welfare |
| CPT | Cryopreservation Technologies |
| DAAD | Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst |
| DHA | Department of Home Affairs |
| DHHS | Department of Health and Human Services |
| EBP | Evidence-Based Practice |
| ELO | Exit Level Outcomes |
| ERIS | European Research Institute for Social Work |
| HAWK | Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst |
| HDSS | Health and Demographic Surveillance System |
| IASL | International Academic Service Learning |
| IASSW | International Association of Schools of Social Work |
| IBM | International Business Machines |
| ICECS-YASS | International Center for Ecological Culture Studies-Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IFSW | International Federation of Social Workers |
| IKS | Indigenous Knowledge Systems |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |

Abbreviations, Boxes, Figures and Tables appearing in the Text and Notes

| | |
|---------|--|
| IRB | Institutional Research Review Boards/committees |
| ISS | International Social Services |
| LGBTQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and Others |
| MCC | Medical Control Council |
| MCM | Malawi Children’s Mission |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MRC | Medical Research Council |
| NCD | Non-Communicable Disease |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NIHR | National Institute for Health Research |
| NWPSWVO | North West Provincial Social Work Veterans Organizations |
| NQF | National Qualification Framework |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| OAU | Organisation of African Unity |
| PHS | Public Health Service |
| RDS | Research Design Service |
| SACSSP | South African Council for Social Services Professions |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SAPS | South African Police Service |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SOPs | Standard Operating Procedures |
| SPRU | Social Policy Research Unit |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| UFS | University of the Free State |
| UIF | Unemployment Insurance Fund |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCRC | UN Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| UNDESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| UNIVEN | University of Venda |
| US | United States |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WLWHIV | Women Living with HIV |
| YASS | Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences |

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Foreword

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We owe immense gratitude to the University of Limpopo, the Office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, Professor Jesika Singh and the Director for Research, Dr Thembinkosi Mabila for making this publication possible, especially in providing the funding to conceptualise and a series of meetings that brought together some members of the editorial committee to explore the value of this vexed concept in advancing our course for *multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary* perspectives, methodologies, theories and epistemologies of *knowledge pathing*. The discourse on knowledge pathing remains critical in advancing debates and dialogues in the humanities and social sciences spaces of research and studies. I once argued using the proverb, ‘making the fish understand its water’ – making reference to how knowledge is produced, analysed, stored and appreciated (Masoga 2017). The artificial demarcations and categorisations of knowledge domains should be dismantled to free knowledge conversations from all fields of studies. Knowledge pathing pushes for and forces these conversations to happen. One notes with regret that the current situation presents a sense of competition and strife when fields of study in the human and social sciences come into contact, thereby making the following African proverb very relevant: *suffering from the smoke of the fire, the wood one collected*. Today’s societal

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challenges and problems require joint efforts – in thinking, strategy, approach and implementation. I was happy when I received a positive response from Dr Allucia Lulu Shokane (University of Venda, South Africa) about writing the first volume as part of the book series on *knowledge pathing*. Dr Shokane embraced this challenge with open arms. I am equally impressed by the choice of her editorial team, Professor Lisa Blitz (Binghamton University, New York, USA) and Professor Jabulani Makhubele (University of Limpopo, South Africa), both scholars of note in their respective areas of research in the field of Social Work. It has been a daunting task to approach relevant and committed authors to contribute to this volume. Authors who contributed to this volume comprise both novice and established researchers – a necessary mixture. The editorial team felt it necessary to include both categories. One is also gladdened by a satisfactory number of women who contributed to this volume.

The first volume of this series is entitled *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education*. This volume aims to provide reflections on issues around aligning theory, research and practice in social work education. Social work, as a profession and a social science discipline, is dynamic, and it must meet the challenges of the realities of the societies in which it serves.

This book affords a space for discussion relating to social work curricular changes, focussing on local knowledge, indigenisation and the developmental context of higher education in a democratic South Africa within the context of national developmental plan. This book is aimed at social work educators, social work practitioners and social sciences specialists.¹

1. Inaugural lecture presented at the University of Venda, School of Human and Social Sciences, 25 May 2017.

Preface

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This series aims at reflecting on social work education given the history of the changing world. This book discusses developments related to Knowledge Pathing: Multi-, Inter- and Trans-Disciplining in Social Sciences, with special reference to focus on *Issues Around Aligning Theory, Research and Practice in Social Work Education*. This book comprises 13 chapters on current social work education issues relating to theory, practice and research. Our contributing authors represent some of the finest thinkers and practitioners writing in the field today. They come from different backgrounds across South Africa, Zimbabwe, USA and Germany.

Each chapter of this volume has undergone rigorous review assessing for the core qualities of scholarship we deemed necessary for readers to have confidence in the trustworthiness and importance of ideas and messages. The editors evaluated each submission for originality, integrity and accuracy, relevance, credibility and hermeneutics. As part of the assessment for

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originality, each manuscript was processed electronically through the Turnitin database. The Turnitin program checks all new submissions against works in its database and generates a 'similarity report', indicating matches of phrases from the current paper and works that exist in the database. Only those manuscripts with low similarity index were accepted for publication, ensuring that readers get to hear the authentic voice of the writer.

Integrity and accuracy were assured through the editors' knowledge of the subject areas. Each chapter is well supported by the existing literature, theory and research evidence. As social work faculty, deeply engaged in the education of our students and invested in the professional development of the social work and human services workforce, the relevance and credibility of each chapter was central to our review and we are confident that the work herein has value for students as well as experienced professionals and leaders in the field. As scholars, hermeneutics and knowledge systems are deeply important in our work and understanding applications of these concepts in the indigenisation of social work practice and research were central concerns in our reviews.

Chapter 1 focuses on the Afrocentric research methodology and presents the contribution of this methodology in the indigenisation of social work. It introduces and advocates for the adoption of Afrocentric methodology in social work research as a step towards Africanising the profession.

Chapter 2 focuses on the importance of data collection for qualitative research in social work. It aims at identifying the advantages of qualitative research in exploring the lived experiences of diverse populations. The authors demonstrate the essence of the participants' use of their own languages during data gathering and the translation of data and indicate the importance of accurately capturing and reporting the findings.

Chapter 3 focuses on the relevance and use of secondary data analysis in social work research. The chapter aims to ensure that

readers gain a broad understanding into the meaning of secondary data analysis, distinguish between primary data and secondary data, and realise the benefits of using secondary data analysis. The author further discusses the relevance of secondary data analysis in social work.

Chapter 4 deals with ethics in research: essential factors for consideration in scientific studies. It provides general explanation, significance and principles of ethics in research and briefly discusses research and ethics-related exit level outcomes (ELOs)/core social work knowledge areas in the BSW programme in South Africa. The author highlights a few historical challenges that can help illustrate past ethical transgressions and suggests key ethical aspects that must be integrated in research projects.

Chapter 5 focuses on engendering values and ethics in social work education and training. The main theme of this chapter is an introduction to values and ethics for social work students with the aim of providing an in-depth and critical understanding of the value base of the profession and the analysis and application of value and ethics in everyday practice.

Chapter 6, which focuses on culture, stories and narratives in social work education, aims to identify possible ways of using African cultural stories in teaching and learning and assesses storytelling methods as a viable tool in teaching and learning. The learning outcomes are to enhance the ability of students to be competent in African culture, particularly in focussing on integrating theory with practice as well as applying stories and narratives appropriately in the classroom setting and the community system.

Chapter 7 deals with the significance of communication and report writing in social work. The authors deal with the fundamentality of communication skills in social work and the critical aspects and significance of social work reports. They also discuss the gaps that exist in social work reports and the importance of teaching social work students report writing.

Chapter 8 deals with what American students learn from Africa through international service learning and social work education. The authors have demonstrated the components of ethical international service learning and pathways for professional development for students of social work and other human service professions. They have critically considered the complexities of developing cultural humility and global citizenship in the context of living with social and economic privilege. The chapter also illustrates the emotional demands of international service learning as a natural part of growth in developing insights that advance students' cultural humility and promote global citizenship.

Chapter 9 deals with social work transcending national borders through an international exchange programme. The authors have provided readers with an overview of the preparatory activities related to an already-established exchange programme involving students and academic staff. They have further shared subject-specific current topics in the field of social work, culture-specific training on social and political information, and language exercises offered before the exchange programme. Finally, they share with readers the students' experiences on mastering preparatory formats and the transferability of these offerings from student groups to individual instructors and academic personnel.

Chapter 10 deals with moving towards collaborative social work supervision. The author explains the concept 'supervision' and advances the reasons as to why supervision is necessary in social work practice. The chapter discusses collaborative supervision using the major aspect and principles of the strength perspective and to understand various roles of a social work supervisor in collaborative supervision.

Chapter 11 focuses on supervision during social work fieldwork practice, using a case of the University of Venda. It deals with the methods of supervision used during fieldwork placement of social work students. It explores whether students are adequately

supervised during fieldwork practical work. The chapter also examines the nature of the relationship between students and social work supervisors and analyses and describes the supervision challenges faced by students during fieldwork practical work.

Chapter 12 is on social work with transnational migrant children in South Africa. This chapter familiarises social work practitioners with categories and needs of migrant children so that they would be able to fulfil their roles effectively and appropriately. The author also highlights the legislative responses available so that social workers could be able to utilise appropriate procedures when assisting migrant children.

Chapter 13 focuses on understanding how Afrocentricity and ecosystems theory may inform the indigenisation of forensic social work education, training and practice. It also describes the dynamics of indigenising forensic social work in South Africa.

Epistemology and theory framing for this volume

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■ Background

This volume on social work theory research and practice in education is a serious attempt to rethink how social work theory and practice teaching and learning currently happen. Theoretical reflection by itself cannot obscure the place of epistemology and ontology. In our view, epistemology, ontology and theory all

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relate closely. It is not our intention to turn this introductory chapter into a philosophical piece and thereby risk drifting off the focus and agenda of this entire volume. We considered it critical, however, to raise some discussion about this to help frame the context for the volume.

The practice of social work and teaching philosophies that are expected from social work practitioners and educators require a knowledge base that is appropriate for any context with the micro- and macro-continuum. Conversely, social workers all over the world are in the coalface of solving numerous and complex societal problems (Healy 2008). In their quest to resolve societal problems, social workers need to assimilate various bodies of research along with theoretical and practice-based knowledge.

The knowledge base of the social work profession and other human and social sciences is generally founded on the fields of psychology and sociology. We agree with the views of DuBois and Miley (2014) as well as Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2013) that it is essential for social workers to be up to date with the available theories and practice models as well as integrate the best research evidence into their own practice. To be responsive to what social work entails, we have espoused the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (2014) global definition of social work which advances that:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. (p. 1)

It remains evident in the global definition of the IFSW and IASSW (2014) that most theories in social work rely on the social sciences for their orientation. Theories are sets of interrelated concepts and constructs that provide a framework for understanding how

and why something does or does not work (Maclean & Harrison 2008; Payne 2005). Details of a theory that are understood as 'a system of generalised statements or propositions about a phenomenon' (Appelrouth & Edles 2011:2) provide a framework for the critical understanding of any phenomenon (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2013). Moreover, we consistently concur with the views stated by Calhoun et al. (2012) that theory is essential in any social sciences research not only to guide the social inquiry to generate answers to social questions, but also for developing new sets of inquiries under changing circumstances, leading to further inquiries. To this end, practice-based and scholarly contributions that help with the development of the theory itself can be utilised for the enhanced understanding of the social world.

■ Theoretical perspectives in social work

In this section, we present a list of systematic theoretical perspectives that are most common in the practice of social work, such as person-centred approach, ecological approach and systems theory, cognitive-behavioural approach, crisis intervention approach and psychosocial model. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive. It is essential to clarify that the ecological approach and systems theory are often applied together in social work practice and are also referred to as ecosystems framework. A comprehensive detail of what the ecosystem entails is emphasised in Chapter 5, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 of this book.

■ Person-centred approach

The person-centred approach is based on the work of Carl Rogers (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman 2013). It is commonly known for supporting the principles of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard as necessary in the helping relationship. This approach is based on the notion that everyone

has the capacity to develop and grow, thereby allowing people to find their own way in their own time. It is famous for resisting temptation to criticise people, thus affirming the dignity and worth of all people.

■ Ecological approach

The ecological approach affirms that people are interdependent on each other and their environment. Consequently, this mutual dependence tends to influence each other over time. The ecological approach was developed by Germain and Gitterman as the 'Life model' in 1980 and was further improved upon in 1996. Essentially, this approach articulates that as people move through their own unique life course, it is expected that they may encounter 'stressors', and it is assumed that these stressors may be more than what they can cope with (Maclean & Harrison 2008). Thus, an interrelationship between person and environment co-exists. Therefore, in order to cope with the environment and stressors thereof, people employ different coping mechanisms and consequently draw on resources in their environment, social networks and inner resources.

■ Systems theory

The systems theory avows that people are not isolated individuals but operate as a part of wider networks or 'systems' (Johnson 2008). These systems may be informal (such as family or friends), formal (such as support groups, stokvels and clubs) or public (schools and hospitals). In return, there could be difficulties that may arise if there is a lack of fit between the persons and the systems they operate within. The systems can be employed to support the service user to achieve a change. In the practical context, the systems theory emphasises on changing environments rather than individuals. The main focus of the system theory is on patterns rather than on cause and effect, which allows for different ways of getting to the desired outcome.

This notion tends to see the social worker as part of a system of change rather than being solely responsible for the change. Furthermore, it could lead to multidisciplinary work.

■ Cognitive-behavioural approach

The cognitive-behavioural approach is based on the assumption that people's thoughts, beliefs, images and attitudes influence their behaviour and, if these can be changed, their behaviour will change as well. This approach uses techniques from behaviourism, social learning theory and cognitive theory (Coulshed 1991). This approach accepts as true that 'self-talk' reinforces irrational thinking. It is for the stated reasons that Lindsay (2009) provides an example of such behaviour which may be perceived to be emotionally driven and irrational when it represents a rational response to very upsetting and disturbing experiences. Furthermore, it is involved in identifying and reframing unhelpful beliefs. This approach can be employed in behaviour modification cases whereby one can use a system of rewards.

■ Crisis intervention

The crisis intervention approach is also considered a 'brief intervention' approach, as it deals with immediate issues rather than long-term problems (Lindsay 2009). It is based on ego-psychology and cognitive-behavioural models that believe that serious events have an impact on the way people think about themselves and their emotional reactions (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman 2013). Thus, crises can reawaken unresolved issues from the past but offer a chance to correct non-adjustment to past events.

■ Psychosocial model

The psychosocial model adopts a medical model of individual pathology. This theory generally draws from 'personality theory',

which emphasises the Freudian concepts of id, ego and superego and looks at defence mechanisms (to protect the ego) (Trevithick 2000). The social workers who apply this theory in their work are often termed ‘mini-psychoanalysts’, for their use of clinical jargon (DuBois & Miley 2014). The psychosocial model is often criticised for its tendency of focussing on cause and effect.

The selected theories discussed above endeavoured to point out that some of the theories which are applied in social work draw on insights from the fields of psychology and social sciences, although we do not dispute that some of them are applied by social workers regularly in research to guide their social enquiries. Furthermore, these theories have been founded by individual theorists from the fields of psychology and sociology within the contexts of the environment in which they lived.

Although we have accepted the fact that in the field of human and social sciences the whole way of thinking and looking at the world depends on theoretical perspectives, in particular, in this chapter we ask for epistemological contributions in social sciences to follow a systematic and scholarly approach, based on Africa’s theoretical context, research and practice. We consider that this could also be applied in the field of social work knowledge and education. Similarly, Calhoun et al. (2012:1) insist on ‘the development of systematic knowledge about social life, the way it is organised, how it changes, its creation in social action, and its disruption and renewal in social conflict’. Thus, our proposal of a transformed theoretical underpinning is explained in the next section.

■ A transformed theoretical underpinning

On our part, we (Shokane & Masoga 2018:1-2) looked at the philosophy which underpins the knowledge base in the social

sciences, with social work in particular, as Western and deeply influenced by European thought and experience. As noted previously, the social work profession comprises a mixture of epistemological perspectives that are imported from the Western theories. We (Shokane & Masoga 2018:2) highlight the fact that 'Western theories have dominated the knowledgebase in the practice and teaching of social work in Africa'. Hence, this is our idea of embracing Masoga's (2017) move towards an Afro-sensed approach to become a theoretical basis of this study. The term 'Afro-sensed' differs from 'Afrocentric', as it refers to one's innate awareness, a 'sense', of one's identity, that is, being African; without making it 'centric', at the exclusion of all else, implicating oneself in another hierarchical regime structure, where one is better than another (Masoga 2017).

In our view, the Afro-sensed theoretical basis becomes a protesting theoretical framing. This move even becomes a disobedience theoretical journey. In her new work, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Sandoval (2000) designs a method for emancipation that builds bridges across theoretical chasms, while creating strategies for globalising resistance from below. Her book is a thought-provoking, explanatory publication that provides one with a series of methods, not only for analysing texts but also for creating social movements and identities that are capable of speaking to, against and through power.

Sandoval's theory of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world, and the methodology behind this, lends itself to the representation and mobilisation of the oppressed. This results in the creation of a mode of social action: the hermeneutic she calls 'love in the postmodern world' (2000:12). This is exactly what we are calling for here. 'We must, all of us together, dig the grave in which colonialism will finally be entombed!' In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon goes on to incite Africans to carve out their own identity, saying, 'So, my brothers, how could we fail to understand that we have better

things to do than follow Europe's footsteps?' (Fanon 2004:235). For instance, in his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, WaThiongo (1994) reminds that:

Africa as a continent has been a victim of forces of colonial exploitation, oppression and human degradation. In the field of culture she was taught to look on Europe as her teacher and the centre of man's civilisation, and herself as the pupil. In this event Western culture became the centre of Africa's process of learning, and Africa was relegated to the background. (p. 100)

Mosala (2016) concurs that:

The black pain of a post-apartheid betrayal of black people is infinitely more painful and dangerous than that of an age when no one had promised any freedom to anyone. (n.p.)

In a lecture entitled 'Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive', Mbembe (2015) calls for *the demythologising of whiteness*. This is not, he argues:

Because whiteness is the same as history. Human history, by definition, is history beyond whiteness. Human history is about the future. Whiteness is about entrapment. Whiteness is at its best when it turns into a myth. It is the most corrosive and the most lethal when it makes us believe that it is everywhere; that everything originates from it and it has no outside. (n.p.)

Some level of disobedience becomes necessary to voice out and assert transformed theories and educational approaches in the teaching of social work today. The latter is the current task and cannot be simply eroded or ignored. A number of contributions in this volume wrestle with this question about identity and context of researching and teaching social work today. These contributions have melted the hard nuts of Western coined theories and juxtaposed them with current pulsating realities on the ground. All efforts have been made to centre the context and content in a very relevant and appropriated sense. It therefore remains our challenge to drive our research and teaching philosophies and include approaches that meet people where

they live and thrive - and struggle. Social work is about real people and as such they (these people, our people) matter very much in the researching and teaching of social work. Some sensing and consideration of the context of people become critical in taking forward the course of social work research and teaching today.

Afrocentric methodology: A missing pillar in African social work research, education and training

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■ Introduction

Research plays a critical role in both social work education and practice. As a helping profession, methods used in social work practice should be evidence-based. Research informs practice while at the same time generating knowledge that is used for teaching. This chapter introduces and advocates for the adoption of Afrocentric methodology in social work research as a step towards Africanising the profession. For a very long time, Africans have been researched from a Western standpoint using Western methodologies, some of which do not recognise beliefs, values, traditions, mores and taboos that are central in African life. Askeland and Payne in Mogorosi and Thabede (2018:4) posit that ‘the concept of universal knowledge conflicts with the idea that different cultures have different ways of understanding the world’. Social work practitioners should understand that African worldview(s) are different from Western worldview(s). Universal social work has proved to be problematic in some parts of the world. As noted by Thabede (2005), it is not surprising for a Western-oriented social worker to experience cultural shock in Africa which may compromise his or her ability to practice effectively. Western cultures differ from African cultures so do social problems which suggest that intervention strategies generated for the Western world may not be effective in an African context. African life is communal hinged on the *ubuntu* philosophy as opposed to the individualistic nature of Western life. One big question that has been interrogated by few non-Western scholars is the applicability of traditional social work methods, principles and values in non-Western contexts. Is it necessary to have and talk of African social work which is different from social work practice on other continents? Should the answer be yes, how should research in Africa be modelled to generate Afro-knowledge to inform African social work?

Though a lot has been written on the decolonisation of the profession, there is only scanty literature on how social work

research should be indigenised (Mabvurira 2016). Mogorosi and Thabede (2018) note that the indigenisation of the profession is an urgent task. Afrocentric methodology has a big potential to propel the indigenisation of the social work profession. Social science research, particularly Afrocentric methodologies (Asante 1988, 1990, 1995; Mabvurira 2016; Mazama 2003; Mkabela 2005; Pellebon 2007, 2012), is critical in the achievement of development, crafting of appropriate intervention strategies as well as evaluating existing programmes. It is therefore imperative for social work training institutions to educate students on Afrocentric methodology as a method of social inquiry. African students must know the world through African eyes and experience (Prah 2017). This chapter proceeds by conceptualising Afrocentricity, Afrocentric methodology and giving an argument for the need to adopt Afrocentric methodology in social work research. Mogorosi and Thabede (2018) challenge social work educators and researchers to develop theory and training suited to the clients' socio-economic environment if the profession is to remain relevant and effective.

The authors acknowledge that the term 'Africa' must be used with caution in academia as Africa is a vast continent and one may run the risk of generalisation. Esikot (2012) corroborates this point by arguing that no continent in the world comprises a higher degree of multiculturalism than Africa. However, despite diversity among indigenous African life, O'Brien and Palmer (2009:16) have identified the following generic themes:

- *All things in the universe are part of a whole.* There is no sharp distinction between the sacred and the non-sacred.
- *In most African traditions, there is a Supreme Being: Creator, sustainer, provider and controller of all creation.*
- *The human condition is imperfect and always will be.* Sickness, suffering and death are all fundamental parts of life. Suffering is caused by sins and misdeeds that offend the gods and ancestors or by being out of harmony with society.
- *Ritual actions may relieve the problems and suffering of human life, either by satisfying the offended gods or by resolving*

social conflicts. Rituals help to restore people to the traditional values and renew their commitment to spiritual life.

- *Human society is communal*. Ancestors, the living, the living dead and those yet to be born, they all form an important part of the community. The relationships between the worldly and the other worldly help to guide and balance the lives of the community. People need to interact with the spirit world which is all around them.

However, apart from the commonality of African lives, the authors wrote mainly in the contexts of South Africa and Zimbabwe. The authors were also cognisant of the impact of colonialism, imperialism and globalisation on Africa.

■ Conceptualising Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity has been seen as a theory and a practice perspective that has its origins in the United States (US) and has over the years been used with African Americans. The theory focuses on African worldview(s) as opposed to other worldview(s). The founder of Afrocentricity (Molefe Kete Asante) argues that the primary social crisis of black Americans is culture. Afrocentricity seeks to demystify the notion that white cultures are superior over black cultures. It also seeks to challenge the subordination of black people which has been natured and perpetuated by imperialism. According to Sono (n.d.:69), Afrocentricity is the contest of the centrality of conventional scholarship and scientism – a rejection of the Western traditional and modes of analysis in African phenomena. Mkabela (2005) corroborates this by arguing that Afrocentricity is generally opposed to theories that dislocate Africans to the periphery of human thought and experience. She further argues that although the origins of the concept are attributed to black Americans, not all forerunners of the Afrocentric school of thought were black Americans. She notes that the greatest contributor to the origin of the idea of Afrocentricity is the West African Cheikh Anta Diop (1989), through his book *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality*.

Pellebon (2007) notes that Afrocentricity's growing influence is undeniable. The term has sometimes been used to refer to anything African, such as clothes, pottery and even food. According to Asante (2003), the goals of Afrocentricity are, (1) to expose and resist white racial domination over African Americans, (2) to transform African Americans over their culture centre, (3) to convert African Americans to an ideology of values, spirituality and rituals, and (4) to analyse disciplines such as literature, history, linguistics, politics, science, religion and economics from an African perspective. It challenges Eurocentrism, arguing that it is not universal. More importantly, the primary objective of Afrocentricity is to liberate the research and study of African peoples from the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship. Mkabela (2005) further argues that the aim of Afrocentricity is to see all cultural centres respected.

Eurocentric research methodologies have failed to consider African cultures. Europeans assumed that the African mind is not capable of any systematic philosophy. Bodibe (1993) argues that Africans have a cosmology, ontology, eschatology, epistemology and axiology that is quintessentially their own (De la Rey & Ipser 2004). The biggest challenge with Eurocentric ideology is that it masquerades as a universal view in many fields such as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, education and anthropology. When the West colonised Africa, there was a total distortion of African values. This is evidenced by Chukwuokolo (2010:31) who reiterates that '[...] imperialism bequeathed Africans with two main unforgettable experiences, namely the denial of African identity and the tendentious imposition of Western thoughts and cultural realities and perceptions'. Furthermore Edwards et al. (2009) note that:

Converging lines of recent evidence from various disciplines such as genetics, linguistics, palaeontology and archaeology all point consistently to Africa as the cradle of civilisation for all humanity, with homo sapiens evolving some one hundred and fifty thousand years ago and gradually emigrating across the Sinai Peninsula some fifty thousand years later. (p. 1)

■ Afrocentric methodology

Although it started as a paradigm used mostly in humanities, Afrocentricity has been used as a research methodology. According to Pellerin (2012:149), normative social science approaches lack a culturally appropriate and realistic interpretation of African reality and researchers who use them do not take into consideration the historical, social and contemporary experiences of African people. Western research techniques have been criticised for failure to effectively measure African phenomena, as they ignore African cultures. Afrocentricity is a philosophical and theoretical perspective that, when applied to social research, can form the essential core of the idea (Mkabela 2005). One of the proponents of Afrocentric methodology, Ama Mazama (2003) identified seven criteria for the establishment of an Afrocentric methodology:

1. African experience must guide and inform all inquiry.
2. The spiritual is important and must be given its due place.
3. Immersion in the subject is important.
4. Wholism is a must.
5. Intuition is a valid source of information.
6. Not everything that matters is measurable.
7. Knowledge generated must be liberating.

These criteria are very critical for social work researchers. Social workers are ethically obliged to respect diversity and be culturally competent in their practice. One way of ensuring cultural competence should be through using culturally sensitive research methods. For good social work inquiry to occur, the researcher must have an appreciation of the experiences of the people being researched. This means social work researchers must understand concepts from the perspectives of the people being researched. To some degree, the first criterion of Afrocentric methodology (African experience must guide and inform all inquiry) is in tandem with the concept of empathy in social work. Empathy entails that the social workers should put themselves in the client's world. Afrocentric methodology recognises the importance

of the spiritual. Spiritual issues are central in indigenous African life (Thabede 2005, 2008). Africans are a very religious people and their religion is evident in their ways of life, namely, healing, birth, death, hunting, et cetera. Religion is the centre of African existence (Chavunduka 2001; Shoko 2007; Viriri & Mungwini 2010). Social work now recognises the importance of religion and spirituality among its clients (Baskin 2002; Canda 2010; Cascio 2012). This leaves social work researchers with no option but to use Afrocentric research methodology which recognises the centrality of the spiritual among research participants. There is no separation between the spiritual and the material in traditional African life.

Another principle of Afrocentric methodology that is pertinent to social work researchers is that not everything that matters is measurable. African beliefs, motifs and values are very critical in their everyday lives, but may not be quantified in Western science. Africans rely heavily on social capital which may be difficult to measure in scientific terms. A good example may be informal social safety nets in African communities whose value may not seem important to a Western trained social worker owing to different cultures.

Afrocentric methodology also believes that knowledge generated must be liberating. This goes down well with the ethos of empowerment and liberation in social work. Social work research among Africans must generate knowledge that relieves them from the bondage of neo-colonialism and knowledge hegemony. Pellerin (2012) argues that these principles institute a standardised foundation for scholarship on people of African ancestry. In Afrocentric research, Africans should be placed as self-willed agents instead of objects of investigation. The issue of cultural location takes precedence over the topic or data under consideration. Mkabela (2005) is of the view that for immersion to take place, the researcher should emphasise and identify with the people being studied in order to understand how they see things. She went on to argue that if research is to be Afrocentric, African indigenous people must be in control of and participate

in the entire research process from beginning to end. This concept of participation is critical in social work. Social workers engage clients in the helping process. This is in line with strengths-based social work which recognises clients' strengths despite the severity of their problems.

Afrocentricity emerges as a methodology that operates within African ways of knowing and existence, and results in implementation of principles, methods, concepts and ideas that are derived from African cultural experiences (Mazama 2003). Mkabela (2005) opines that the Afrocentric methodology is derived from the Afrocentric paradigm which deals with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people. According to Pellerin (2012:151), the prioritisation of African people's customs, beliefs, motifs, values and conceptualisation is the rubric on which the application of Afrocentric methodology operates. Afrocentricity serves as a foundation for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research. It is a structural research approach that engenders a reconceptualisation of African phenomena (Jayawardene 2013; Pellerin 2012). According to Pellerin (2012), utilising an Afrocentric methodology equips the researcher with a detailed foundation for employing culturally correct methods, principles and frameworks in analysing phenomena.

In any Afrocentric research project, the researcher must determine a purpose that is not antithetical to African people. According to Pellerin (2012), the Afrocentric research process follows a similar process with normative social science research with several alterations to suit African people's context. She argues that the research design in an Afrocentric study may differ from those used in non-Afrocentric studies in a number of ways. For example, an exploratory Afrocentric design involves investigating African people for the purpose of developing a culturally accurate understanding of them. Further to that, a descriptive Afrocentric design provides a more precise understanding of African social phenomena. Key to Afrocentric studies is the ability to use culturally appropriate lens. Lastly, an

explanatory Afrocentric study should provide reasons and causes of African phenomena. It is critical for any Afrocentric researcher to have a viable and reliable understanding of African thought. It can be deduced that the major point of departure of Afrocentric methodology is its sensitivity to African cultures.

As in any normative social science research, conceptualisation of key terms is crucial in an Afrocentric study. According to Pellerin (2012), definitions of concepts and variables to be studied must be specified in alliance with African people's historical and cultural realities. A good Afrocentric researcher should deliberately and consciously study African people from their standpoint. There are various concepts that differ from one centre to the other. For example, Thabede (2005) argues that the concept of time in an African community may differ from that in a Western setting. It may not matter for an African to be late for a meeting by say 20 min without giving an apology, but the opposite may be true for Western-oriented people.

As noted by Pellerin (2012), Afrocentric researchers are charged with the task of developing new methods that are rooted in African people's histories, cultures and experiences. Tools of measurement used in Afrocentric studies matter a lot, as they should be in harmony with African people's existence. According to Pellerin (2012), the applicable tools should not threaten, intrude upon or disrupt the agency of African people. In the same vein, in a study on the influence of Shona indigenous religion in understanding of chronic illnesses, Mabvurira (2016) used family interviews. The justification was to respect the spirit of unity and oneness that is central in African families by not separating a particular member for one-on-one interviews. In an Afrocentric study, the unity of analysis should not be based on a particular individual as life is understood to be communal. Community members may provide valuable information on a particular phenomenon they are not directly involved in (Mabvurira 2016).

According to Mulemi (2011), in Afrocentric research the researcher and the participants have an interactive role in the

production of theoretical and applied knowledge. This implies that the researcher is not superior to the participants who should be equally consulted throughout the research process. The researcher should identify with subjects to appreciate how they see things and construct reality. In order to fully understand the cultural frameworks, the indigenous people should be actively involved in the research process (Cunningham & Duries 1998). Canons of Afrocentrism underpin Afrocentric methodology. Reviere (2001) identified the following five canons that should guide an Afrocentric research enquiry: *Ukweli* [truth], *Kujitolea* [commitment], *Utulivu* [calmness and peaceful], *Uhaki* [justice] and *Ujamaa* [community]. According to Chilisa (2012:191), the canons are derived from seven cardinal African virtues of truth, justice, rightness, propriety, harmony, order and balance and reciprocity.

According to Mkabela (2005), the principles underlying Afrocentric research are in line with qualitative research in which researchers should actively participate and be involved in the production of knowledge. Afrocentric methodology therefore shares the same characteristics as qualitative research methods. Both methods assume that people use interpretive schemes which must be understood and that the character of the local context must be articulated.

■ Why the Afrocentric methodology in social work?

The Afrocentric methodology is a critical pillar towards the indigenisation of social work in Africa (Gray et al. 2014). For so long, Western ideas permeated social work institutions despite the ethical conflicts between traditional African cultures and values and the Western Judeo-Christian norms on which social work was based (Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird 2008). According to Gray et al. (2014), it was because of these foreign influences that social workers in Africa completely disregarded traditional

cultures and support systems based on collective values. Some borrowed techniques have failed to bring about the desired results owing to different cultural settings. Not all social work principles by Rev. Felix P. Biestek are in tandem with African cultural norms and beliefs. For example, in a Western setting individual confidentiality matters a lot, but it is different in some African communities where confidentiality is shared by the whole family. Family members may want to know the problem confronting their own in detail before they may help. Life is communal, and each person lives for others. No problem is owned by an individual, but by the whole community. Another principle which is questionable is individualism, where each person is treated as a unique person with a unique problem. The question here is how do we individualise in a setting where life is communal?

Africans are incurably religious (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003). For them life is religion and religion is life. Almost every faculty of their lives is explained within the purview of religion. For most Africans, there is no clear separation between the spiritual and the physical (Schreiber & Tomm-Bonde 2015). Afrocentric methodology is very conducive for people of African ancestry as it recognises spiritual issues in research. Spirituality is a resource that social workers may exploit during the helping process. Mabvurira (2016) found that some spiritual beliefs among the Shona people of Zimbabwe were of paramount importance in motivating people to care for their sick relatives. He cited fear of *ngozi* [avenging spirit]. Such issues may only be thoroughly interrogated if social workers adopt the Afrocentric methodology.

Thabede (2005), a key proponent of Afrocentric social work, indicates that practising social workers in Africa should understand African concepts of witchcraft, ancestral worship and other rituals that are key to traditional African life, as well as appreciate the difference between Western and African ontologies. In Zimbabwe, for example, the colonial government passed a *Witchcraft Suppression Act*, and what that meant was that white people did not recognise the existence of witchcraft.

It was then difficult for researchers aligned to white education to recognise witchcraft-related information that may be provided by research subjects. Although some people who purport to be Christians do not recognise the existence of avenging spirits, most Africans believe in these spirits (Chavunduka 2001, 2009; Mabvurira 2016; Machinga 2011). In the same vein, Ross (2010) argues that African beliefs are key for social workers practising with indigenous African communities. Twikirize (2014) notes that for indigenisation of social work to take root, the concepts, theories and models adopted should be drawn from the bottom-up. Social work educators therefore cannot afford to continue relying on teaching material generated outside Africa. In a study by Twikirize (2014) in East Africa, only 15% of respondents acknowledged availability of country-specific material used in social work teaching. Social work researchers still have a long way to go in terms of producing local knowledge for teaching purposes.

Most Africans have totems. The use of totems among most Bantu people of Southern Africa is a prehistoric tradition that goes back for centuries. According to Pfukwa (2014), the totem is an animal that a clan takes up to express certain values and virtues. Each totem is buttressed by a string of myths and folklore. The totem serves as a social bond and is an expression of collective identity for a clan or family that carries that totem (Pfukwa 2014). Mabvurira (2016) notes that these totems may be of help to social workers. He proposes the formation of totem-related social work groups where a group may comprise people who share the same totem. His argument was that group conflicts may be limited as members already share something in common apart from their problem. These issues may be effectively interrogated when social workers use Afrocentric methodologies.

Afrocentric research is pertinent in the formulation of a body of knowledge for Afrocentric social work. Schiele (1996) defines Afrocentric social work as a method of social work practice which is based on traditional African philosophical assumptions that are used to explain and solve human societal problems. Social workers

are encouraged to embrace the Afrocentric paradigm because of its emphasis on eliminating oppression and spiritual alienation. Afrocentrists believe that the spiritual component of a human being is just as important and valid as the material component (Whitehead 2017). There is need for a shift from a Western perspective to an African-centred one in practice with people of African ancestry (Harvey 2003). Social work was introduced in most African countries by colonisers and the danger with this is that there was a tendency to view African cultures from the colonisers' perspective and to assess the educational needs in terms of the colonisers' desires (Mkabela 2005). Western hegemony is still visible in social work education of most African countries. Although early African scholars like Hall (1990), Mupedziswa (2001), Osei-Hwedie (1993) and Thabede (2005) have advocated for the indigenisation of the profession, few social work training institutions have walked the talk. Even if these institutions want to indigenise, there is not enough reading material to inform indigenous social work, hence the need to embrace Afrocentric research methods. Africans were and are still judged through a European lens, and social work education in Africa has marginalised Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Without Afrocentric knowledge obtained from Afrocentric enquiries, professionals may assume that the history, cultural practices and social environments of people of African ancestry are the same as those of other races and that same practice methods are appropriate (Hollingsworth & Phillips 2017). Mkabela (2005) corroborates this by arguing that it is absurd to study the indigenous while still hooked to external methodologies. Social work practice in Africa should be informed by social inquiry in African contexts.

A lot has happened in psychology and sociology in line with Afrocentricity. Bodibe (1993) proposed an indigenised model of psychology which he believed was necessary if clinicians are to succeed in appreciating cultural idiosyncrasies. Another laudable initiative in South Africa has been the development of the Forum

for African Psychology and establishment of journals like the *Indilinga* which focuses on IKS. The same should happen to social work practice where IKS should inform practice. It is very pathetic to note that Africans have been conditioned to discard their heritage. Most textbooks used in social work education have been authored and published in the West. African training institutions buy these textbooks, or they get them as donations through development partners such as BookAid. Courses in sociology and social anthropology mostly meant to sensitise students on African cultures and societies are not enough. According to Ose-Hwedie (1993), lack of research by locals has led to continued reliance on Western theories, paradigms and models (Mwansa 2010). Thabede (2005) is of the view that social work is a contextual profession, as it takes place within a given cultural milieu; hence the need for social work researchers to adopt Afrocentric methodology and generate relevant knowledge.

Afrocentric methodology is critical for social work indigenisation. Gray (2005) defined social work indigenisation as the extent to which social work fits local contexts. Opposed to indigenisation are the concepts of universalism and imperialism. Universalism is defined by Gray (2005) as trends in social work to find commonalities across divergent contexts such that it is common to talk about a social work profession with shared goals and values wherever it is shared. Gray and Fook (2004) further define universal social work as:

[A] form of social work that transcends national boundaries and which gives social work a global face such that there are commonalities in theory and practice across widely divergent contexts. (p. 628)

Universal social work assumes that there should be one world and one social work. Imperialism is defined as trends within social work which promote the dominance of Western worldviews over diverse local and indigenous cultural perspectives (Gray 2005).

Afrocentric research is critical for cultural competence in social work practice with people of African ancestry. Many social

work professional bodies expect social workers to be culturally sensitive. Social workers are encouraged to comprehend cultural contexts specific to their clients and how that knowledge is used in the everyday lives of their clients in order for meaning to be known and revealed (Wiedmeyer 2013). It is implied, in Afrocentric social work, that one cannot affect one member of the society without affecting others. In Africa, there is no clear separation between an individual and others (*ubuntu*). Mogorosi and Thabede (2018) argue that:

[M]ore work has to be undertaken – not to reinvent the wheel – but to research and ensure that local knowledge, wisdom and experiences that can enrich the discipline are highlighted and infused into formal teaching curricula. (p. 5)

The authors strongly agree with Mogorosi and Thabede (2018) and further argue that Afrocentric methodology will yield pertinent knowledge on indigenous African communities than Western-biased methods of social enquiry.

■ Conclusion

Research plays an important role in social work education and practice. It generates knowledge that is used for social work education and training while at the same time informing evidence-based intervention. Afrocentric research is critical for social work practice with African clients or people of African ancestry in the African diaspora. The Afrocentric methodology is a cornerstone for the indigenisation of social work in Africa. It fully respects African cultures and can yield valuable data when properly applied. The Afrocentric methodology should be used to generate knowledge so that schools of social work in Africa desist from relying on Western texts for training. African academics should train students on Afrocentric methodology so that they will be able to apply it. Without suitable research strategies, Afrocentric social work, social work indigenisation and decolonisation will ever be a dream in the pipeline.

■ Summary: Chapter 1

Research plays a critical role in both social work education and practice. It informs practice while at the same time generating knowledge that is used for teaching. This chapter introduced and – not advocated for the adoption of Afrocentric methodology in social work research as a step towards Africanising the profession. For a very long time, most Africans have been researched from a Western standpoint using Western methodologies, some of which do not recognise African beliefs, values, traditions, mores and taboos that are central in African life. A lot has been written on the indigenisation of the profession but there is only scanty literature on how social work research should be indigenised (Gray & Fook 2004; Gray, Kreitzer & Mupedziswa 2014; Ibrahima & Mattaini 2018). Therefore, a need exists for the adoption of Afrocentric methods of inquiry if real development is to be realised in Africa. Universal social work has in some instances proven to be problematic, hence the call for Afro-sensitive methods of inquiry to achieve intervention strategies that are friendly to African cultures. Social science research, particularly Afrocentric methodologies, is critical in the achievement of development, crafting of appropriate intervention strategies and evaluating of existing programmes. It is therefore imperative for schools of social work in Africa to educate students on Afrocentric methodology as a method of social inquiry.

The importance of data collection for qualitative research in social work

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■ Introduction

The use of a Eurocentric¹ social work curriculum in teaching the majority of social work undergraduate and postgraduate students

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1. 'Eurocentrism is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing emphasis on European (and, generally, Western) concerns, culture and values at the expense of those of other cultures' (Pop n.d.:1).

does not prepare them adequately in many areas, including qualitative data collection. The Eurocentric orientation recognises and acknowledges African or IKS to a very limited extent. Thus, the mindset of students has moved away from recognition and appreciation of the richness and depth of African languages that are endowed with metaphors, adages, poems and totems (clan praise names called *direto* in Northern Sotho).² The underlying philosophies of social science research are rather perceived as subtly promoting 'is the dominant Eurocentric perspective that often serves to undermine IKS' (Oppong 2014:242).

Afrocentricity, on the other hand, positions the researcher to consider cultural aspirations, understandings and practices of indigenous people during the research process (Mkabela 2005; Pellerin 2012). The Afrocentric method focuses on African identity from the perspective of African people as centred, located, oriented and grounded. Asante (1995) expressed his views on Afrocentricity as follows:

To say that we are decentred means essentially that we have lost our own cultural footing and become other than our cultural and political origins, dis-located and dis-oriented. We are essentially insane, that is, living an absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source. Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to relocate the African person as subject. [...] As a pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to the proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, survival. (p. 1)

Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) recommend a radical change for African researchers to persist in developing and using alternative methods of studying African reality and not to follow the research pathways designed by Western methodologies, within which many have been trained. This chapter will help students or social work researchers to learn about the importance of data collection among indigenous populations and the factors that require consideration before embarking on the process.

2. The language Northern Sotho is sometimes referred to as Sepedi.

IKS refer to the unique, traditional and/or local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area (Owusu-Ansah & Mji 2013; Grenier 1998). The exclusion of IKS in teaching research minimises the researcher's ability to capture idiomatic expressions and nuances used by the participants when expressing their lived experiences. Mangoale (2004:113) purports that 'proverbs are the most important expressions of human wisdom and knowledge of nature, psychology and reality for the people of Africa'. As a result, Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) advocate the use of the African ways of enquiry in research among Africans.

The medium of instruction in South African universities is English which poses a challenge to non-English speaking lecturers and students (Križaj, Warren & Slade 2016). The article by Van Nes Abma, Jonsson and Deeg (2010) discusses challenges of language differences in qualitative research, particularly when participants and the researcher are not English speakers but are expected to present and publish data in English. However, a significant challenge is that students, supervisors and researchers may not be familiar with the indigenous languages used by participants. They may rely on interpreters and translators to carry out research.

Qualitative research facilitates the recognition of rich information provided by the participants. This includes indigenous knowledge that influences individuals' social values and shapes their behaviour within a particular environment. The recognition of rich information gathered from the participants will enhance insights of research students, practitioners and supervisors into the social phenomena under study. Research is not the preserve of students and those in academia, but it should also be effectively used by practitioners for in-house research, for example, to determine and gain an in-depth understanding of the causes, effects and prevention of social ills such as child abuse.

This chapter does not provide a detailed description of all the stages that a researcher needs to follow when collecting

qualitative data. However, it focuses on the description of data collection and some challenges encountered by students and researchers eager to use qualitative research to gain insights into and a broader understanding of the social phenomenon under study. Insights gained would facilitate the development of appropriate intervention strategies for service users.

■ **Qualitative research**

■ **Definition and purpose**

To some people, qualitative research conjures up a non-scientific way of gathering information or stories of or from the participants. However, qualitative research is a scientific research approach. It seeks answers to a question, uses procedures systematically to collect evidence to answer the question and produces findings that were not determined in advance (Creswell & Poth 2018; Mack et al. 2005). It is ‘an inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people’s lives’ (Polkinghorne 2005:137).

Qualitative research does not answer questions of ‘How many?’ or ‘What is the strength of the relationship between variables?’ These questions may be answered through quantitative research (Barbour 2014:13). In certain instances, both qualitative and quantitative research are utilised in a complementary fashion to understand phenomena. The use of both approaches is called mixed-methods. Qualitative researchers ‘study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:3). They also focus on the value-laden type of research and seek to answer how social experiences are created and given meaning (Daher et al. 2017; Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Multiple sources of evidence are used in qualitative research to gain insight into a phenomenon under study (Yin 2011).

From qualitative research, students and social workers will learn about its strength in its ability to provide textual descriptions

of people's experiences of a particular issue. It provides information on behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011; Mack et al. 2005). Therefore, failure to accurately capture the meaning of the participants' experiences presents a diluted, watered-down or inaccurate picture of their narratives.

Some of the researchers in favour of the positivist stance either do not take outcomes of qualitative research seriously or regard them as insignificant narratives akin to anecdotal information. They do not view the approach from a constructivist perspective that affords participants an opportunity to construct the meaning of a particular phenomenon under study. This is significant as it accentuates individual experiences as opposed to striving for generalisation of the findings. Diverse, individual experiences and expressions enrich social workers' insight into a phenomenon from various perspectives.

■ Philosophical assumptions

Students and researchers interested in conducting qualitative research should have an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the methods, which are clearly outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Barbour (2014). Furthermore, researchers need to be aware of certain sets of beliefs as well as philosophical assumptions that they bring to their research projects (Creswell & Poth 2018).

The researcher's intentions, goals and philosophical assumptions are inextricably linked with the research they do (Mack 2010). Creswell and Poth (2018), and Grix (2004) warns that people who want to conduct clear, precise research and evaluate others' research need to understand the philosophical underpinnings that inform their choice of research questions, methodology and intentions. Therefore, how the researcher views the constructs of social reality and knowledge affects how he or she will go about uncovering knowledge of relationships regarding social behaviour and phenomena. Grix (2004:68)

purports that research is best done by setting out clearly the relationship that a researcher thinks can be researched (ontological position), linking it to what the researcher knows about it (epistemological position), making their values known in the study (axiological position) and establishing how to go about acquiring the necessary data (methodological approach). An explanation on these positions is also provided by Creswell and Poth (2018). Mkabela (2005) captured Asante's argument that Afrocentricity as a philosophical and theoretical perspective:

[M]ay have a significant impact on the way African researchers view their identity, specifically considering the African people as centred, located, oriented, and grounded. Afrocentricity is therefore a philosophical and theoretical perspective that when applied to research can form the essential core of the idea. (p. 179)

■ Research considerations

A question mostly raised in relation to reporting qualitative research findings relates to their accuracy or authenticity: 'How do you know that people were telling the truth?' The answer is that no one can know for sure (Barbour 2014:21). In qualitative research, contradictions and inconsistencies in the participants' narratives may raise a flag as to the accuracy of the information shared (Barbour 2014). However, it should be borne in mind that qualitative research recognises multiple realities about people's perceptions and experiences (Hennink et al. 2011; Speziale, Streubert & Carpenter 2007). The rights of all human beings should be respected regardless of their socio-economic status, and political, cultural and religious backgrounds. Researchers should be cautious when asking people questions which they may deem innocent; this may be risky and disturbing, as it could evoke unpleasant emotions on the part of the participants (Blaikie 2010).

The researcher's conduct is guided by research ethics that 'deals primarily with the interaction between researchers and the people they study' (Mack et al. 2005:8). Ethics is a professional

researcher's behavioural guide (Guthrie 2011) that points out what is morally right and wrong (Neuman 2014). Respect for the participants as people of worth and dignity is fundamental, guided by voluntary informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and proper management of information. Voluntary consent is concerned with offering an explanation to participants of the purpose of the research, which would enable them to make an informed decision whether to take part in the study or not (Bull & Lindegger 2011; Mack et al. 2005). The researcher should be mindful of the levels of literacy of the participants, and to write consent forms in the preferred language of the participant. Confidentiality refers to the privacy and secrecy of the participants' information. The researcher should not disclose information gained from the participants through informal conversation with others (Green & Thorogood 2014). Anonymity cannot be separated from confidentiality. Only the researcher and possibly a few relevant people (such as the researcher's supervisor, a translator or an independent coder) should be aware of the identities of the participants (Babbie 2016), and they should commit not to share the information with others. Management of information involves record-keeping and storing, both of which are important in research. Unauthorised persons should not have access to written or electronic records of data (Flick 2007).

All research projects should be approved by the relevant institutional review board or ethics review committee, depending on the institution to which the students are affiliated. Therefore, ethical approval should be obtained and recorded in the report on the study (Taylor, Killick & McGlade 2015). Such projects should have a clear goal(s) and objectives based on the overarching question(s) that the study seeks to answer. The rationale for the study determines the design(s) and mode(s) of data collection to be used, whether it will be interviews or focus group discussions. Justification of the research is important and should be linked to accountability. The researcher has a responsibility to disseminate the findings to different audiences or implement recommendations based on improvement of practice.

■ Population and sampling

A population encompasses all participants with specific characteristics that could be included in the study in which the researcher is interested (David & Sutton 2011; Gilbert 2008). Saumure and Given (2008:644) state that a population 'refers to every individual who fits the criteria (broad or narrow) that the researcher has laid out for research participants'. For example, when the researcher intends to establish the experiences of parents who have lost children through suicide because they have either passed Grade 12 with low marks that do not allow them entry into a university, or failed their exams altogether, then the target population will be the parents or guardians of those children. The researcher should identify and provide a description of the area in which the study will be conducted to provide the parameters for the study.

Sampling is used to select a sample of the participants from the population. The sample refers to people who will be recruited to take part in the study through interviews and/or focus group discussions. Non-probability sampling techniques are used in the realm of qualitative research. Ideally, in qualitative research, the sample size is not determined at the onset of the study but relies on data saturation, which refers to a point during the interviews when the researcher realises that no new information is being garnered from the participants (Green & Thorogood 2014) and may decide to discontinue the interviews. Qualitative sampling is concerned with information richness that encompasses appropriateness and adequacy. The types of sampling techniques used are convenience, purposive (or judgemental), quota, snowball and theoretical. Convenience sampling is also known as availability sampling, which relates to the accessibility and availability of participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012). It is less costly in terms of time, effort and money; however, the results may not be deemed credible by other qualitative researchers. Purposive sampling is used to access hard-to-reach participants

such as those suffering from a particular illness or rape victims. The researcher provides the criteria for inclusion (characteristics) in the study. Even though Patton (2002) delineated 16 types of purposive samples, the common factor is that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria for inclusion relevant to a particular study (Garg 2017; Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006), meaning that the researcher's prior knowledge guides the selection of the participants.

With reference to the vignette (see Box 2.1), the criteria for inclusion of parents or guardians in the study may involve those who observed that pupils showed signs of depression while awaiting their Grade 12 examination results; for instance, pupils who were reluctant to communicate with others at home, isolated or locked themselves in their rooms, suffered loss of appetite and did not talk about their fear of failing their Grade 12 exams to any family member before they committed suicide. The identified parents and/or guardians will then be approached and recruited to take part in the study.

Quota sampling is sometimes equated with purposive sampling. The researcher decides how many people who fall within a specific category should be included as participants. The criteria will allow researchers to target people they think would be most likely to have experience, knowledge or insights into the research topic. The people who meet the criteria will be recruited from different communities until the prescribed quotas are attained (Ishak & Bakar 2014; Mack et al. 2005). Snowball sampling, also called network or chain referral, is concerned with reaching out to potential participants who are difficult to identify and contact (Neuman 2014; Sadler et al. 2010). For instance, parents who will qualify to form part of the sample will be those who have lost a child who was in Grade 12 in 2017 through suicide. Theoretical sampling is purpose-driven; the sample is selected for the particular purpose of explaining and refining the emerging theory (Breckenridge & Jones 2009).

BOX 2.1: Background to the vignette.

Information contained in Box 2.1 serves as a background to the vignette in Box 2.2 which illustrates the challenges of using an indigenous language during an interview with a Northern Sotho-speaking participant. Literal translation refers to direct translation of the exact or linguistic words used in an indigenous language into English. Communicative translation, on the other hand, is a sense-for-sense translation as opposed to word-for-word translation. It provides the meaning intended by the use of idiomatic expressions or figurative language taking into account aspects such as the context and culture.

At the beginning of every year, Grade 12 results are released by the Department of Basic Education. South Africa's Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, announced the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination Results for 2017 on the 4th of January 2018. Most pupils anxiously awaited the examination results over the December holidays. Some of the pupils who did not pass the examination or did not have sufficient points to gain entry into institutions of higher learning may become despondent, depressed and contemplate and/or commit suicide. Scores for university entry are determined by individual institutions. Sadly, on the afternoon of 5 January 2018 a tragic incident was reported by the media that two pupils in the Mpumalanga Province committed suicide (Eyewitness News [EWN], 5 January 2018). One pupil had passed the exams but was not satisfied with the marks obtained, while the other had failed the exams. This tragedy occurred despite the officials' calls for pupils who did not succeed to explore available options to improve their marks. An intensive 'Second Chance Matric Support Programme' has been initiated to support learners who do not meet the requirements to obtain the NSC qualification. For instance, pupils may write a supplementary examination at different intervals during the first semester to improve their grades. The Department has also made study materials available in the form of hard and electronic copies to assist pupils in preparation for the supplementary examinations and increase their chance to succeed.

During the recruitment process, the researcher could access potential participants through gatekeepers who control a researcher's access to the fieldwork site or formal setting such as managers of hospitals and schools. Informal gatekeepers may be community leaders who help with the recruitment of participants who are difficult to reach, to support the study (Green & Thorogood 2014). For instance, in relation to the vignette in Box 2.1, the researcher may approach traditional leaders, councillors and church leaders to acquire information on parents or guardians whose children committed suicide after the announcement of the Grade 12 exam results.

■ Cultural awareness and sensitivity in data gathering

Researchers should be cognisant of the appropriate methods to be used in gathering data, including cultural awareness and sensitivity (Wardale, Cameron & Li 2015). Culturally sensitive research involves integrating the cultural beliefs, characteristics, attitudes, values, traditions, experiences and norms of a target population into the research design, implementation, evaluation and materials (Allen 2017). Research methodologies should be tailored around cultural sensitivities to ensure optimal research outcomes among culturally diverse participants, while adhering to academically sound practice (Wardale et al. 2015). Deloria (1991:460) purports that a researcher often 'bears the burden of researchers' past mistakes' and that care must be taken when interacting with diverse, marginalised or vulnerable groups. Benefits may be derived from the insights of researchers with cultural competence regarding specific knowledge, particularly if their cultural backgrounds are the same as that of the participants (Deloria 1991; Desouza 2007). The participants' lived experiences will be better understood by researchers who make a concerted effort to increase their awareness and sensitivity to other cultures.

■ Data collection methods

Collecting data in one language and presenting the findings in another is increasingly common among social researchers and may present challenges for analysis (Smith, Chen & Liu 2008; Birbili 2000). For instance, in Box 2.2, a request in English from the interview guide states, 'Please share with me your experience of losing a child'. This translated into Northern Sotho illustrates the difference between literal and communicative translations.

Data refer to raw information that has not been subjected to interpretation by the researcher and is still in its original form (Räsänen & Nyce 2013). Collection of data is regarded as the core activity in social research. It is essential to specify the methods to be utilised to generate and record data, and to justify why these methods are considered to be the most appropriate. Data can be collected at one point in time or at a series of points over time (Blaikie 2010). Any data collection method such as focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews which the researcher undertakes will potentially generate a large amount of data (Sutton & Austin 2015). Other existing sources of gathering qualitative data include observational and visual data, documents and artefacts. A detailed discussion on these aspects is provided by Polkinghorne (2005).

There are different ways of recording what is said and done during an interview, such as taking handwritten notes and audio or video recordings. The audio or video recording of data collection must be transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin (Sutton & Austin 2015). It can roughly take an experienced researcher or transcriber 8 h to transcribe one 45-min audio-recorded interview and generate 20 to 30 pages of written dialogue (Sutton & Austin 2015:228). Even though many South Africans are bilingual or multilingual, research interviews require a researcher to be familiar with and able to communicate in a particular language. Nelson Mandela said, 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to

BOX 2.2: Application of a semi-structured interview.

Vignette (a hypothetical scenario)

An interview between the researcher and a mother who lost her 17-year old son who committed suicide after failing Grade 12.

Researcher: Ke kgopela o nhlalošetse gore o tšere bjang go loba ngwana.

Participant: Hei! gape re mathateng kage re be re lebeletše tše dikgolo go yena gore o tla re thuša. Bjale ngwedi o apogetše ke maru (idiomatic expression; see translation below).

Translation of the participant's response in English: *Literal translation:* Hei (a sigh), we [referring to the family] are in trouble. We were looking at him to help us. Now the moon is not covered by clouds.

Communicative translation: Hei (a sigh), we have lost a great deal as we had thought that he was going to be prosperous in life and assist his family. Now we are left in the ledge.

Probe

Researcher: Please share with me anything that you would like to say about your loss. *Translation in Northern Sotho:* Ke kgopela gore le nhlalošetse se sengwe le se sengwe se le ratago go se bolela ka go loba ngwana.

Participant: Lehu le gona. Efela la mohuta woo le bohloko ka gore le dira gore motho a nagane kudu. O kaba wa nagana gore o loilwe.

Translation of the participant's response in English: *Literal translation:* Death is there. However, this type of death (suicide) is painful because it makes one to think. One may even think that one has been bewitched.

Communicative translation: Death does occur. But, this type is painful and can make one to think deeply, wondering if there are evil forces of witchcraft at play.

him in his language, that goes to his heart'. A brief discussion on interviews as one of the data collection methods is given below.

■ Interviews

The researcher is perceived as a key instrument in the research process and must be authentic, intuitive and receptive to the participants' stories (Stewart 2010; Dallas et al. 2005). Students and practitioners are encouraged to use a toolkit for understanding qualitative interviews with culturally diverse participants (Burnette et al. 2014). In the social sciences, researchers are likely to collect qualitative data using unstructured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews including focus group discussions. The qualitative interview seeks to gather information on the participants' meanings, interpretations and the social interactions in which they have been involved.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews are flexible and allow prompts (supplementary questions) to be used to guide the discussion and allow participants to speak liberally about what is in their hearts (Taylor et al. 2015; Mack et al. 2005), as illustrated in the vignette in Box 2.1. The researchers should refrain from imposing their frame of reference on the participants' responses. In-depth interviews allow the participant to talk at length about his or her experiences on a given topic. They may have a guide about the topic, but they do not rely on a predetermined schedule of questions (Green & Thorogood 2014). Researchers vary in the application of semi-structured interviews; some rely on a previously prepared set of questions, while others use schedules in a fluid way (Barbour 2014).

■ Interviewing skills

It is important for students and practitioners to differentiate between clinical and qualitative research interviews. An article by Hunt, Chan and Mehta (2011) on 'Transitioning from clinical to qualitative research interviewing' provides insight into challenges

that may be faced by even experienced clinicians during research interviews. To conduct an interview, researchers require skills such as reflective questioning, summarising and controlling the interview process (Reid & Mash 2014; Fox 2009).

The researcher has a responsibility to prepare participants for the study to eliminate the initial fears they might have about the research (Kovach 2010; Feldman, Bell & Berger 2003). The researcher will provide information on the purpose of the study, the questions that will be asked during the interview, clarify data collection and recording procedures and explain how the information will be used. The information will help potential participants to make an informed decision whether to take part in the study or not. If they agree to participate, the researcher will negotiate the place and time for the interviews, and permission to record the interviews. Before the open-ended questions contained in the interview guide are used to gather data, they have to be tested. Such a process is called pilot testing.

■ Pilot testing

Data collection is a critical stage that requires the researcher to test the instrument of data collection in order to ascertain whether the structure of the questions is appropriate, that they are clear and unambiguous and that they will yield the required information (Dikko 2016; Van Wijk & Harrison 2013). A pilot test is a trial run prior to the actual study and enables the researcher to determine if there are any adjustments to be made to the interview guide (Kim 2010). In an instance where the participants do not speak English, the interview guide should be translated into their language before pilot testing (Hennink et al. 2011).

Pilot testing also affords the researcher an opportunity to uncover ethical as well as practical issues which may hinder the main study. Similarly, pilot testing may assist the researcher to affirm, revise or sharpen the data collection tools by amending the order, structure or wording of questions to accomplish the goals of the intended study (Dikko 2016; Barbour 2014; Kim 2010).

It provides researchers an opportunity to perfect their interviewing skills (Glesne 2011:56; Strydom 2005) and examines techniques and tools to be used in the larger study (Guthrie 2011).

In order not to overtly or inadvertently influence the participants' responses, the researcher should use a technique called 'reflexivity' or 'bracketing' to alert him or her to subjective feelings towards the participants' experiences. This is a process of reflecting critically on the self by analysing personal values that could affect data collection and interpretation (Polit & Beck 2012). Reflexivity requires researchers to reflect upon and articulate their position and subjectivities in relation to their world view, perspectives and biases (Sutton & Austin 2015). In other words, it involves acknowledging the impact of the researchers' values on the research process and the interpretation of data (Barbour 2014). Researchers are encouraged to use diaries or journals to record their experiences during data collection and their own reflections on those experiences. This helps them to identify biases expressed during the process, if any, and find ways of ameliorating them in future interviews.

■ Audio recording and transcribing of interviews

Even though some black students conduct interviews in the language preferred by the participants, the challenge is that there are 11 official languages³ in South Africa of which nine are classified as indigenous. Not all people, including students, are conversant in all these languages, and this poses a challenge during interviews as some use the services of a translator (Nikander 2008; Temple & Young 2004). After audio recording interviews conducted in an indigenous language, students translate and transcribe them into English (language of instruction

3. Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Sotho (Southern Sotho), Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.

at universities). Unfortunately, a great deal of information and meaning is lost during translation by the student or an unqualified translator (Van Nes et al. 2010). Often, supervisors identify incoherence when going through students' presentations of qualitative findings. They then seek clarity and strive to help students to correct this incoherence. Supervisors who are familiar with some indigenous languages are more likely to identify nuances and idiomatic expressions which students may have misrepresented in translation. To overcome some of these challenges, it is advisable that supervisors and students seek assistance from academics attached to departments of African languages.

The advantages of capturing information accurately and the disadvantages of failing to do so are summarised below.

The following are the advantages of capturing information accurately:

- helps researchers to develop and gain new insights into and knowledge in a particular area of study
- researchers may develop hypotheses for future extensive research projects
- insights from research studies facilitate the establishment or development of appropriate social work interventions.

The following are the disadvantages of not capturing information accurately:

- inaccurately captured research findings are misleading
- inaccurate data leads to inaccurate interpretation
- researchers may develop incorrect hypotheses based on inaccurate findings
- the development of intervention strategies will be misdirected such as provision of resources
- threaten and decrease the trustworthiness of data and rigour of the study.

The literal translation of the participant's response reflects the direct translation from Northern Sotho to English. However, it

does not give a clear meaning of what was said owing to the fact that an idiomatic expression [b]jale ngwedi o apogetše ke maru was used. On the other hand, the communicative translation provides the meaning of the idiomatic expression that shows dashed future plans. The literal and communicative translation of the participant's response to the 'probe' is almost similar. However, attention should be paid to the communicative translation that acknowledges the existence of death and the pain experienced by a parent who wonders whether the suicide is the manifestation of evil forces through witchcraft.

The scenario in Box 2.2 raises a number of issues that researchers may pursue in order to gain insight into the contributory factors leading to suicide among Grade 12 pupils. It may be that unknown underlying factors contributed to the pupils' suicidal ideation and that the dissatisfaction with the examination results and/or failure of the grade may have been the 'last straw that broke the camel's back' or triggered the actual suicide. Such occurrences may encourage social workers to develop preventative services for Grade 12 pupils to avoid such tragic incidents. Therefore, a possible research topic to pursue would be the identification of risk factors among pupils who are likely to contemplate, attempt or commit suicide should they fail the examination as opposed to assuming that their thoughts and actions were precipitated by their failure of the grade.

□ The use of an interpreter in data collection and translation of data

The 'language barrier is frequently mediated using a translator or interpreter' (Squires 2009:277). Interviews should not be restricted to the language of the researcher by using qualified interpreters (Van Nes et al. 2010). The article by Van Nes et al. (2010) is a good resource based on interviewing through interpreters. It should be borne in mind that researchers who opt to use interpreters because they are unfamiliar with the language of the participants should consult literature widely to familiarise

themselves with the planning and training of interpreters to minimise challenges they may encounter.

It is not uncommon for supervisors of students' research projects not to read transcripts which may contain rich information obtained from the participants owing to translation challenges. The article by Al-Amer et al. (2016) on language translation challenges with Arabic speakers participating in qualitative research studies highlights the difficulties in the translation process, specifically in managing data in relation to metaphors and, most importantly, preserving the meaning between the original and translated data. The vignette demonstrates the use of idiomatic expressions (in Northern Sotho) that some students may not be familiar with owing to changes in the syllabi of basic education.

Few studies have been undertaken to assess the importance of translators in qualitative research, but it has been noted that 70% of the participants felt the need to have an interpreter at every consultation (Hadziabdic, Albin & Hjelm 2014). In addition, the following researchers conducted studies in translation: Temple and Young (2004); Temple, Edwards and Alexander (2006); Larkin, Dierckx de Casterlé and Schotsmans (2007); and Van Nes et al. (2010).

Temple (2002:844) was the first to use the term 'cross-language research' to describe qualitative studies that use a translator or interpreter at any stage during the research process. When a language barrier exists between qualitative researchers and participants, the research becomes a cross-language qualitative study with challenges related to language (Van Nes et al. 2010; Temple & Young 2004). How researchers use the services of translators and interpreters in their studies can affect the findings obtained from participants (Larkin et al. 2007). For instance, poorly translated concepts or phrases will change the emergent themes from the analysis and may not reflect what the participants said. In addition, translation is an interpretive process; therefore, translators need to systematically and

accurately capture the full meaning of the spoken language (Al-Amer et al. 2016).

Back translation is a quality-control mechanism during the data-transcription period. The researcher is required to write down word-for-word the interviews he or she audio recorded. Back translation is defined as (Shigenobu 2007):

[7]he original language obtained by translating input into a target language and then retranslating the resulting text back into the original language. The effectiveness of back translation is based on the assumption that when back translation (homeward) is correct, the target language translation (outward) must also be correct. (p. 260)

During the authors' discussions with research students, it became apparent that they are not familiar with the translation procedures, which raises many questions regarding the accuracy of the data. Some students solicit help from unqualified translators, while others received help from high school English teachers.

Chen and Boore (2010:234) recommend the following process when the qualitative researcher is not fluent in the participant's language: verbatim transcription in the original language; two bilingual translators to transcribe concepts that emerge; back translation; and an expert committee for final agreement. Even though this sounds like a time-consuming and arduous process, researchers should make an effort to follow this recommendation. An expert committee may comprise members who belong to different academic departments in an institution. Van Nes et al. (2010) assert that language differences may have consequences in qualitative research, considering that concepts in one language may be understood differently in another. Furthermore, qualitative research works with words, hence language is central in all phases from data collection to analysis and presentation of the findings in publications.

□ Working with translators

Researchers who do not carry out the translation of interviews conducted in indigenous languages into English have a

responsibility to ensure that the participants' responses have been captured correctly and accurately. This could be done by reading through the transcripts to ascertain that the information is clear and represents the participants' narratives.

The credentials of the translator are critical (Squires 2008) considering that the quality of translation will affect the coding and analysis of qualitative data (Garg 2017; Adamson & Donovan 2002). Researchers who do not undertake the task of translation themselves have a responsibility to do quality assurance to ascertain that translators have captured the participants' responses accurately and that they are familiar with the languages used by the participants. Reading through the English transcripts may also reveal problematic areas where the information is unclear. Translators are supposed to transmit neutral messages (Temple 2002:844). Some authors (Kapborg & Berterö 2002:52; Temple 2002:610) are of the view that translation should be based on meaning rather than 'linguistic words' or 'literally translated equivalents'. Considering that language is not neutral, Berman and Tyyskä (2010) maintain that the perspectives of translators need to be taken into consideration, meaning that translators have to be familiar with the study, while researchers should also acquaint themselves with the process followed by translators.

■ Data analysis and verification

Even though the focus of the chapter is not on data analysis and verification, it is important to indicate how these processes fit into qualitative research. A transcript refers to the verbatim rendition in text format of an interview between the researcher and the participant, as illustrated in Box 2.2. Text analysis involves content analysis which aims to discover the attitudes, behaviours, concerns, motivations and culture from the researcher's point of view (Bauer, Biquelet & Suerdem 2014). It is also a process used to understand the participants' various cultures and subcultures 'to make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live' (McKee 2003:1).

Another form of thematic analysis may be conducted through the use of Tech's eight stages (cited by Creswell 2009:186) that are usually recommended for research students to use, following the delineated steps. It is advisable that researchers procure the services of independent coders who are critical in their analysis to enhance the rigour of the study and the trustworthiness of the findings. An external independent coder refers to a person with experience in thematic analysis and with a broad understanding of the research topic (King & Horrocks 2010). This means that the researcher and the independent coder will analyse the findings independently and compare notes at the end of the process regarding the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from the findings.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that researchers need to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their findings through the following criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. In 1994, the authors added the fifth criteria of authenticity. The reader is advised to consult the source for further details.

■ **Presentation and interpretation of the findings**

Researchers have a responsibility to present the findings accurately in a compelling and engaging manner to specific audiences (Yin 2011). They should also be presented clearly in an intelligible way (Taylor et al. 2015). The presentation on the themes, sub-themes and categories should include quotations or storylines expressing the exact words or descriptions extracted from the transcripts. The findings should be compared and contrasted with previous research findings or observations by other researchers. In order to accomplish this task successfully, researchers need to engage with literature extensively. This process helps to identify commonalities of the findings which show that human beings may think and react in a similar manner

to stimuli or challenges. On the other hand, the dissimilarities may indicate that people's values, cultures and general circumstances influence their thoughts, behaviours and reactions to challenges or problems. For instance, a researcher's interpretation of the findings may show people's divergent ideas on issues that reflect their idiosyncrasies.

■ Conclusion

Qualitative research is important in social work as it provides multiple realities about people's perceptions and experiences. Consideration should be given to 'cross-language research' and 'culturally sensitive research' since it is required from the majority of African students to report their findings in English. The challenge of loss of rich educative knowledge from students' research projects resulting from poor translation of qualitative data from an indigenous language into English requires serious attention. Following proper data collection processes and effecting an accurate translation of data and interpretation of findings will enable researchers to develop appropriate intervention strategies to address the needs and challenges of individuals, groups and communities (Kowal, Bubela & Jardine 2017).

■ Summary: Chapter 2

Qualitative research is an essential component of generating knowledge to inform social work practice. South Africa is a diverse sociocultural society beset by challenges rooted in the iniquities during the apartheid era. The decolonisation of the social work curriculum provides a platform for students to recognise, acknowledge and report on the narratives of research participants, including nuances that express their lived experiences in their language of preference. Proper reporting of qualitative data by researchers should therefore facilitate the presentation of the participants' observations on a particular

phenomenon, accentuating the rich idiomatic expressions from these narratives. This will enable researchers to gain in-depth insights into the phenomenon under study and to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity in research and practice. This chapter presents an overview of procedures to be followed when collecting qualitative data in social work research. A vignette was presented to demonstrate how Northern Sotho indigenous idioms may be used by participants to express their lived experiences. The relevance and implications of accurate reporting on qualitative data are underscored.

The relevance and use of secondary data analysis in social work research

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■ Introduction

Despite the rapid increase of available data archives from websites online, agencies, governmental and research sources (Cheng & Phillips 2014; Sales, Lichtenwalter & Fevola 2006), the use of secondary analysis in social work remains limited (Radey 2010). In addition, Radey (2010) argues that despite secondary data's benefits and datasets' accessibility as well as the potential contribution to social work research, there is still limited use of it,

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and therefore this justifies an examination. Few books have been written about the topic (Hakim 1982; Hyman 1972; MacInnes 2017; Muijs 2018; Radey 2010; Vartanian 2011) and a recent and first article by Sales et al. (2006) documented secondary analysis as an important technique for social work research. The author (Sales et al. 2006) further examined the current treatment of secondary analysis in social work research texts and reviewed its strengths and weaknesses. Lately, the usage and accessibility of large secondary datasets among various social science disciplines have increased (Johnston 2014; Tripathy 2013; Vartanian 2011). Owing to the revolution of new technology, accurate information may be obtained via search engines. The challenge now is being able to see whether the datasets are valid.

Secondary analysis, also referred to as 'secondary data analysis' or 'second-hand data', is the 're-analysis of existing data for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive purposes' (Hakim in Radey 2010:165). Quantitative or qualitative secondary data are readily available and mostly obtained from various published sources, for instance, reports released by companies or statistics produced by government. Researchers, who may have limited resources and time, may benefit from using secondary data (Johnston 2014).

Secondary data may serve as a valuable methodological tool that may contribute to social work profession. For instance, new discoveries may be observed through generating new insights and perspectives from previous analyses (Sherif 2018). Researchers in social work may re-analyse the data and come up with new relevant conclusions, recommendations, responsive intervention strategies or verify and confirm previous results. They may further benefit from using secondary analysis, as it will enable them to monitor social problems that are rife and identify research gaps for research endeavour. This will provide the social work profession with empirical evidence central to expanding social work knowledge (Sales et al. 2006; Radey 2010).

Social work is a profession that seeks to improve the living conditions of individuals, groups and communities. Research is essential in social work since it enables researchers to develop

effective intervention strategies to resolve social issues based upon a logical synthesis of the findings (Draper et al. 2017), and to develop insight into the social issues under investigation. Furthermore, empirical research provides researchers with an opportunity to demonstrate an ability to think critically about the phenomenon to be investigated. Moreover, research explores possible improvements that can be made and how it may contribute to fill existing research gaps in the field.

Evidence-based practices (EBP) are an integral part of social work. Various resources such as primary and secondary research are used to inform social work practice. EBP 'involves assessing the available body of practice-relevant research' (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2018:1), because having a robust social work research base is important. EBP is an educational and practice paradigm originating from the medical profession (Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003; Okpych & Yu 2014). In social work (NASW 2018), EBP involves creating an answerable:

[Q]uestion based on service 'users' or an organisational need, locating the best available evidence to answer the question, evaluating the quality of the evidence as well as its applicability, applying the evidence, and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the solution. (p. 1)

EBP also enables researchers to combine well-researched interventions, ethics, service users' experiences and culture to guide and inform the delivery of effective and efficient services.

The practice of secondary data analysis with quantitative and qualitative data is encouraged across disciplines. Although secondary data from qualitative research has not been widely used, various methodological and ethical issues become a concern and therefore need attention, especially in a case where the secondary researcher was not part of the original project (Heaton 1998; Tripathy 2013).

This chapter introduces the meaning of secondary data, the benefits of using secondary data analysis, the distinction between secondary and primary data and the relevance of secondary data analysis in social work research.

■ The meaning of secondary data analysis

The history of secondary data was clearly discussed by Radey (2010). Researchers lack agreement in defining the term 'secondary data analysis'. Radey (2010:165) is of the view that the researchers' differences in defining the term arise when they 'establish the purpose of data collection, the role of the researcher in the data collection and the analytic technique used in the analysis'. Primary data produces factual, first-hand and original information derived from the original study conducted by the researcher using the scientific method. Researchers may collect primary data using a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and observation (Vartanian 2011:3). In contrast, secondary data is second-hand information already collected for analysis and interpretation (Johnston 2014).

Secondary analysis involves the utilisation of existing data to pursue a new research interest, different from that of the primary research (Johnston 2014:619; Sherif 2018). For instance, secondary researchers may formulate a new research question (Cheng & Phillips 2014; Hinds, Vogel & Clarke-Steffen 1997; Tripathy 2013) based on the research topic of interest. Secondary data analysis is distinct from systematic reviews and meta-analyses of qualitative studies. Its purpose is to examine, analyse and produce the existing data relating to the field of practice. For instance, EBP in social work encourages social workers to pay attention to evidence (the most appropriate information available) that can inform and improve their problem-solving and decision-making to enhance the living conditions of individuals, groups and communities. The required data to be considered when analysing secondary data is obtained from the known works of researchers, as it has already been collected. It is thus cheaper to obtain than primary data (Management Study Guide 2018). Riedel (2000:1) defines secondary data 'as the use of statistical material and information with a purpose other than

what was originally intended'. Boslaugh (2007:ix) defines secondary data analysis as 'an analysis of data collected by someone else'. Vartanian (2011:3) further defines an analysis of secondary data as 'any data that are examined to answer a research question other than the question(s) for which the data were initially collected'.

Moreover, Johnston (2014) indicates that secondary data analysis follows the basic research principles, as it is an empirical exercise. It has systematic steps that should be followed like any scientific research method.

Secondary data analysis has few frameworks to guide researchers (Andrews et al. 2012). Radey (2010) and Johnston (2014) have outlined processes and/or steps that may be followed by researchers when utilising secondary data. These processes will enable researchers to develop research questions, identify datasets and conduct a thorough evaluation of the datasets. A detailed discussion on these processes are provided by Radey (2010:168–172) and Johnston (2014:620–624).

■ Formulating the research questions

Prior to utilising the existing data, secondary researchers identify knowledge gaps in order to formulate the research question. Theoretical knowledge provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through the context of a holistic approach. A research question is derived from a general research topic. It refers to an overarching question to which 'the researcher seeks to answer' (Blaikie 2010:8). Good research questions, derived from the main research question, define the focus of the proposed research project. When developing a research question, the researcher must do a preliminary research on the chosen topic of interest, brainstorm on who will benefit reading the paper or book. In addition, the W5H technique (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How) questions are formulated based on the general research question.

■ Dataset identification

Literature review is one of the basics of scientific research. Researchers may have a specific topic of interest to study. However, they need to conduct literature review, which is an examination of existing published scientific or factual material (Blaikie 2010) from peer-reviewed journals.

A thorough and vigilant methodological review of past literature is an essential endeavour for any academic researcher (Geron & Steketee 2010; Webster & Watson 2002). It is, however, crucial to uncover what is already known in the body of knowledge prior to initiating any research study (Hart 1998; Hewitt 2007, 2009). A preliminary literature search, involving examining and reviewing the previous and current works of researchers (Creswell & Poth 2018), will enable researchers to discover what is already known. This will afford the researcher an opportunity to provide justification and the rationale to base his or her argument on what remains to be learnt (Creswell & Poth 2018). Researchers further rely on their experience and existing work as well as the literature review regarding the identified topic and problem formulation (Špiláčková 2012). By undertaking a literature search, a researcher demonstrates that he or she knows the field of study. The researcher should read extensively in order to uncover critical issues and controversies relevant to the topic. This will enable him or her to easily map and justify the research question within the context of his or her study. Through the knowledge of the researcher's field of study, research gaps may be identified which the research question could fill. It may not be enough to simply identify the gap; the researcher must convince the reader that it is essential to conduct scientific or empirical research based on the research question identified and justify why it should be done.

The unutilised data from the primary research may provide different perspectives (see Box 3.1) to the proposed research question or social issue (Heaton 2008; Johnston 2012). It is up to the researcher who intends using secondary data to establish

BOX 3.1: Example of a qualitative secondary data analysis.

Primary data

A qualitative exploratory-descriptive study was conducted with women living with HIV (WLWHIV) in the Mankweng area and surrounding villages of Limpopo Province in South Africa (Malatji 2007). The purpose of the study was to explore and describe various challenges and experiences of WLWHIV. Fifty-six (56) women were selected through purposive sampling. Six focus group discussions were conducted with eight (8) to twelve (12) members with an average of nine (9) members per group. The NVivo programme was used to manage, organise and analyse qualitative data. The goal of the study was reached.

Secondary data

In a situation where the researcher would like to conduct secondary analysis utilising the primary data from the six focus group discussions, he or she will embark on the assessment of the six transcripts. The goal of the study may be to describe the flow of communication among participants during the focus group discussions and the role of the researcher as the facilitator. Content analysis may be used to analyse and interpret the transcripts (Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Mayring 2014). A sociogram may be utilised as a tool to illustrate the flow of communication among members during discussions and the role of the researcher as a facilitator. This tool is a visual representation of the relationships and interactions between individuals (Drahota & Dewey 2008).

The research objectives derived from the goal of the study will be:

- To describe the interaction between the participants during focus group discussions.
- To describe the role of the facilitator during focus group discussions.
- To make recommendations on the effective facilitation of focus group discussions.

It is anticipated that the accurate analysis and interpretation of the six transcripts will enable the researcher to accomplish the objectives.

whether he or she wants to pursue a research question similar to that of the original study.

■ Evaluation of the dataset

The concept of a dataset is common in scientific arena where data provide the 'empirical basis for research activities' (Renear, Sacchi & Wickett 2010:1). Datasets refer to large and complex data that become awkward to work with (Snijders, Matzat & Reips 2012). It is essential for researchers to evaluate the dataset in order to confirm the feasibility and relevance of the research topic (Creswell & Poth 2018). Data verification must be considered where data quality control is lacking (Chen et al. 2014; Needham et al. 2009). Data verification ensures that there are no errors and discrepancies during data processing by checking data for accuracy and consistency, including quality checks for reliability of the results (Creswell et al. 2011:37). Research should be subjected to rigour in order to ensure 'truth value' of research (Struwig & Stead 2013:12). Rigour denotes quality, and by increasing rigour, the issues of reliability and validity must be addressed. Bryman (2012:47) indicated that validity seeks to preserve the integrity of the research results and conclusions drawn from a completed research project. Reliability means dependability or consistency. The same information that is repeated or recurs under the identical or very similar conditions is called reliability (Neuman 2014:212).

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the classic work of Stewart and Kamins (1993:17-31) on evaluative steps for secondary sources is still relevant as supported by Johnston (2014). Students and researchers interested in conducting either qualitative or quantitative secondary research may benefit from employing the secondary sources evaluative steps which are clearly outlined by Stewart and Kamins (1993:17-31) and Johnston (2014:622-624). The purpose of the evaluative steps is to enable researchers to determine the appropriateness of the research

topic and matching of datasets. Moreover, the evaluative steps will enable researchers to ensure congruency and quality of the primary study and its dataset. Possible evaluative questions to be asked during the evaluation process include (Stewart & Kamins 1993):

(1) what was the purpose of the study; (2) who was responsible for collecting the information; (3) what information was actually collected; (4) when was the information collected; (5) how was the information obtained; and (6) how consistent is the information obtained from one source with other sources. (pp. 17–31)

These six evaluative questions are briefly summarised below:

1. *Purpose of the study.* The goal of the primary research should be clearly clarified (see Boxes 3.1 and 3.2) to avoid any factors that may influence the research methodology of the secondary research, that is, the sample and population, research design and approach. For instance, the goal should be aligned with the specific research question of the study prior to gathering secondary data. This will enable the researcher to set objectives (steps) to be accomplished based on the goal of the proposed secondary research.
2. *Responsible persons for collecting the information.* In instances where the data requires clarification, the researcher should try to approach the primary researchers, to explore whether the research question (s) identified were not yet analysed and reported in the primary data and to answer some of the questions that may arise during secondary data analysis (Heaton 1998; Tripathy 2013). For instance, secondary researchers may examine how the original data was generated and processed (Johnston 2014).
3. *Type of information generated.* The primary research team usually keep record and evidence of the process followed during data preparation and collection. Moreover, procedures followed in the process of data collection of the primary data should be accessible, including relevant information (Smith et al. 2011) such as any publications that are related to the data, research question guide or questionnaire and all coding materials (Boslaugh 2007). Description of the dataset is a

BOX 3.2: Example of a quantitative secondary data analysis.

Primary data

The original quantitative cross-sectional community-based study was conducted by researchers (Alberts & Burger 2015; Maimela et al. 2016; Ntuli et al. 2015) at the Dikgale Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) site, Capricorn District of Limpopo Province in South Africa (Alberts & Burger 2015). The area consists of 15 villages, 7 200 households and a population of approximately 36 000 (Ntuli et al. 2015). The population targeted in this cross-sectional community-based study comprised of male and female participants older than 15 years. An adapted STEPwise questionnaire version of the World Health Organization (WHO) was used to collect data from a sample of 1407 participants in order to determine the prevalence and determinants of chronic non-communicable disease risk factors in a rural community in the Limpopo Province of South Africa (Alberts & Burger 2015; Maimela et al. 2016).

Secondary data

The purpose of secondary quantitative data analysis was to determine the prevalence and determinants of hypertension among women living with hypertension in rural areas. From the primary data, suitable data of 879 females were identified. The following research questions were derived for the purpose of analysing secondary quantitative data:

- What is the prevalence of hypertension among women living in Dikgale?
- What are the contributing factors of hypertension among women living in Dikgale?

International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics 23 was utilised to analyse secondary data obtained from HDSS in order to answer the research questions.

crucial aspect of data management, so that researchers, who may need to do re-analysis of either qualitative and/or quantitative data, may make sense of the data and understand the processes followed during data collection, data processing and analysis. The following components, as adapted from Library Curtin University (2018), can be considered by researchers when describing their data for future use. The description should cover, among others, a broad overview of the content and technical description and accessibility of the data. The primary researcher must label and provide the unique code of the dataset, and record the period and location where the research project took place. The methods utilised to collect data, data processing as well as multiple sources used in the data must be appropriately captured. Keywords and abbreviations used in the data and inventory files (participant's files and photos) must be safely stored. Relevant software such as NVivo and/or SPSS may be required to create and analyse data. Information on how and where the data can be accessed as well as the licenses and property rights to use the data must be clearly stated.

4. *The relevance of the period the information was collected.* The period in which either qualitative or quantitative research was conducted is essential (Boslaugh 2007), such as the start and end dates of the research project. The information will determine whether the information is outdated or not. It will further guide the researcher during the interpretation and analysis of data to compare the time, space and meaning of the previous and current situation being investigated.
5. *The methodology employed and the management of primary data.* Research methodology is the study of the research process, which involves the application of a variety of standardised methods and techniques in the pursuit of valid knowledge (Solomon & Draine 2010). Data collection methods are essential to establish quality secondary data analysis (Njenga 2017). The original data must be evaluated, meaning that the researcher must consider the issues of sampling, response rates, missing responses, as well as the issue of bias if it was addressed in the original research.

6. *The consistency of multiple data sources.* For secondary researchers, to boost the validity and reliability of findings, the use of multiple data sources should be considered. A good scientific research is supported by multiple data sources based on logical reasoning. Multiple data sources afford researchers an opportunity to articulate accurately the available information required. In some instances, researchers use triangulation of data to examine the consistency of various data sources within the same method. For instance, different viewpoints of participants may serve as multiple sources.

■ The distinction between primary data and secondary data

Primary data analysis involves a team of researchers or an individual researcher who designs, collects and analyses the data (Cheng & Phillips 2014). Primary data refers to new information obtained for the first-time by a researcher for a specific purpose (Vartanian 2011). It can be unique qualitative or quantitative information and not published before. Secondary data may be collected for various purposes. A systematic process with proper planning and organisation is followed when collecting primary data from its source of origin by the researcher himself or trained fieldworkers. Primary data is collected systematically through, among others, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, direct observations, ethnographic research, questionnaire and focus group discussions. A verification of the data will then follow. Subsequently, immense care must be considered to avoid any bias on the quality of one's research, because the study's credibility will be affected.

In contrast, secondary data is collected from both internal and external published sources. For instance, internal sources include, among others, reports and records, data from promotional campaigns, service users' feedback and marketing activities. External sources include data published by governmental departments, as well as publications released by international organisations such as the WHO and international labour

organisation (ILO). Reports produced by institutions of higher learning, research institutions, books, newspapers, archives, databases, indexes, old historical records as well as online websites and forums also serve as external sources.

Primary data is more reliable than secondary data owing to the originality of the data that has been collected. It does not produce outdated information or secondary sources that may be subject to some ‘errors or discrepancies’ (De Sordi et al. 2013:22). Secondary data is less reliable than primary data, as someone else has already collected it. The accuracy of published information cannot always be verified or confirmed due to the point that not all references used may be available or mentioned in detail.

The flexibility of using existing data leads to several types of data collected in many ways. Data can be cross-sectional or longitudinal, depending on the dataset. Secondary analysis can use official records, official statistics or combination of these. The presentation of quantitative data may be in the form of percentages, lists and tables. No ‘method of data collection is superior to others, but these distinctions are important as they influence the analysis and interpretation of data’ (Radey 2010:166).

■ The utilisation of qualitative secondary data

Qualitative secondary data remains an under-used technique in social sciences research (Radey 2010; Sherif 2018). It may be utilised by social science researchers to inform policy (Fielding 2004; Ziebland & Hunt 2014) and to develop responsive intervention strategies in order to address the myriad challenges faced by individuals, groups and communities. Social work researchers may consider the use of mixed-methods research, that is, the combination of both primary qualitative and secondary quantitative data to augment and complement each other.

This will enable researchers to better understand the complexities of the issue under study. Qualitative data produces narratives of the individuals ascribed to their lived experiences, while quantitative data produces numerical and statistical information about an event.

Although secondary data analysis of quantitative data is a well-known practice (Heaton 2000; Long-Sutehall, Sque & Addington-Hall 2010), it is interesting to note that secondary qualitative data is starting to be recognised and utilised by various disciplines (Long-Sutehall et al. 2010; Medjedović 2011; Ziebland & Hunt 2014). Corti and Bishop (2005:2) argue that the 'use of real-life data in teaching substantive or methodological perspectives in the social sciences adds interest and relevance to courses' (Sautter 2014). Furthermore, Corti and Bishop (2005) purport that a pervasive culture does not exist that encourages the re-analysis of secondary data. Moreover, there is dearth of published sources to 'guide novice researchers' on the benefits and limitations of re-analysis (Corti & Bishop 2005:2; Johnston 2014).

Various authors (e.g. Long-Sutehall et al. 2010; Medjedović 2011; Notz 2007) have used existing qualitative data to answer a different research question from that of the original qualitative data. Irwin and Winterton (2011) wrote a paper on 'Debates in qualitative secondary analysis: Critical reflections'. The paper discusses practical ways to consider when conducting qualitative secondary data analysis, as well as some 'challenges for the re-use of qualitative research data, in relation to distance from the production of primary data, and related knowledge of the proximate contexts of data production' (Irwin & Winterton 2011:2).

Both secondary qualitative and quantitative data analysis are regarded as having the same motive by researchers (Fielding 2004:98; Tripathy 2013) who have used secondary analysis of data. The motives may include, among others, performing in-depth analysis of the original data, as well as when a new perspective (Heaton 2000; Radey 2010; Sherif 2018) needs to be studied.

Hammersley (1997), in his paper titled ‘Qualitative data archiving: Some reflections on its prospects and problems’, discusses the feasibility of utilising secondary qualitative data analysis. Hammersley (1997) is of the view that the re-analysis may benefit secondary researchers to evaluate the results of qualitative research conducted by various researchers on similar populations or topics. Subsequently, researchers are able to strengthen future research capacity and make valuable conclusions and recommendations for future research regarding similar populations and topics.

In most cases, health and social science researchers pursue sensitive research topics; therefore, existing data on similar topics may be utilised until exploited prior to approaching new participants. This will enable future primary researchers to protect the population that is over-researched (Tripathy 2013) and to avoid repeating the same studies conducted before.

Based on the information already discussed in this chapter, Table 3.1 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of utilising secondary data.

TABLE 3.1: The advantages and disadvantages of secondary data.

| Data | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|-------------|--|---|
| Secondary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It saves time • Cost effective • Suitable to answer a research question and to meet the research goal • Improves and augments existing primary data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy and relevance of data may not be verified especially where a primary researcher is not consulted • Regarded as outdated • Prone to bias • May contravene some of the ethical research standards |

■ Methodological and ethical considerations

It is stated that there is a growing interest in carrying out secondary analysis of qualitative data since the mid-1990s (Heaton 2008; Long-Sutehall et al. 2010; Kwek & Kogut 2015).

The paper by Heaton (2008) on 'Secondary analysis of qualitative data: An overview' explores the development of secondary data analysis in qualitative research and some of the crucial factors that can be utilised by secondary researchers. Ruggiano and Perry (2017) critically examined research articles ($n = 71$) published between 2006 and 2016 that involved qualitative secondary data analysis and assessed the context, purpose and methodologies that were reported. In their paper, implications of findings are discussed, with particular focus on recommended guidelines and best practices for conducting qualitative secondary data analysis.

Heaton (1998) has highlighted two fundamental methodological issues for secondary data analysis, namely, (1) the inaccuracy of the intersubjective relationship between the researcher and participants and (2) the difficulty to establish whether the study is part of the original investigation or not to qualify as secondary analysis. Qualitative data utilises data collection methods such as interviews and observations; therefore, the contextualisation and interpretation of participants' situations and responses may pose a challenge for the secondary researcher, as he or she did not experience first-hand information provided by the participants.

Some of the practical and ethical considerations have been documented by various authors (e.g. Hinds et al. 1997; Irwin 2013; Thorne 1994; Yardley et al. 2014). Heaton (1998) has summarised some of the ethical considerations by various authors, for instance, compatibility of the data with secondary analysis (meaning that the quality of the original data should be assessed, depending on the purpose and nature of the original data) and the position of the secondary researcher as to whether he or she was part of the original research project. If yes, the decision to partake in secondary data analysis may be influenced. Therefore, the procedures provided by Radey (2010:168-172) and Johnston (2014:620-624) may be followed. This may be feasible and easier if the original research team member is part of the secondary research team with a new focus in mind. The description of the dataset should be reported in full (Library

Curtin University 2018; Thorne 1994). Secondary researchers should consider an outline of the original study such as the study design, data collection methods, an account of how methodological and ethical considerations and other relevant processes. One of the ethical issues includes ‘How was consent obtained in the original study?’ For instance, various sensitive topics are explored in qualitative studies and seeking for consent again may not be practical. Perhaps also re-use of the data violates or contravenes the agreement made between the primary researchers and the participants. Now that there is an interest for using existing data for either qualitative or quantitative research, it is imperative that researchers consider consent, which covers the possibility of secondary analysing of the research at hand.

Heaton (1998) raises key pertinent issues to be considered by secondary researchers including, firstly, an extensive examination of the literature on secondary qualitative studies. This could include assessing the methodology used, and verifying the quality and value of the research work done. Secondly, researchers should learn about the work protocols used for conducting secondary analysis of qualitative data. Thirdly, researchers must acquire accurate guidelines on ethical standards for primary researchers when conducting qualitative research that may be reused in the future.

■ Conclusion

The practice of secondary data analysis with quantitative and qualitative data is encouraged across disciplines. However, to determine the data sources for the research project, secondary researchers must assess the amount and type of data presently available. Proper guidelines to analyse qualitative and/or quantitative secondary data must be followed in order to produce accurate findings. Social workers are expected by the statutory body to keep abreast of the contemporary issues that can be

integrated into practice and research. Therefore, the curriculum for social work research in higher institutions should incorporate the relevance of secondary data to enable social work students, postgraduate supervisors and novice researchers to gain insight into the realities, benefits and limitations of re-analysing qualitative or quantitative data.

■ **Summary: Chapter 3**

Secondary analysis, also referred to as ‘secondary data analysis’, is the re-analysis of existing data for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive purposes. Despite the increase of available data stored by agencies, online websites and research sources, the use of secondary data analysis in social work remains limited. The utilisation of this existing data provides a viable option for researchers who may have limited time and resources. This chapter presented an overview of secondary data analysis as a possible, valuable methodological tool for social work research.

Ethics in research: Essential factors for consideration in scientific studies

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■ Introduction

To provide quality assurance and guarantee appropriate coverage of necessary subject matter in the BSW curricula – including in research – the social work profession in South Africa is governed by the general prescripts of *Social Service Professions Act* (No. 100 of 1978) as well as a professional body, the SACSSP. This chapter focuses on ethics in research, which is a critical factor in the education and practice of social work in general.

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Questions about ethical practices in research come out of human experiences, where people, animals and the environment have been abused in the name of the advancement of some purposes. With hindsight about the need for some guidelines and watchful eyes of scientific peers, regulators and authorities, horrible practices have taken place in laboratories and other places to push the frontiers beyond acceptable practices in research. Brief examples of recent harmful experiences are presented, both ethical practice and research are defined, guiding principles are listed and the chapter concludes with suggested ways to help researchers avoid pitfalls in their work.

■ Social work education

■ Research relevant programme outcomes and standard

Social workers in South Africa are currently trained through accredited four-year BSW university degree programmes, which must comply with the National Qualification Framework (NQF), as legislated in the *South African Qualifications Authority Act* (Mogorosi & Thabede 2018; South Africa 1995; Spolander et al. 2011:822). Through monitoring and guidance of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) initially set out 27 ELOs that all BSW programmes must meet and later on suggested an improved 16 core social work knowledge areas (Qualification Standard for Bachelor of Social Work 2015). Of these ELOs, both ELOs 10 and 11 are relevant to training, teaching and learning as well as for future practice related to ethics in research as they focus on *Ethical Principles and Values of Social Work* (ELO 10) and *Use, Plan and Executing Social Work Research* (ELO 11), respectively. These two ELOs guarantee that no BSW graduate will complete their learning programmes without proper grounding in the centrality of ethics in research that will also be applicable for their future professional practice.

To expand further about these ELOs, key to ELO 10 is that BSW students are expected to develop abilities to implement

social work values and ethical principles, as well as ensuring that they are engaged in critiquing the South African Social Work Code of Ethics as to its relevance. To fulfil research project requirements, students need to produce mini-theses/extended essays in their final year. Furthermore, in line with the requirements of ELO 11, BSW students are expected to:

- develop research proposals that reflect well-formulated research project plans
- ensure that research ethics are clearly identified and considered in the design and implementation of their research activities
- ensure that all research processes they develop are executed in accordance with accepted research protocols
- produce research reports that reflect knowledge and skills of social work research.

As indicated earlier on in this section, to further enhance the quality of social work curriculum and to reform offerings against concerns raised about the relevance of some of the 22 BSW ELOs, CHE proposed a reformed Qualification Standard for BSW (2015). This Qualification Standard (2015) suggests 16 core social work knowledge areas in which social work graduates must demonstrate knowledge. Relevant here are core knowledge areas relating to ethics (number 13) and research (number 16). These 16 areas are further organised and classified into 'nine applied competencies and skills required of a graduate' of BSW. Three of the nine that are relevant to ethics and research are stated as follows (see Qualification Standard 2015):

(2) Application of core values and principles of social work; (4) Demonstrated competence in the use of codes of ethics vis-à-vis the moral impulse; (6) Ability to undertake research. (pp. 8–9)

■ Past questionable professional and research practices

To give the chapter practical illustration of complications about ethics in research, it begins with examples of past questionable professional and research practices. Looking back in time,

vulnerable individuals, communities, animals and the environment have been abused, exploited and ill-treated in the name of innovation and advancement. Such incidents have helped to highlight the importance of codes of conduct and implementation of ethical review processes, which would ensure utilisation of processes that are sensitive to ethical, sociocultural and legal dynamics.

Some professionals and scientists may be overlooking important ethical practices which may not appear as serious transgressions. For instance, not obtaining permission for the use of personal information or conducting experiments without following necessary institutional protocols and legal prescripts.

As illustrated by examples here, major contributing factors to questionable research practices include silence, apathy and inaction on the part of those that should know or are in positions of authority. Reference here is to usual expressions when transgressions are uncovered: 'we were not aware of that', 'it was the role of review board to refuse authorisation' or 'it will not happen again'.

The first example here is about an experience in South Africa during the 1990s when the country was confronted with increasing rates of HIV and AIDS as well as high costs of medical treatment (Chikane 2013; Fisher & Rigamonti 2005). In the haste to contribute to some resolution to the health epidemic of HIV and AIDS, a possible clash between socio-political aims and meticulously slow but required medical science testing procedures could have led to potential research ethics problems. Even though reports are sketchy about role-players in the story as well as approval for drug testing, an estimated R40 million (about US\$7 million at the time) of state funds were reportedly provided to a researching organisation, Cryopreservation Technologies (CPT), to find a 'cure for AIDS', namely, Virodene P058. Use was reportedly made of a purified form of an industrial solvent *dimethylformamide* as a major component of the drug. Medical testing for Virodene P058 was found to have taken place

even though it was not registered as a drug by the South African Medical Control Council (MCC). After media revelations, MCC banned Virodene. By 1999, the South African Public Protector (i.e. the ombudsperson) conducted a probe which cleared high-ranking politicians (Chikane 2013; Le Roux 2013; Nattrass 2006).

The second example took place in 1989, when two American scientists, Pons and Fleishmann, caught the physicists and energy science community by surprise, revealing their experimental discovery on cold fusion. If the Pons–Fleishmann experiment was correctly done, it could have led to less reliance on oil as major source of energy. Cold fusion is a process that involves a ‘low-energy nuclear reaction’ which occurs near room temperature and pressure, using relatively simple and low-energy input devices. These scientists also hastily presented their ‘findings’ and requested funding for further research. To quote the report ‘Cold fusion: A case study for scientific behaviour’ (The University of California Museum of Palaeontology 2012:1), ‘this “discovery” was missing one key ingredient: good scientific behaviour’. This is so, as fellow scientists could not successfully replicate the Pons–Fleishmann experiment. Controversy has ensued for years about ethical violations relating to faulty calculations and possible cutting of corners that might have taken place during the Pons–Fleishmann experiments (Mallove 2006; Plotkin 2002; The University of California Museum of Palaeontology 2012).

The next three serious research ethical transgressions involve relatively recent horrible human experiences that can be used here as examples, to help illustrate the dangers of being over-zealous about research and medical solutions. The infamous Nazi experiments on involuntary subjects in concentration camps, in the name of eugenics and ‘testing medical cures’, are examples of such cases of ethical transgression. The full horror of these was revealed during the 1945 to 1946 Nuremberg trials (Homan 2004; Marshall 2007; Monette, Sullivan & DeJong 1986). Monette et al. (1986) state that healthy people:

[W]ere infected with such serious diseases as spotted fever or malaria. Other people were used to test the effects of various

poisons or had parts of their bodies frozen to test new treatments. Still others were purposely wounded to study new anti-biotics and other treatments. (p. 42)

After the Second World War and subsequent trials of perpetrators, the Nuremberg Code was formulated, the principles of which were intended to guide future medical and other research endeavours that utilise human subjects (Marshall 2007).

A fourth example of ethical transgression relating to serious human subject abuse was the 1930s' Tuskegee Study on Syphilis, which was conducted by the US Public Health Service (PHS) on 625 poor and semi-literate black males in Tuskegee, Alabama. Two hundred of these men had syphilis (Gorman 2007; Monette et al. 1986). All 625 men were led to believe that they were being treated for the disease. The study was only stopped during the early 1970s when, based on information unearthed by a social worker, some medical professionals openly voiced their horror, which then led to public outrage. The intention of the study was to observe these men over a span of years, to document and map out the progression of syphilis which was then a newly discovered disease. Monette et al. (1986) complete this harrowing but true tale:

Fifteen years later, penicillin was discovered to be effective cure, [...]. Despite this discovery, the PHS continued the syphilis study an additional 25 years, withholding treatment from all but those fortunate few who discovered its existence on their own and requested it [...]. Many of the afflicted participants, [...] suffered serious physical disorders or died as a result of not receiving treatment for the disease. (p. 42)

The fifth and final example here is what can go wrong with covert methods in research, where the role of the researchers, true purposes or methods are either concealed or disguised. Homan (1991) reports that in 1971, medical professionals in Nevada, USA, without stating a true purpose, decided to conduct a 'study on the side effects of contraceptives' on a social minority group of Mexican-American women who went to Planned Parenthood clinics for assistance. Some of these women were given real

contraceptives, while others only got placebos (mostly useless sugar pills without any medicinal properties). Making a poignant statement, Homan (1991) concludes the story, stating that:

Those who were given placebos showed more dramatic side-effects than those who were given contraceptives: they became pregnant [...]. If this was to have been the finding, it hardly justified the choice of unwitting subjects and consequent human distress. (p. 97)

Obviously, as illustrated here, there is no justifiable reason for human rights abuse. From these kinds of experiences, researchers and scientists should, therefore, note that they have to do their work with greater care and, importantly, ensure that they follow established professional and research conventions. Failure to do so can only lead to abuse, as shown here.

■ Ethics in research

Ethics are typically associated with morality, as they are about matters or principles of right or wrong, good or bad, what should be or not, welfare of study subjects, doing things properly and staying within agreed-upon standards. Ethical practices ensure that scientific work and practices do not lead to harm, either by commission or omission (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Fouche & Delport 2015; Kirst-Ashman 2015; MRC Guidelines for Medical Research, n.d.). Fouche and Delport (2015) state that ethics:

[I]mplies preferences that influence behaviour in human relations, conforming to a code of principles, the rules of conduct, the responsibility of the researcher and the standards of conduct of a given profession. (p. 114)

Their main purpose is to protect human dignity, and to promote justice, equality, truth and trust. Thus, ethics in research fosters practices and culture of accepting responsibility and accountability of own actions. It can be argued that general interest in and willingness to actively enforce them helps to enhance knowledge within any discipline, as well as increase the standing of those involved. Broom (2006) says that being ethical in social research projects means that the dignity,

rights, safety and well-being of participants must be of primary consideration.

Knowledge leading to the adoption of ethical practices and care during scientific studies is of greater importance in the education and professional exercise of responsible professionals. Incompetent and unethical researchers tend to cause harm as a result of poor practices. As Gorman (2007:13) put it, 'unethical research may harm the individual, the institution, and the profession as a whole, and impact upon the future willingness of potential participants to engage in research'. Thus, scientific inquiries cannot be regarded as good enough and appropriate unless proper ethical standards have been maintained. In research conducted within practical and helping sciences or professions such as in social work, psychology or health, it is common that a significant number of study subjects may fall within what can be referred to as 'socially stigmatised social classes or groups' (the poor, ill, and less educated), thus making them vulnerable to possible abuse (Oliveira & Guedes 2012:131). Due care, therefore, is of great importance.

Obtaining institutional ethics approval before research begins, and maintaining high ethical standards throughout a research project, are central to good scientific inquiries. These proper ethical standards include respect of the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of study subjects and sources of information having to be appropriately considered (Broom 2006; Peled & Leichtentritt 2002). Broom (2006:155) further makes a very simple but telling statement: 'Being ethical is vital for the production of good-quality research and avoiding damage to the field (study site)'.

■ Theoretical framework

This chapter adopts a human rights and social justice framework, which is central to social work in both its response to related inequalities and social problems (Healy 2008; Lundy 2011; Wronka 2010). This framework focuses on the issues of ethics

which are consistent with the social work profession. At times researchers are faced with ethical dilemmas relating to choices and actions associated with their studies. Human rights and social justice framework can help them and assist them to negotiate and navigate the practical and ethical challenges involved (Reisch & Garvin 2016). In the South African context, Chapter 2 of the national constitution (Bill of Rights) can also be helpful to supplement the understanding of human rights and social justice (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996*). The Bill of Rights lists, explains and enshrines the rights of all citizens.

Human rights and social justice framework implore researchers that they need to ensure protection of study methods, participants and sources through the use of carefully worked out and rigorous research methods and processes. Social scientists, including social workers, need to make certain that their research and investigations should adhere to ethical standards and comply with expected research processes in line with the undertaken study. As an example, SACSSP, in its guidelines for research and evaluation, emphasises that social work professionals are expected to be sensitive to cultural diversity, and work towards ending unfair discrimination, poverty and other forms of social injustice through promoting social justice and change (see *Research and Evaluation* [Section 5.1.4] of SACSSP Guidelines of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers n.d.). This means, therefore, that whenever decisions have to be made about project plans, choices and actions – which may involve any attendant dilemmas – uppermost in the checklist of researchers and institutional approval bodies must be human rights and social justice.

■ Mandate of science and research

Social research can be viewed from its three dimensions, namely, that it is a discipline, a science and a process. A discipline involves collecting, weighing and evaluating of evidence; a science is

about producing acceptable description of some aspect of how the universe works; and finally, a process part of research involves the use of acceptable methods and procedures (Bouma & Ling 2004). Saunders (2007:69) believes that scientific research enquiry is essentially an empirical undertaking which follows the most rigorous mode of knowledge production. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2012) define research as a process of obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures. Research involves planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data, as well as including processes that must withstand intense and concerted scrutiny over time (Wilkinson 2000). With medical research in mind, the South African Medical Research Council (MRC Guidelines for Medical Research, n.d.) views research in similar terms as Welman et al. (2012), Wilkinson (2000) and Saunders (2007), but goes on to include two additional factors, namely, testing and evaluating designed to contribute towards generalisable knowledge. MRC Guidelines for Medical Research (n.d.:10) then conclude that such endeavours could then raise ethical questions, as they 'may involve subordination of at least the immediate interest of the individual participant to the objective of the advancement of knowledge, they must be subject to ethics review'.

Focussing on the 'science' element of research as presented by Bouma and Ling (2004) here, one may also wonder in partial agreement with Steinberg's (2015:4) assertion that 'science is political', which he took further to state that it meant that 'research is conducted within sets of assumptions about what is, what should be, and why'. Granted, humanity has progressed largely on the basis of research and scientific innovation. But, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, humanity, animals and the environment have also been victims of over-zealousness and abuse by unethical practices in scientific research projects. Theobald (2016) captures past political transgressions of science which adversely affected those who were colonised, aptly stating that:

Science has an embarrassing history of involvement in a colonial project. It has been used to justify racism, exploited colonial

subjects as fodder for experiments and expended great energy on technology to enforce colonial authority. Serious scientists such as Robert Boyle and Francis Galton argued for biological racism that underpinned the racist attitudes that led to eugenics. We now know that 90% of genetic variation is within groups and only 10% between them. (p. 3)

A critical mandate of science and research is seeking for and presentation of evidence. Both Kazatchkine, Kinderlerer and Gillian (2016) and Lehohla (2016) remind us about the centrality of seeking for and presentation of evidence in scientific endeavours. Arguing for the significance of separating fact from populist fiction as far as use of science in policy-making, Kazatchkine et al. (2016:1) argue that those in positions of authority in society ‘should not give up on defending the right thing to do when the scientific evidence is clear’. In addition, discussing the importance of demography and national census in assisting with national policy planning and implementation, especially in the developing world, Lehohla (2016) emphasised that:

Africa will not win hard won battles against colonialism, neo-colonialism and coloniality if it does not look in the direction of evidence and statistical evidence, which, its national offices collate for policy making. (p. 16)

Camara et al. (2008), answering their own rhetorical question about practical efficacy of ethics in the real world, strongly argued that:

No new scientific or technological development can claim immunity from ethical scrutiny. Science cannot be pursued in a complete moral and ethical vacuum in any society that claims to be healthy and civilised. (p. 5)

Coming closer to home, referring to assuring ethical practices in research within social work, Steinberg (2015) states that producing and consuming research within the discipline must be underpinned by a combination of ethical mandates derived from expected competencies for professional practice as identified by relevant national professional body. In furtherance of that point,

for example, in South Africa social work students and practitioners are required to register with SACSSP, a body within which registered members must be guided by a code of conduct which includes aspects relevant to ethical conduct. SACSSP code of conduct contains a section which addresses issues relevant to those involved in research endeavours (see *Research and Evaluation* [Section 5.1.4] of SACSSP Guidelines of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers n.d.).

To conclude this section, it is important to summarise key characteristics and mandates of both science and research endeavours here. These include that they both:

- involve diligent and structured inquiry processes
- utilise systematic and acceptable scientific methods
- involve presentation of evidence for assessment
- endeavour to solve problems and create new knowledge, as well as expecting that adequate attention be paid to ethics.

For ethics, emphasis should be on two factors above here, namely, 'diligence' and 'acceptable scientific methods'. Noble research intentions of 'helping to solve problems' and the 'creation of new knowledge' cannot be used by anyone to justify utilisation of sub-standard processes, appalling or illegal means towards some ends. Research frequently involves, in some form or way, interfering with sources of information such as people, animals or the environment. In the social sciences, for example, study endeavours mostly involve talking or observing people; gaining their trust and cooperation; asking them to disclose information about themselves, others and situations; as well as asking them to do certain things. Usually people will not easily disclose this kind of information to strangers, as doing so may involve the potential to bring problems or harm to informants. When pursuing answers for study questions, researchers should never forget the rules of the game: treatment of others and the environment with due respect and decency, as well as adhering to the universal ethical practices.

■ Ethical practice in research work and projects

Raising questions about ethical issues should not be seen as obstacles, but should rather be dealt with as a call for necessary engagement with stakeholders (such as targeted information sources, review boards or regulators). When research and other project proposals are put together, ethical prescripts, processes and practices should, anyway, be central in all the planning and decision-making processes. These practices should, anyway, form part of the daily practices of the researchers themselves (European Commission Ethics Reviews 2013:6).

Boydell (2007) points out that there are at least three general classifications of research-related ethics, namely, 'procedural', 'ethics in practice' and 'relational ethics'. The first, procedural ethics, is about seeking approvals while assuring rights and safety through consent forms and submission of formal research project proposals. The second classification is ethics in practice (or situational ethics), which relates to the day-to-day practical issues that arise when research is done, such as, for example, what to do when study participants raise questions of concern at any stage or process of research-related procedures. The third classification, relational ethics, relates to the degree and quality of caring towards study subjects, whether they are treated with due care, respect and deserved dignity.

In case of dilemmas or conflict for guidance on 'the right thing to do', besides own conscience and the researchers' cultural and professional background, two other important sources should be referred to as important ports-of-call to clarify any grey areas of how to deal with sources of information. Firstly, in the practical case of the South African experiences, one can point to the Bill of Right in the constitution of the country (Chapter 2, *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, Act No. 108 of 1996) which addresses the importance of respect for human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. The second

port-of-call for moral guidance for those who are professionally trained should be values and principles that form part of own discipline or profession-specific code of conduct. To give social-work-specific examples of general ethics in the discipline and profession, there are at least six core and common values which are universally accepted; these include respect for the individual person, promotion of clients' self-determination, promotion of social justice, working for the interests of others, competence and integrity. It stands to reason, therefore, that social work professionals engaged in scientific research endeavours are expected to continue to uphold these core values in their work (Kirst-Ashman 2015; Oliveira & Guedes 2012; Peled & Leichtentritt 2002). As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, academic preparation of future social work professionals (including researchers) includes rigorous training that demands all-round knowledge and professional competence which also incorporates knowledge of ethical practices and skills. To ensure ethical practice in the profession, qualities that are demanded of a social worker include what Blennberger and Fränkel (2006) refer to as 'ethical traits of character'. These are:

- integrity and critical self-insight
- responsibility and moral courage
- a sense of justice and balanced judgement
- broad-mindedness and sensitivity
- a basic attitude of respect and equality in relation to others.

These aforementioned ethical considerations have, however, not escaped valid criticisms. Even though ethical consideration forms a core of preparatory curriculum, there are still some teething challenges. From the experience of the author here, a large number of BSW students tend to think mainly of 'confidentiality', and almost no other features, when asked to infuse practical ethical aspects in their research projects. These students only cast their nets a bit wider on other ethical aspects – as it were – upon being challenged and pushed to think beyond that 'confidentiality'.

From other countries' experiences, through their study on ethics in qualitative research in published social work journal articles in the USA, Peled and Leichtentritt (2002) addressed problems related to why researchers in social work (mainly in the USA) neglect to address ethical issues for their projects, saying that:

Another set of explanations for the lack of evidence of good ethical conduct we observed in qualitative social work research reports relates to training and education. It is possible that researchers do not follow ethical standards because they are trained to be good researchers but not good ethicists. In our experience, ethics often receive a narrow slot in research courses. These educational shortcomings seem to be reflected also in the policy and practice of social work journals. (p. 161)

Peled and Leichtentritt (2002:161), addressing these questions further, state that some common ethical principles are stated in relatively imprecise terms, which may render them difficult to operationalise (e.g. respect for the individual person, promotion of user self-determination, promotion of social justice). They also state that social work researchers are frequently asked to adopt ethical standards which emanate from the thinking which suitably applies to the professional practice of the discipline, which may not correspond very well with research.

Another issue is that modern technology and associated devices have been a boon for research and advancement of knowledge in general. Heed, however, must be paid to what could be unintended consequences of modern means, such as information and communication technology processes and equipment, and how they can have an impact on ethics in research. For example, computer programmes and systems have made it so much easier to copy and plagiarise people's work. Again, sometimes scant attention is paid to standards as researchers use technology such as open information sources, websites, GPS (Global Positioning System), cell phones and other advanced devices to access information and locate, document and record activities, voices, conversations as well as take pictures.

Such usage and actions may be taking place without expressed permission of affected sources of information.

There have been instances where ‘outsiders’ get into contact with individuals and communities in research-related activities without expressed permission: taking pictures, asking for information, as well as demonstration of some activities (singing, dancing, recitations). Sometimes, the less formally educated and poor people may ‘agree’ to participate in certain activities that they may not fully understand or agree with, believing that some of their existing personal and socio-economic challenges may be attended to. Scant attention, therefore, may be paid to informed consent, confidentiality, dignity and possible risk exposure related to some of these processes and actions.

■ **Avoiding ethical problems in research endeavours**

Major challenges for research projects leading to ethical problems may include how they are planned for, funded and implemented. Leeson (2007) reminds us, for example, that research with vulnerable population such as children requires greater sensitivity and robust ethical consideration. Research with such populations predictably demands protocols that demonstrate higher levels of sensitivity and formidable ethical constraints. Research ethics processes involved should then have frameworks which raise meaningful questions, which is the very heart of good scholarship.

Before undertaking any project, researchers need to ensure that their study designs, instrumentation, facilities and subject selection comply with requisite quality standards. Effort needs to be put into ensuring that all possible risks to study subjects and others are minimised, for if not done, it then becomes an ethical issue. It is unacceptable to expose anyone to unnecessary discomfort, deception or harm. In their discussions on the need for well-designed studies, risk reduction and the ethics of using

children, Koocher and Keith-Spiegel (1994) capture ethical challenge of poorly designed studies very well, emphasising the point when they state that:

Poorly designed studies yield uninterpretable, easily misinterpreted, or useless findings. Participants have at best wasted their time and at worst were needlessly put at risk or harmed. Future consumers also may be harmed if the findings are generalized and applied. Overall, the scientific knowledge stockpile has been contaminated. (p. 60)

As an example, to help minimise possible risks to study subjects and others, the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides guidelines for ‘allowable risk’ when using children as participants. DHHS defines ‘minimal risk’ for child subjects as where the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research ‘are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests’ (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel 1994:51). Researchers need to ask themselves a number of questions, including:

- How really important and necessary is the planned study?
- Has literature been thoroughly reviewed to learn from previous experiences?
- What does common sense reveal about the potential for harm at various developmental stages of these children?
- What does the investigator’s experience with similar intervention or procedures contribute to an understanding of the proposed risks in this particular study?
- What is the situation of the proposed participants or specific group in terms of possibilities and degrees of vulnerability?
- What has been done to avoid or reduce incidental, unintended or secondary exposure to harm (both psychological and physical)?

To assist researchers to be ‘more ethically prepared’, the EU Ethics Standards (European Commission Ethics Reviews 2013:6) document presents three suggestions. Firstly, for much needed

reflection on ideas, choices and processes, researchers are implored to always try to integrate ethical and societal expertise into their research projects. Secondly, they are encouraged to openly and constantly refer to applicable and existing codes of conduct for researchers. Thirdly and finally, when such is needed, researchers are required to seek advice from experts and other sources without hesitation.

■ Guiding principles of ethics in research

Moving towards the end of the discussions and focussing towards what needs to be done, the purpose is to answer the question: What can be done to help ensure that both students and practitioners of social work and social work research are assisted to curtail problems of ethical oversights and violations? To help answer the question, three sets of relevant principles are presented here that inform each other and are very useful examples. These are Principles of the 1947 Nuremburg Code, United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2014), as well as SACSSP Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct. The section ends with a general list of ethical principles as summarised.

To avoid potentially devastating, risky and life-threatening situations that led to examples such as Virodene P058 'AIDS cure' or the Pons–Fleishmann experimental debacles, the report 'Cold fusion: A case study for scientific behaviour' (The University of California Museum of Palaeontology 2012) suggests that researchers should pay attention to simple researchers' standard code of conduct. It includes that they should:

- pay attention to what fellow researchers have already done on the subject matter
- expose their ideas to testing
- base their work and results on evidence

- openly communicate ideas and work together with fellow researchers
- always act with scientific integrity.

For actual application of ethical principles, crucial questions must be addressed by both researchers and institutional ethics committees. Bioethics has helped enrich the field of research ethics in general, emanating from the history of abuse of research subjects. To guide research in the medical field, bioethics emphasises principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. These principles assist with a framework with which researchers and regulatory bodies could function and guard against ethical transgressions. Firstly, the principle of autonomy is about consent being obtained from research subjects or their guardians. The second principle, beneficence, relates to balancing potential benefit with that of potential harm and risk, as well as deliberating on how that potential harm can be minimised. The third principle, non-maleficence, is closely related to beneficence. It is about not doing harm, with crucial questions needing to be raised about the interests of the parties involved in a research enterprise, such as who could be harmed and how, who could benefit, as well as how that might happen. The fourth principle is about justice, wherein risk-benefit and impact analyses need to be done with the intention to examine whether a study should really be conducted (Gorman 2007; MRC Guidelines for Medical Research n.d.).

■ Principles of the 1947 Nuremburg Code

Researchers need to heed lessons of the Nazi experiments and Tuskegee study. As a consequence of Nazi trials after World War II, the 1947 Nuremburg Code was formulated and was aimed at introducing principles that would guide the use of human subjects in medical and other experiments (Gorman 2007; Grodin & Glantz 1994; Homan 1991). Table 4.1 presents some of these principles:

TABLE 4.1: Principles of the 1947 Nuremburg Code for Usage of Human Subjects in Experiments.

| No. | Principles |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Participation in experiments should be voluntary and participants must be fully informed of possible risks. |
| 2. | Medical experiments are justifiable only if they serve humanitarian purposes, which cannot be served by other methods. Scientists are implored to question whether the knowledge they seek, through research, is a worthy cause. |
| 3. | The risk of experiments for subjects and others need to be calculated in proportion to the importance of the research for humanitarian purposes. Researchers need to weigh the outcomes with probable strains, discomfort or embarrassment to people. |
| 4. | Researchers need to have thorough knowledge of the nature of their experiments, and if necessary, should have done pilot studies beforehand. |
| 5. | Measures should be taken to avoid physical and psychological harm. |
| 6. | There are no grounds for expectation of the disablement or death of subjects. |
| 7. | Researchers should take all necessary precaution to avoid harmful effects in medical and psychological research. Use should be made of equipment that has been properly tested and must comply with high standards of safety. |
| 8. | Researchers should be highly qualified and appropriately experienced. |
| 9. | Subjects should be free, and know that they are free, to withdraw from experiments, even once these studies are in progress. |
| 10. | Researchers are obliged to discontinue experiments as soon as they are seen to cause undue discomfort or harm to subjects. |

Source: Babbie and Mouton (2001); Bell (2017); Broom (2006); Fouche and Delport (2015); Gorman (2007); Healy (2008); Homan (1991); Kirst-Ashman (2015); Lundy (2011); MRC Guidelines for Medical Research (n.d.).

United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

In the fields of research and science in general, it is important to ensure widespread trust of outcomes of work through ethical practices. As a good example of that, in 2014, the United Nations (UN) adopted *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, consisting of ten principles set out to guarantee that all information collected by the UN itself, its associates and member countries would enjoy universal trust as being of acceptable quality, with legal standing, trustworthy, and compliant with high ethical standards. Four of these principles (namely, Principles 2, 3, 6 and 7) contain elements relevant to ethics in research. These 10 principles have subsequently been adopted by UN member states and affiliates, including South Africa through Statistics

South Africa (Stats SA) – a national institution legally mandated with conducting national census, collecting official statistics and other related information in the country (UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics 2014). The four relevant UN fundamental principles are as follows:

- *Principle 2.* To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.
- *Principle 3.* To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.
- *Principle 6.* Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.
- *Principle 7.* The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

Closer to home, and as an example of how professional bodies help guide its members, *Policy Guidelines for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers* of SACSSP (see Section 5.1.4, SACSSP Guidelines for Conduct n.d.) emphasise the importance of ethical practices and implores social work professionals engaged in research and evaluation to ensure that they should:

- never design, conduct evaluation or research that does not use consent procedures
- report evaluation and research findings accurately
- be alert to and avoid conflict of interest and dual relationships with participants, as well as to inform participants when a real or potential conflict of interest arises
- educate themselves (i.e. social work professionals), their students and their colleagues about responsible research practices
- not be involved in plagiarism in evaluation and research.

What then helps researchers to ensure that their work complies with expected practice conventions? Table 4.2 presents a number of ethical principles that researchers need to adhere to when conducting their studies.

To sum up the section and for actual implementation, Peled and Leichtentritt (2002) suggests five interrelated assumptions that should help guide ethical thinking on research in general, namely, that ethical research should:

- be infused in all acts, phases and processes of an investigative undertaking
- empower participants (especially vulnerable and disenfranchised groups)
- help and benefit participants
- prevent harm for participants and others that are involved
- require that researchers be technically competent.

TABLE 4.2: Ethical Guiding Principles for Research.

| No. | Principles |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Voluntary subject participation in studies. |
| 2. | Guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity for subjects and others. |
| 3. | Respect for privacy of subjects and others. |
| 4. | Informed consent must to be obtained from participants and guardians. |
| 5. | No harm to participants and others. |
| 6. | No harmful deception of subjects and others. |
| 7. | No withholding of treatment for research purposes. |
| 8. | Actions and competence of researchers must be of high quality. |
| 9. | Corporation with collaborators needs to be proper and legal. |
| 10. | Revelation of sponsorship of research projects should be done. |
| 11. | Acknowledgement of others' work and ideas is essential. |
| 12. | There is a need for secrete respect for research evidence. |
| 13. | There is a need for carefulness about scientific advocacy. |
| 14. | Data analysis and report writing need to be objective. |
| 15. | There must be honest disclosure of the results. |
| 16. | Study results need to be released as previously agreed upon. |

Source: Babbie and Mouton (2001); Bell (2017); Broom (2006); Fouche and Delpport (2015); Gorman (2007); Grodin and Glantz (1994); Healy (2008); Homan (1991); Lundy (2011); Peled and Leichtentritt (2002); Watts (2010).

■ Conclusion

As indicated elsewhere in the chapter, questions about ethical practice in science and research emanate from practical incidents where people, animals and the environment experienced abuse in the name of the advancement of research and science. Examples of recent harmful experiences and violation of scientific procedures are presented, and guiding principles are also listed. The chapter concludes with suggested ways to help research practitioners and students avoid pitfalls in their work.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel; what is needed is re-dedication and intensive application of what should already be in place in most institutions for better research teaching and learning, as well as practice. Marshall (2007) suggests a number of helpful and commendable actions that should help to further strengthen these efforts. One such action is an intensive effort to help deepen understanding of informed consent, especially in ‘resource-poor’ settings wherein studies are largely driven by those with better knowledge and ‘resource-rich’ backgrounds. She (Marshall 2007:72) also argues for meaningful community consultations before studies are undertaken, stating that researchers ‘should consider how cultural, social, and political factors influence decision-making among individuals representing the local population’. Furthermore, she (Marshall 2007:72) advocates for improvements of strategies for strengthening capacities of institutional research review boards and committees (IRBs) to effectively and fairly evaluate research project proposals, suggesting that IRB protocols need to pay attention to ‘social and political dynamics that influence the “gate-keeping” function of review committees’.

In terms of what academic and research practitioners should do, ethical guidelines operate within a particular context of cultural and professional practice, rules and climate. Such ethical guidelines serve as both a standard and a basis upon which researchers need to evaluate their practices and conduct.

Before undertaking any project, researchers need to ensure that their studies – from planning, designs and implementation – comply with requisite standards. Key pointers to ensure good-quality research plans, proposals and implementation include:

- adherence to discipline-specific conventions and relevant code of conduct
- respect for the rules (i.e. law, human rights and international conventions)
- ensuring that reviews and risk-benefit assessments are done (by peers, supervisors and concerned parties)
- ensuring that work is conducted by qualified individuals, under the supervision of competent seniors
- attention and advice being sort for the use of new technologies
- obtaining approvals of the institutional review committees
- obtaining consent from participants, informants and legal guardians
- respect for the views, preferences and choices of participants and others
- ensuring necessary and fair disclosure of funding, affiliation and associations
- providing for objective analysis and reportage of results
- within reason, fair disclosure of results is provided for.

In conclusion, these guidelines can help make researchers be responsible and accountable for their actions. In the end, the onus is on the student, practitioner and scientist to ensure that their actions and work comply with conventions, in the interest of good work. Ethical guidelines presented here can help humanity avoid similar harmful experiences and violation of scientific procedures, such as the ones that are presented in this chapter, as kinds of experiences that should never recur in the future in the name of science and research.

■ Summary: Chapter 4

Questions about ethical practice in science and research rise out of practical incidents where people, animals and the environment

experienced abuse in the name of the advancement of the very same research and science. This chapter was about conventions and guiding principles for ethics that all those involved in research endeavours need to be aware of. To show why ethical guidelines and practice are essential, brief examples of recent harmful human experiences and violation of scientific procedures are presented, and guiding principles are also listed. Ethical practice and research are defined, guiding principles are listed and the chapter concludes with suggested ways to help both students and practitioners of research avoid pitfalls in their work. This chapter adopted human rights and social justice as a theoretical framework.

Engendering values and ethics in social work education and training

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■ Introduction

All professions have ethical values that give purpose and direction to their practice. That is not an exception to the social work profession; values play an imperative role in social work. SACSSP (n.d.) asserts that the guiding ethical values and principles relate to the general approach as is reflected in the rules relating to the course of conduct to be followed by social workers in the practising of their profession. Evidently, Hafford-Litchfield and Bell (2015:1) contend that the importance of ethics and values in social work practice forms an essential part of social work internationally. In addition to the above authors, Giurgiu and Marica (2013:373) posit that values substantiate the already existing everyday practice in the field of social work. Hepworth et al. (2013:7) argue that values speak to firmly held principles about how the world ought to be, about how individuals ought to regularly carry on and about what the ideal conditions of life are. Beckett, Maynard and Jordan (2017:5) see values as an integrating part of how one is defined and recognised by others and that they are never completely their own creation. However, from the above-mentioned authors, they both seem to concur with each other that values are the cornerstone of social workers' behaviour in and out of the workplace. To start with, it is useful to discuss what 'values' are, where they come from, the milieu in which social work values have arisen and how they are being put into practice.

■ Theoretical frameworks

This chapter is guided by two theories, namely, Afrocentric theory and ecosystems theory.

■ Afrocentric theory

As a philosophical and theoretical perspective among other perspectives, Afrocentrism provides a conduit towards engendering values and ethics in social work education and training. Afrocentrism, also referred to in the literature as

Afrocentricity, 'literally means, placing African ideas at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour' (Asante 1998:2). Asante (1998:6) argues that: 'Afrocentricity belief in the centrality of Africans in the postmodern era: It is our history, our mythology, our creative motif, and our ethos exemplifying our collective will' (Iheduru 2006). Furthermore, Adeleke (1998:508) concluded that: 'Afrocentricity developed as a response to the intellectual challenges and perceived threat of a mainstream historiography that was deemed Eurocentric' (Iheduru 2006). In the same vein, Daniels (2001:301) and Asante (1998:2) further describe Afrocentrism as a worldview through which people should interpret events and define reality. It is about fundamentally affirming tradition and validating or promoting people's cultural worldviews in their environment. For the past few decades, Africans have been taken off cultural, economic, religious, political and social standings and have existed primarily on the periphery of Europe. The main goal of Afrocentricity as an intellectual quest is to demystify historical fallacies about African people and their cultural values, traditions, practices and customs and to reconstruct a historiography that precisely embodies and acknowledges African cultural contributions to human growth and development. It is still relevant in engendering values and ethics in social work education and training which resonates with African value systems and practices.

The Afrocentric theory seeks to re-define, re-assure and re-affirm self-definition, self-affirmation and identity for Africans. According to Iheduru (2006:221), Afrocentric theory stands to substitute what is lacking in Eurocentric value system. Therefore, Afrocentric acknowledges that African culture and expressions of African values, beliefs, traditions and behaviours are important. As a result, the Afrocentricity theory rejects Eurocentrism theory as it purports to support collective consciousness, which means shared commitment; fraternal reactions to degradation of cultural values, traditions, customs and practices; assault on humanity; and collective awareness of common destiny (Iheduru 2006). Some of the African philosophies and values

are *ubuntu*, togetherness and symbiotic relationships, and can be weaved well in social work education and training to engender values and ethics with African outlook.

Bennett (2001:179) contends that Afrocentrism enables researchers to view African identity from the perspective of African people. It is centred, located, oriented and grounded in African values, beliefs and practices. Consequently, it becomes necessary to examine all values, beliefs and practices from the standpoint of Africans as subjects and human agents, rather than as objects in a European frame of reference. Afrocentrism holds that Eurocentrism has led to the neglect or denial of the contributions of African people and focused instead on a generally European-centred model of world civilisation and practices of culture, values and beliefs. Therefore, Afrocentrism aims to shift the focus from a perceived European-centred development to an African-centred development, thus viewing African values, beliefs and practices within the context of African culture. Osei-Hwedie (2005:10) advanced that Africans should see themselves through African eyes, as agents of development, rather than as simply subjects of investigation. This means that their view of themselves as Africans must start from individual self-introspection and proceed towards the family and the community at large. This is a call for social work to re-look at its cardinal values and ethics so as to resonate with the Afrocentric worldview. As one of the theoretical frameworks, Afrocentrism could help social work educators and practitioners to acquire a working understanding of the uniqueness and special qualities of different people with special reference to their cultural values, traditions, practices and customs in a particular environment. Based on the above, it goes without saying that engendering values and ethics in social work education and training is about affirming, authenticating and putting at the centre the revitalisation of African values, traditions, customs and practices for the benefit of the African people. According to Asante (1998:2), the essence of Afrocentrism, as an alternative worldview, seems to be founded on the need to counter a hegemony resulting from economic and cultural

influences of the affluent countries of the West towards African people. Concepts such as self-esteem and independence are culturally-based norms and values which have different meanings in different cultures (Kee 2004), and it is through Afrocentricity theory that they can be revived.

■ Ecosystem perspective

Ecosystems perspective, also known as person-in-environment, looks at the constantly reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environment and how these individuals and systems reciprocally influence each other (Hepworth et al. 2013:16; Suppes & Wells 2013:46). Social workers in South Africa use ecosystems perspective to guide their intervention (Suppes & Wells 2013:46). Hence, Hepworth et al. (2013:17) further argues that the ecosystems perspective indicates that the 'satisfaction of human needs and mastery of developmental tasks require adequate resources in the environment and positive transactions between people and their environments'. In order to engender values and ethics in social work education and training, cognisance should be given to various systems at play which also are value-laden. All these systems carry some degree of values which have to be recognised and applied.

■ Interfacing of social work values and ethics

Values and ethics are central in social work education and training. Values are based on each or combination of cultural, political, social and religious beliefs. Social work students need to understand that there was an evolution from a morality base in social work education to a value base and, ultimately, an ethical base. It has started as what people perceived as right or wrong to what was believed to be the right approach in dealing with people. That evolution culminated into what was ought to be the code of conduct of social work practitioners during professional

intervention. Social work as a profession requires specific training, qualification and registration with the SACSSP as it is a professional regulatory body. Without this, people cannot call themselves 'social workers'.

■ What are social work values?

In ordinary utilisation, 'values' are regularly used to allude to one or all religious, moral, social, political or ideological beliefs, standards, mentalities, sentiments or inclinations. In social work, 'values' can be viewed as specific sorts of beliefs that individuals hold about what is viewed as commendable or significant. With regard to proficient practice, the utilisation of the term 'beliefs' mirrors the status that values have as being more grounded than negligible suppositions or inclinations. The term 'social work values' alludes to a scope of beliefs about what is viewed as commendable or significant in a social work setting (Banks 2012:16).

Conventionally, there are cardinal values that buttress social work in education and training and have been central to its practice and what makes it unique among other professional groups. Upholding professional behavioural, value-laden codes and standards of practice aimed at shielding the society are indubitably indispensable; however, social work cardinal values are professed to be about more than conforming to fixed guidelines. Because of the kinds of conditions social workers come across and must deal with, they also have to consider their individual facets of their value base and be mindful of how their values impact on the work they do. In this way, Walmsley (2012) and Banks (2010:2168) state that their professional identity and standards of professional integrity inform the complex and difficult situations they deal with. Banks (2010:2181) further proposed that in the education of social workers there needed to be consideration of:

- A commitment to a set of values, the content of which relates to what it means to be a 'good person in a professional role' and/or a 'good professional'.

- An awareness that the values are interrelated to each other and form a coherent whole and that their interrelationship is what constitutes the overarching goals or purpose of the profession.
- A capacity to make sense of professional values and their relationship to the practitioner's own personally held values.
- The ability to give a coherent account of beliefs and actions.
- Strength of purpose and the ability to implement these values.

Social work values should not be perceived as a robotic conformity to principles and procedures but should also encompass the consideration of one's personal value base and impetuses to work with people who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged in some way. Nevertheless, there are far-reaching themes that are unswervingly sensed to epitomise the value base of the profession. In South Africa, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996* as amended and SACSSP provide a framework under which social workers should uphold:

- Chapter 2 of the Constitution spells out clearly the basic human rights which should be respected. Affirming the right to equality and human dignity – respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people as expressed in the constitution.
- Social justice – it is the responsibility of a social worker to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in particular to the people with whom a social worker interacts.
- Professional integrity – a responsibility to respect and uphold the values and principles of the profession and act in a reliable, honest and trustworthy manner (SACSSP Code of Ethics).

□ Social work and values

Beckett et al. (2017) contend:

[I]n social work that, a social worker will continuously be a social worker will continuously be engaged with judgements in which contending values must be weighed up, and have various diverse frameworks, infrequently conflicting or disagreeable, within which to settle on these decisions. (p. 7)

However, as Hepworth et al. (2013) put it, the cornerstone or the priority is the social worker, and so an individual's right to make autonomous choices and to partake effectively in the helping process must be respected. Values are different. In most cases there is a dissonance of personal values and societal values, but, in their book, Hepworth et al. (2013:7) posit that professional values cannot be separated from societal values. In response to the views of Hepworth et al., Giurgiu and Marica (2013:373) posit that conceivable mismatches and disagreements with respect to values are created by the overwhelming belief systems, customs and societal lack of engagement, prejudices and generalisations. Evidently, Beckett et al. (2017:6) contend that by and large when social workers utilise professional values, the idea of 'values' goes up against an extra measurement. The question of values do not disappear or vanish when social workers put on their professional 'hat' for a long time, yet they stop to be purely personal. Thus, Beckett and associates state that a professional social worker cannot just be guided by his or her own values; however, he or she cannot just dismiss her own values either (Beckett et al. 2017:10).

With regard to African contexts which seem to be different to Western contexts, social workers should consider the difference in those contexts when offering service. Makhubele (2008:38) avers that conventionally, Western beliefs, concepts and processes have been allowed to unconditionally dictate and control development activities around the world with little consideration for indigenous cultures. Western beliefs, concepts, values and ideas were seen as the only sources of development. However, the importance of other values and norms is evident. Other traditions, as exhibited by *ubuntu*, demonstrate that flexibility, understanding and accommodation are critical in all aspects of development. Therefore, the challenge for social workers and related professionals is to become familiar with indigenous structures, cultures and their core values, and appreciate and incorporate them in development policies, programmes, projects and processes. Therefore, the value and

philosophy of *ubuntu* is a core organising value and principle in social work education and training. *Ubuntu* is based on human interdependence as related to the norms of, and respect for, reciprocity, selflessness and symbiosis. In this sense, language '[...] is used to establish a sense of community, belonging, shared heritage, and common welfare' (Mangaliso, Mangaliso & Weir 2005:795). For instance, group work education and training is based on the concept of solidarity, peer support and mutual aid of and by group members who come together because of a common life experience, common interest or common need. In the African context, people are gregarious and work in community formations, and these are called 'Tsimba'. Historically, the 'Tsimba' spirit was primarily for the strengthening of cohesion in black communities. It encouraged cooperative effort and a collective commitment to the improvement of both the individual and society. It encouraged respect for every member of the community. The combined efforts of people in a community made it possible for them to achieve results which no individual family could achieve on its own.

□ Essence of social work values

The aim of social work values is to give a typical arrangement of standards that social workers can utilise and develop as a means of working in a moral conduct with clients. Without values and ethics, of what value is the information and skills acquired by social workers? Values are referred to as what is good and desirable. They are regarded as persistent beliefs which people hold about what is to be ideal as good and right in human relations (Bisman 2004:116). Values allude to what is decent and required. Parrott (2014:13) identifies the following as the benefit of ethical values for social workers:

- Values provide guidance with regard to professional behaviour. Social workers have the power to decide during professional intervention, and as such he or she should not abuse such power bestowed and should allow values to guide him or her in discharging power for the benefit of the client(elle).

- They can uphold a professional personality.
- They can shield clients from unprofessional conduct. Given the diversity of clients that social workers assist, values assist them in instances where they are clueless about the religion of the client. For instance, social workers do not decide for clients, but they work hand in hand with clients and lend a helping hand so that the social worker cannot be held accountable for taking decisions for clients.

Social work is not a valueless profession. The profession mirrors the values of practitioners and society. Where social work's values do not match those of the society, it is the duty of the practitioner to look to changing social structures which sustain imbalances and shameful acts (Bisman 2004:120). Values and mission are fundamental to social work education; without them, there is no social work (Bisman 2004:120; Yeung et al. 2009). Subsequently, it is more fitting to discuss social work ethics (Banks 2012:40).

□ Core social work values

SACSSP have recognised core values and ethical principles that guide social workers' professional behaviours, and they were also seen in the work of Hepworth et al. (2013:7). In addition to these values, African value systems like *ubuntu* should be considered in education and training of social workers. These core values and their ethical principles are:

- *Service*. Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. According to SACSSP (n.d.), social workers' primary goal is to assist individuals, families, groups and communities, and address social needs and problems. Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. All human beings deserve access to the resource they need to deal with life's problems and to develop to their fullest potential. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context. According to National Association of Social Workers (1999), attending to the environmental forces that create,

contribute to and address problems in living is a fundamental part of social work theory and practice. Accordingly, enforcing value of service implies trusting that individuals have the privilege to assets. It additionally implies that social workers are conferred in securing those assets for their customers and in creating approaches and actualising projects to fill neglected requirements. If the client has not requested a resource but the need for one is apparent, according to Hepworth et al. (2013:8), social workers should develop or find ways of making the resource available for clients in that community. Clients ought to approach the resources they have to address their life's difficulties and also access opportunities to understand their potential for the duration of their lives. According to Hartman (1994), a social worker's sense of duty regarding clients' self-assurance and strengthening is dull if clients lack access to the resource needed to accomplish their objectives. Individuals frequently know little about the accessible resources, so social workers must go about as professionals, linking individuals with relevant organisations, for example, human services offices, youth welfare divisions, places for elderly individuals and family advising offices. In certain instances, clients may sometimes require resources that are not accessible. In these cases, professionals must act as programme designers by making and providing new resources, services and programmes. Cases of such endeavours, for instance, incorporate working with groups, individuals, communities and relevant stakeholders to arrange and develop new resources, services and programmes for a particular target population, especially in rural areas, as they are located far from the resources and services offered by government.

- *Social justice.* Social workers challenge social injustice. The concept of social justice is the cornerstone of social work education. SACSSP (n.d.) posit that social workers challenge social injustice. They pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families, groups and communities. Social workers ought to fight poverty, lack of opportunities and discrimination. According to Friedman (2010:1), social justice 'mirrors an

intense assessment that moves most social workers – a feeling of trouble and misery, if not altogether outrage and shock about the difference or inequalities that is prevalent in a lot of human lives'. In addressing social justice, social workers in the field are providing those families which are deeply in need with food parcels to address poverty. This value is intertwined with the previous value (value to service) because social workers ought to provide resources fairly and avoid discrimination.

- *Inherent dignity and worth of clients.* Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of clients. Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Social workers recognise the central importance of human relationships (National Association of Social Workers 1999). Similarly, SACSSP (n.d.) social workers accord appropriate respect to the fundamental human rights, dignity and worth of all human beings. They respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy and are mindful of the fact that legal and other obligations may lead to inconsistency and conflict with the exercise of these rights. These values mean that social workers believe that all people have intrinsic importance and, as such, they should be accepted unconditionally. Evidently, National Association of Social Workers (1999) state that these values embody several related concepts and, among others, the value of unconditional positive regard, non-possessive warmth, acceptance and affirmation. Clients come from a society wherein they are judged, and it is the role of a social worker to ensure that they do not reciprocate such attitude and accept clients as someone with capabilities. Respect is an essential element of the helping relationship in these values.
- *Individualism.* Social workers establish human relationships and recognise that clients are different. According to SACSSP (n.d.), social workers recognise the importance of human relationships. The primary goal of social workers is to serve the community members equally, that is, their service to others is lifted above their self-interest (National Association of Social Workers 2008). In other words, social workers must utilise their awareness, values and skills to help individuals in

need and to address social issues. Accordingly, they must keep in mind that individuals or clients are different and what pleases one client need not please the other. They should not exploit or mislead other human beings during or after termination of a social work relationship. Hence, the SACSSP (n.d.) asserts that social workers must uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their social work roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour and adapt their methods to the needs of different client systems. Social workers should be cognisant of their role when they are serving clients, that is, they should not take decisions for clients, unless there are no visible guardians or parents and the client is a minor or mentally challenged. For this reason, Hepworth et al. (2013:9) assert that social workers respect the individual's right to make independent decisions and to participate effectively in the helping process. In other words, social workers should not make decisions for clients but should give them an array of information so that they can make their own choices. For instance, a social worker should not advise a client to divorce her abusive husband, but should help the client by giving her information on reporting domestic abuse. However, if children are involved, the social worker has the authority to remove the children for their safety.

- *Integrity.* Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner. The value of integrity means that social work professionals behave in a trustworthy and honest manner. They seek to promote integrity in the science, teaching and practice of the profession. In these activities, social workers are honest, fair and respectful of others. According to the National Association of Social Workers (1999), integrity as a moral guideline implies that social workers act truly, encourage moral practices in their offices and assume liability for their own particular moral conduct. While in practice it implies that social workers introduce themselves and their credentials precisely, evade different types of distortion and do not take an interest in fraud and deception.
- *Competence.* Social workers practice within their area of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. The value of competence requires that social

workers practice within their domain and that they develop their expert abilities (National Association of Social Workers 1999). Social workers strive to maintain high standards of competence in their work. They recognise the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitation of their expertise (SACSSP n.d.). As with the value of integrity, this value places the weight for mindfulness and self-control on social workers. As such, Hepworth et al. (2013:7) assert that a social worker should persistently refresh his or her knowledge about the qualities and resources related with people from diverse societies to be in a good condition to provide service.

The aforementioned principle assists social workers to balance the difference in their professional and personal values. González-Prendes (2011:2) sees them as values that make the social worker obliged to provide service in a respectful way and, in the process, safeguard the clients' right to privacy and treat them with dignity and respect

□ Social work and value dissonance

Everyone has a set of beliefs which affects their actions. Parrott (2014:13) argues that values talk about the way people want to live their lives. However, because social workers are working with society, they must deal with their personal values, societal values and professional values. In deciding between the above-mentioned values, social workers depend on values to inform them as to what is significant, and their moral code determines what they value in life. Beckett et al. (2017:7) and Hepworth et al. (2013:7) observed that all professions have ethical codes that point, in addition to other things, to preventing the abuse and misuse of power. Social workers, in particular, need to be aware of the exercise of power and control that they are actually engaged in on a daily basis. Social workers, for example, can see abortion as a solution whereas society may discard or speak out against abortion, but that does not mean the social worker should abuse his or her power and force the client to undergo an abortion against her decision. This was also supported by

Hepworth et al. (2013:7) who postulate that social workers must respect the individual's right to make independent decisions and to participate actively in the helping process. In this way, a social worker must vividly discuss the pros and cons of enforcing *Choice of Termination Act* (No. 92 of 1996). It must be noted that apart from cultural or societal values, termination of pregnancy in South Africa is legal, but that does not mean all society members are in support of it. For example, the Christian communities see abortion as taboo and against their values. Hepworth et al. (2013:7) – who state that interpretations of values and rights are not always uniform – also saw this argument. Given the above example, Beckett et al. (2017:15) assert that 'in some situations, a social worker's personal values may be very sharply in conflict with what she is expected to do as part of her duties'.

Beckett et al. (2017:15) have recognised that values are usually contested. Social workers can all agree that values are important, but they still have quarrels as to how they should be applied. Beckett (2017:15) has noticed that people join the profession of social work because they are motivated by a belief that it is important to do something for those who are excluded or disadvantaged by society at large. However, in social work, as per Hepworth's view, social workers help clients view problems from a different view, reflect numerous remedial options and assemble coping means. Social workers' own personal values in most cases affect their job. For example, if a social worker is a rape victim or a victim of attempted rape and is handed over the care of a rapist, her personal experience will surely have an influence on how she cares for the convicted rapist. Hence, Beckett et al. (2017:15) noticed that individuals' value inevitably influences professional decisions.

According to Beckett et al. (2017:15), the concept of value takes on a new dimension once people change from their personal life to their professional life. However, once social workers put on their professional hat, values cease being personal.

■ Ethics in social work

In the profession of social work, ethical values are essential (Banks 2012:18). Social workers' capacity and sense of duty regarding their moral actions are fundamental parts of the nature of the administration offered to the clients. Respect for human rights and a pledge to advance social equity are at the centre of social work training throughout the world. In South Africa, SACSSP is the regulatory body tasked to ensure that compliance to ethical codes and standards are implemented.

Social work came out of philanthropic and autonomous goals, and its values depend on social equity (Banks 2012:18). Since its beginning over a century ago, social work training has concentrated on addressing human needs and creating human potential. Human rights and social equity fill in as the inspiration and support for social work activity. In solidarity with the individuals who are burdened, the profession endeavours to ease destitution and to work with powerless and abused individuals to advance social incorporation. Social work values are encapsulated in the profession's national and universal codes of ethics. The code involves proclamations of qualities and moral standards identifying with human rights, social equity and professional integrity, trailed by training rules that show how the ethical principles ought to apply in practice (Banks 2012:18).

■ Professional ethics definition

Comprehensively, 'ethics' is about issues of good and bad deeds, great and awful characteristics of character and tasks attached to relations. In spite of the fact that the topic of ethics is frequently said to be human welfare, the master plan likewise incorporates the thriving of the entire ecosystem. The term 'ethics' might be utilised as part of a particular sense to allude to the investigation of good and bad standards of conduct, or in a plural sense, to allude to the real standards and characteristics. Professional ethics are concerned with moral directives guiding the relationship between

the professional and other and are designed to distinguish between right and wrong actions (Banks 2012:100; Chambers 1995).

■ Ethics and accountability

It has been clearly pointed out by the SACSSP that cognisance is taken of the fact that social workers have individual rights as outlined in Chapter 2 of the *South African Constitution Act* (No. 108 of 1996). Social workers as professionals, consequently have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and equality. Social workers also have professional rights that need to be protected and for this purpose social workers have the right to join any professional association of their choice that aims to act in the best interest of social workers. However, social workers should uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify their social work roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour and adapt their methods to the needs of different client systems. They cooperate with other social workers and institutions as needed in order to serve the best interest of their clients. In interpretation statements of standards of professional values, it may be tough to contemplate how social workers could be in any way problematic for themselves. They have to work with conflicting interests and competing rights. Social workers have a role to support, protect and empower people, as well as having statutory duties and other obligations that may be coercive and restrict people's freedoms. Social workers are constrained by the availability of resources and institutional policies in society. Ultimately, social workers have to be above reproach and accountable for their conduct and actions.

Social workers regularly execute an imperative part in deciding on such moral dilemmas, for instance, when making decisions involving risk, protection and restriction of freedom. The manner in which social workers conduct themselves in these conditions ought to be guided by ethical codes beyond their personal beliefs alone. Social workers have to be conscious of the societal stated values and of the organisation they are

working at and make skilful, ethical decisions grounded on their amassed knowledge and experience. Ethical considerations are seldom the responsibility of the particular social worker. However, organisations' policies and structures of accountability offer both guidance and a standard against which social workers' practice can be measured. Accountability, consequently, is the process through which employers and the public can judge the quality of individual workers' practice and hold them accountable for their decisions and actions ethically.

■ Conclusion

The chapter has covered a wide range of issues on values and ethics that are designed to make a social work practitioner and social work student reflect on their own life experiences and on the experiences and perceptions of service users and practitioners. Social work literature over the last two decades reflects increased attention to a discussion of ethical dilemmas and decision-making. In the midst of the ongoing discussions about the relevance of universal values, the applicability of ethical codes and the best pathways through dilemma mazes, social workers and student social workers need to address continually the importance of ethical practice. Social workers and student social workers frequently must revise and update ethical practice standards and codes in accordance with new knowledge and emerging practice issues.

■ Summary: Chapter 5

Values and ethics occupy a central position in social work education and training. Ensuring that social work education and practice remain relevant in an ever-changing society, conformity to professional values and ethics becomes the cornerstone of a profession's survival. Values and ethics in social work map the broadening of the field beyond a focus on professional knowledge base and guide and embrace ethical decision-making towards

more embedded and situated approaches in professional life. The focus of this chapter was on exploration of sources of different value systems, their relevance and applicability as well as their interfacing with social work professional expected ethical standards. Owing to the focus, which is conceptual in nature, extensive literature review and desktop analysis constituted the methodological designs. Central to this chapter is that social work education and training should inculcate continuous reflections on values and ethics vis-à-vis emerging trends in terms of practices in the society.

Culture, stories and narratives in social work education

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■ Introduction

This chapter outlines culture, ontology and epistemology, stories, narratives and research, particularly focussing on how the concepts are intertwined to assist students in teaching and learning in social work education. Parallel to this discourse is the issue of cultural competence, values and principles in social work education, professional stories in social work, and how the concepts of colonisation and decolonisation can be analysed to bring a positive change in social work education systems, particularly in the academic environment.

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What narratives and stories do practitioners, social workers, educators and academics tell regarding their profession? Social welfare scholars and historians of social work strive to ensure that history should consider the perspectives and experiences of people from different cultures that have been marginalised or are not well represented, while at the same time maintaining and strengthening social work education (Fisher 1999; Popple & Leighninger 2004). It emanates from the different authors that stories tend to educate people on important aspects of life. In other words, it is the story that educates a person on the practical issues of life. It is the story that beats the drum to equip people with skills and techniques of dealing with challenges of life. It is the story that teaches a person to refrain from unacceptable conduct. The story serves a valuable role to entertain and communicate important messages among human beings. That said, stories also present a clear vision in relation to theory and practice in the classroom setting. Arts, sports and culture also affirm the importance of engaging people in activities as Franklin translated Kuang saying (312–320 BC): ‘Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn’.

Based on these words, students and clients can be involved in storytelling methods to live with stories as good memories as well as to develop strategic ways of resolving problems and achieving their studies. Riesman and Quinney (2005) argued that it is proper to employ a narrative approach whenever students’ and clients’ matters are dealt with in the social environment. Parker (2004, 2005) on the other hand argued that, in analysing storytelling with EBP, learning takes into account focussing on whether the method is relevant, sufficient and valid.

■ Defining social work and social work education

Social work is defined as a profession that is based on practice and the discipline liberates people from oppression by promoting

cohesion, social change and development as well as empowering people. It encourages a collective responsibility and respect for the rights of human beings as well as their cultural diversity through social justice (IFSW 2014). Social work is a profession that operates in different cultural societies. Therefore, it is important for social workers and academics to operate in line with ideas, beliefs, ethnicity, language and values of the people. Giddens (2001) argued that these elements are learnt, constructed and shared by societal members. The same situation is also applicable to the classroom setting with regard to learning and teaching programmes. Based on this matter, it is my understanding that students have different cultures and they tend to learn and share ideas on a collective basis. Storytelling techniques and narratives can serve as important aspects in this regard.

The whole vision of empowerment and change in social work urges social workers to be creative, innovative and preventative (Stepney in Roscoe 2009:1302). The fact remains that social work is based on historical stories. It needs to maintain its status through accountability to its history by revitalising culture, stories and narratives within a team of different professionals, families, communities and the use of senior citizens and social workers. Practice should connect through research and sharing significant indigenous resources. Such practice can serve as powerful methods for exchanging ideas, particularly in the classroom setting. In defining the theoretical-practical relationship in social work education, Parton in Rutten, Mottart and Soetaert (2009) talked about the discovery of a classical relationship between praxis and theories through the realisation of practical-theoretical power. The main issue here lies not only in the implication of narratives and rhetorical analysis to understand human behaviour and social reality, but also to know how these perspectives can be applied for the development of insights and concepts for practicality purpose.

■ Colonisation and decolonisation in social work education

Colonisation is defined as the practice of invading territories and land for the purpose of resource exploitation and settlement. Colonisation refers to land control and indigenous people's production through the threat of war. Colonialism emerges as a conflict of war, when an indigenous population in an occupied territory is confronted by an invading force, with one party trying to impose its rule on the other. The same situation has happened with Western ideas which have influenced the educational world through textbooks that are dominant globally. As such, indigenisation has not been a flexible task because of university policies that are based on globalisation of education. On the other hand, decoloniality has never been debated at length nationally, particularly in South African universities (Zig-Zag 2006).

Based on this matter, one will argue that social workers, educators and academics need to understand current issues and the history caused by colonisation in order to bring change to these people who have been colonised. Maathai (2009) argued that Africans need to think, act and learn from their mistakes. Ghandi (1998) shared similar views with Maathai (2009) when he argued that freedom will come only when the people free themselves from the domination of Western education, Western culture and the Western way of being. Biko (1978) also indicated that the recovery of indigenous knowledge should be supported by service providers.

The loss of culture, family and the community has left a dearth of legacy, devastation and pain that have an impact on today's indigenous people through multi-generational trauma (Carpenter 2016). Based on these arguments, one will argue that the risk of making a change in societies is much better than the risk of blaming others. In other words, because colonisation has contributed to the marginalisation of people, changes should be done to decolonise the people.

Social work education and practice continues to destabilise indigenous knowledge and customs. Although social work students are engaged with families, indigenous people and communities, they still need to be provided with cultural values, norms, skills and knowledge in the classroom setting that are significant to cultural settings. The learning and teaching approaches should run concurrently with storytelling methods, narratives and cultural information. Pillai (1998) argued that the importance of indigenous knowledge centres on the relationship between ecological survival and indigenous epistemology. The land and nature are intrinsically connected to indigenous ways of knowing; hence, ecological survival 'reconstructing' 'indigenous theories' must be seen not as an end in itself but as an integral part of movements for ecological and economic survival (Pillai 1998:209). That said, African social work and practice should provide the core cultural ethics and values for social work as a way to incorporate the concept of cultural diversity in the social environment.

■ Narrative and culture in social work education

The term *narrative* carries many connotations and is used in different ways by different disciplines. The field of narratives has postmodern and constructivist strands (Langellier 2001). Everyone has a story to tell, but how you narrate the story is very important. As human beings interact with each other on a daily basis, they share important stories that are meaningful to social work practice. Social work is based on interaction and talks. Many researchers or investigators employ narrative approaches to study interactions with clients or to talk with other professionals about clients. Cultural storytelling and narratives are related to cultural, ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological rhetorical turn. Such a concept puts more emphasis on the significance of symbols in constructing reality, particularly the construction of cultural meaning through storytelling and narratives (Rutten et al. 2010).

Social reality can be constructed through oral language as people narrate stories. Parton and O'Byrne (in Rutten et al. 2010) concur with this statement when they argue that as individuals interact through the social world they create symbolic linguistic activities that are meaningful in the social worlds. The focus on language and narratives starts from constructionist perspectives on social reality. According to constructionists, individuals create social worlds through their linguistic symbolic activity by interacting with others and participating in social worlds (Parton & O'Byrne 2000:16). Here social identities depend on 'audience ascriptions', referring to audience attention (Lynch cited in Parton & O'Byrne 2000:14; Rutten, Mottart & Soetaert 2009).

Talk and language can have an effect of moving people to action and changing their views and perceptions (Parton & O'Byrne 2000). Constructivist social work postulates that the notions of indeterminacy and ambiguity are central to social work and should be erected upon rather than to be defined out, thereby opening up the opportunity for creative and novel paths of acting based on thinking. This simply means that social work education is still having a lot of issues that are uncertain for the profession. That said, the social work practice still has some elements of uncertainty, with unclear determination with certain conditions that still need improvements, particularly when focussing on the development of training methods and research. (Taylor 2006:191). Social constructionism focuses on diversity rather than solely inherent or biological traits. The approach acknowledges that aspects of identity like race and gender are the result of social influence and categories that shape and reinforce social norms into identification categories. Thus, race is regarded as a relational concept. Hence, people are classified for the purpose of separation and stratification.

Stories are also classified and stratified as guided by the environment or society. The main issues underlying narrative approaches lie with the understanding of how order is identified by individuals and how events are put to meaning as they take

place in a particular environment. Parallel to this discourse, we have culture, African epistemology, coloniality and decoloniality which also play a significant role in shaping individuals' lives. The situation can be applicable to the academic world too. Narrative events should be selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful. Students tend to understand much better when events are theoretically and practically connected, particularly in a narrative way. Roscoe (2009) in critical social work practice states that a narrative approach indicates that a human being can best be understood through narrative accounts, events as well as experiences. Stories enable human beings to relate to one another. What matters here is the creation of a narrative approach to search and communicate with each other regarding professional issues. Martin (1998) argued that:

As a narrator you have to choose among all the things that could be included in the story. What should be included in the story? How should it be included? Remember as a narrator you are the boss, you have absolute authority on how things should be done (String the important pieces together). (n.p.)

This simply means that as a narrator you need to identify the relevant dots and be innovative on how to connect the dots to make your events meaningful, attentive and educational. Martin (1998) further argued that one can speak but might not be heard. In other words, proper planning and organisation of events in terms of narratives may assist people to listen attentively, particularly to hear stories and follow events.

■ The professional story of social work

Social work knowledge can best be understood in terms of Healy's (2005) model of the constructed knowledge concept where practitioners' challenges are captured regarding discourses that they face as they try to integrate into practice, particularly in the application of relevant stories that are in line with their profession to the client system and community system (Kong 2015).

The model emphasises the need for practitioners to identify and consider the context of the institution. In other words, important aspects such as organisational policies, laws, public policies and accepted practices within the institution need to be taken into consideration. The second important aspect involves the formal professional base that includes theoretical professional practice, beliefs based on Judeo-Christian system, human science service discourse and skills that are formally accepted.

The third important aspect is the individual framework of the particular social worker when putting into action a specific practice approach (Bell 2012; Healy 2005). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) and Healey (2005) note that the process of teaching and practice can be understood in the context of narrative and the usage of metaphor. A fact-finding mission on storytelling was also done with levels 2, 3 and 4 social work students at the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in 2017. The main motive behind the mission was to assess students' performance on modules that were carried out based on theories that were related with cultural practical stories. It emanated from students' assessment forms that students understand modules much better when related with practical stories that are happening in the social environment. The majority of the students in levels 2, 3 and 4 wanted storytelling techniques to be applied in the classroom setting as they are able to grasp the content of the module taught if stories are used. In other words, the use of stories that are aligned to modules taught in the classroom setting tend to simplify the content of modules.

■ **The concepts of culture, ontology and African epistemology**

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) define culture in terms of implicit and explicit patterns of behaviour observed and transmitted through symbols. Such behaviour is constituted by the achievement of human groups, including their artefacts and embodiment. Human behaviour and society is best analysed

through culture. Each and every society is unique and can best be described through its uniqueness. The uniqueness of culture cannot be translated into another culture. A human being can accommodate the culture of others, but one cannot translate his or her culture. My understanding is based on the fact that the culture of a person is like a planted tree and if you nurture it, it will grow and flourish. If you do not water it, it will die. If you do not water it on a daily basis, it will gradually diminish.

Culture is simply the standards and norms developed by society across generations which have a great impact on our behaviour in the society. In other words, you do as culture influences you to do. Culture has a connotation of experiential learning, with useful behaviour patterns for proper functions and existence in occupational settings and interactions. Culture can be regarded as a form of resistance to change. In other words, culture can serve a dual role of bringing positive and negative things in the sense that people can maintain their culture and fail to adapt to positive environmental changes owing to patriarchy. On the contrary, it is cultural stories that motivate us to adapt to positive changes and challenge negative changes in the social environment. Individual systems, group systems and community systems are able to perpetuate, survive and thrive through their cultural patterns of doing things. The same situation is applicable to institutional cultures that have a set of roles, values, attitudes, assumptions, communication practices, set of goals and processes fitting together like a mutual reinforcement system.

Culture is inseparable from ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to meaning in reality and construction of knowledge. It deals with reality and subjectivity to perceive existence of real things (Narh 2013). Arguably, science cannot occur without ontology. Parallel to the notion of ontology is epistemology which refers to the theory of knowledge, methodology and method of discovery. It refers to the way we understand and explain what we know and the way we know. Every human being has the desire to know. Africans conceptualise, comprehend and

interpret reality within contextual cultural experience. The discourse of African epistemology attempted to link African ontology within the African mode of knowledge (Anyanwu 1983:6; Ndubisi 2014). Based on this argument, it is my understanding that social work education should always incorporate cultural, ontological and epistemological issues, particularly in the academic world.

■ Decoloniality

■ Decoloniality of pedagogical challenges and the healing journey

The most important aspect is to train social workers to incorporate African epistemology and pedagogical methods into their approaches, combined with useful Western theory and practice models, within a critical historical context. On one level, taking this path is simple. The elders say, 'walk your talk' and 'heal yourself before you can heal others', and once the individual has acquired sufficient Western-validated education, the work begins. In other words, Western education has laid the basic foundation of education for Africans, but at the same time has disadvantaged Africans, particularly on the issue of indigenous knowledge. Hence, the majority of the current youth generation appears to be a lost generation. On another level, it is a solitary journey where African worldview and traditional knowledge foundations have few mirrors in Western pedagogy. Critical analysis with respect to the African population can be done within mainstream institutions, focussing particularly on theoretical approaches such as anti-racism or cross-cultural social work. The responsibility is to engage in a healing journey in order to be able to embark upon tasks of helping others, whether it is in the field or in the classroom. The healing journey process is validated by Carpenter (2016) when she indicates that one should first heal himself/herself before embarking upon the task of assisting others, be it in the classroom setting or the field setting.

■ Decoloniality approaches to social work practice

Post-colonial theory approach can give guidance to decolonising social work education through awareness of coloniality and creating unoppressive ways of learning and teaching styles, particularly through revisiting indigenous knowledge, cultural concepts, storytelling and narratives. Discourse based on post-coloniality should provide room in social work education curriculum for indigenous people to articulate their daily lives, and students to have a better knowledge of coloniality through indigenous stories (Anderson & Lawrence 2003).

Important progress has been made in relation to decolonising pedagogical matter within social work and education studies amid programme initiatives and policy directives. However, a lot is still to be done in terms of shaping Western studies with cultural studies. It is partly because of colonisation that indigenous people are indigenously marginalised. On the contrary, some colonial knowledge is still needed, particularly when dealing with matters that need diversity and innovation. In order for social work education to create an equitable, fair society, both African culture and Western culture should be analysed, and important aspects taken into consideration so that present-day students can maintain their culture. By so doing, we can decolonise the society.

The exclusion of cultural knowledge and indigenous history is equivalent to cultural genocide (Weaver 2005). That said, indigenous knowledge through stories and narratives should be included in the mainstream curriculum for students to understand as well as to live with such information. Therefore, it is of vital importance for social work curricula to incorporate a decolonial lens that includes practice, policy, ethics, values, diversity, research and human behaviour within the social environment as well as research (Tumburro 2013).

■ Why storytelling is valuable to practice

Labonte and Feather (1996) regard narratives or stories as strong mechanisms to relay experience in health promoter practice based on the fact that it is only the narrator or storyteller that articulates the particular meaning of constituting people's lives. Oral culture should be respected and be given credit in many spheres worldwide, particularly looking at the issue of making people understand one another. In other words, local people have interesting, innovative knowledge and ideas regarding their environment and their lives which are connected to narratives. Freire (1968) regards storytelling as a method in which students explore events, share experiences, utilise practical words to label their worlds and lived experiences, analyse issues and meld practice with theory as they move through social work education. The point at issue is for the student to uplift the collective consciousness regarding constructing meaning based on experiential learning.

Stories tend to educate and train students about important aspects of life.

Entertainment and communication also carry messages through stories. Here is a practical situation of a professional social worker and a lecturer: A social worker first listens to a story before engaging a client to come up with a solution for his or her problem. The same situation is applicable to the classroom setting where the lecturer presents social work theories to students with relevant stories that are connected to the subject matter. Students listen to such stories attentively and thereafter participate actively. It is the story that gives direction to what should be done. What matters here is for the student to understand and apply the story through lived experiences rather than letting them study and adopt a memorising system which is difficult to understand. Storytelling encourages reflections. It creates space for professionals to reflect on their own moral compass, and their personal values and practice in relation to

other groups (Haines & Livesley 2008). Stories promote resilience and are able to turn negative things into something strengthening and empowering.

■ Values, principles, ethics and storytelling in the cultural foundation of the academy

Respect is regarded as a value in social work, particularly focussing on client systems, group systems and community systems. The same situation is applicable to the classroom setting where students and the lecturer engage in a two-way relationship that is strengthened by attentive listening and respect, with the recognition of the students' sociocultural contexts. A value is defined as a desired ideal which people strive to achieve; it is usually based upon societal life conditions and beliefs that are not provable. In certain cultures, values were historically linked with the Judeo-Christian heritage and culture that emphasises high value on individuals and their uniqueness and the purpose of individuals as God's creation (Loewenberg & Dolgoff 2000:39). Professional values give guidance on practical matters relating to social work, and ethical principles are always based upon them. Each and every society or culture has its own values and principles of doing things. In other words, values originate in society. It is the story that makes values, principles and ethics to resonate in people's lives. The same situation is applicable to the classroom setting where the student-lecturer relationship is maintained upon values through courses. It is through my practical experience that students understand much better if practical stories are shared with them based on the content of the module taught. Fullan (2000), in supporting the statement, also states that education is usually supported by the 'The three stories of Education', namely:

- *The Inside Story* strengthens the existence of work cultures based on collaborative ties contributes for students' performance in schools or professional learning communities. The schools, institutions and communities can thus work in collaboration

with one another to strengthen the importance of indigenous knowledge through stories. Such a practice tends to open a new educational path which shows a new role for assessing students. Based on this argument, Fullan (2000) concluded that educators should 'become more assessment informative'. In other words, educators should have the ability and capacity on individual and team bases to assess students' performance based on an integrated knowledge from a theoretical knowledge combined with cultural stories. In other words, cultural competence is needed in this aspect to change institutional ways of doing things in order to render transformative, qualitative services based on cultural stories.

- *The Inside-Out Story*, on the contrary, says that schools and institutions cannot focus on the inside story of retaining the cultural process alone. The walls of schools and institutions are considered permeable and transparent. Therefore, there is a need for different stakeholders in the community to work as a multidisciplinary team to address cultural matters. The new discourse of the environment is relentless, unpredictable, turbulent, uncertain and complex. However, it is increasing the demands of greater accountability and performance.
- *The Outside-In Story* posits that educators and institutional heads should shift their orientation to the outside as well as reframing their roles. Education and indigenous knowledge are inseparable. Parallel to indigenous knowledge is the family, the school, institutions and the society which are governed by the different stories of life. Based on this, concepts such as humility, epistemology and decoloniality should also be taken into consideration in revising curricula as well as dealing with the community system.

■ Theoretical framework

This study embraced cultural humility and cultural competence to guide the theoretical framework for this chapter. The environment and the historical background also play a role in who we are. This is based on the notion that people are who they are owing to their cultural backgrounds. Stories, culture and social work education are intertwined in terms of dealing with the community

system as well as the student education system. Therefore, teaching and learning should incorporate diverse cultural variables – stories accompanied by narratives in research on ways to improve the standard of social work education. Therefore, narratives carry different views on how the telling should be done and what it must have, particularly focussing on factors such as pacing, rhythm, place, time, category of audience and narrators as well as human agency (Sandelowski 1991). Narratives incorporate a detailed, personal perspective. The constructionist, on the contrary, views narratives as part of the constitutional, cultural, social and political world (Hyvarinen 2007).

The concept of cultural humility was originally put forth by medical doctors Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) to tackle health disparities as well as inequities in medical institutions. Currently, the term cultural humility is used in social work and other disciplines to address hierarchical relationships, build relationships and change organisational relationships built on trust. The cultural humility aspects put emphasis on social workers to be humble, particularly when they work with communities from different cultural backgrounds. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary in Walter (2015) defines ‘hum’ and ‘human’ as the core words, derived from the Latin word *humus*, referring to a man. What begins as humus (earth) then becomes humilis (low), which refers to humbleness. Based on this argument, it is important to know how people are connected to the earth, particularly environmental challenges that they face on a daily basis. Yancu and Farmer (2017) also regard cultural humility as a distinctive approach to explore, understand and appreciate differences among human beings. It begins with self-assessment of a person’s cultural practices and beliefs with an aim to develop a respectful relationship.

Social work education also emphasises humility in dealing with client systems, group systems and community systems. Cultural humility complements cultural competence. The term ‘cultural competence’ refers to the way one understands and responds appropriately to the unique combination of cultural variables.

Cultural competence refers to the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with persons from cultures other than one's own. Cultural competence is regarded as the essential principle of social work education and practice. Cultural competence as defined in social work practice and education is regarded as a discipline that serves the needs of clients' systems as well as community systems, focussing particularly on impoverished and vulnerable communities. Social work is guided by principles and ethics for supporting community optimal outcomes.

The National Association of Social Workers (2015) operationally refers to cultural competence as a process of integrating and transforming knowledge regarding individuals and different groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices and attitudes appropriately in a cultural setting to improve the quality of services. The rationale here is to produce better outcomes.

The updated standards reflect growth in the field of social work as aligned with cultural competence. This embraces the broad definition of 'culture' to cover identity aspects such as sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, family structure and religious or spiritual beliefs. NASW (2015) emphasised the following attributes that are linked to competency: self-awareness, values and ethics, diverse work force, language and communication, empowerment and advocacy, cross-cultural language, cross-cultural skills, professional education and service delivery. Parallel to the notion of cultural competency are narratives and the use of appropriate relevant research methodologies that need to incorporate African indigenous systems in order to address the needs of local African communities. Therefore, one will argue that educators in the academic world can take cognisance of research methods that accommodate indigenous values for students to maintain their culture.

It is my understanding that all nine of these attributes linked to competence revolve around the notion of humility and innovation. The inclusion of cultural humility shows a commitment to improve cross-cultural service. Cultural humility and cultural

competence in social work education strive to encourage professionals and practitioners to deal with clients' systems at grass roots level, acknowledge, understand and know their cultural diversity. Based on this, social workers are expected to be non-judgemental as well as to accept clients' system and community system regardless of their origin. The same situation is applicable to the academic world where academics deal with a lot of students from different cultures. However, there still exist considerable limitations within the social work profession regarding service delivery and its conceptualisation. That said, the process by which social work carries on professionalising requires higher levels of education and licensure without proper financial or institutional accommodations for obtaining them, which poses a challenge to the commitment to embrace diverse backgrounds and experiences. Another limitation is the practice to operate from the historically ethnocentric and Western foundation of social work (Ortega & Faller 2011; Weaver 1999).

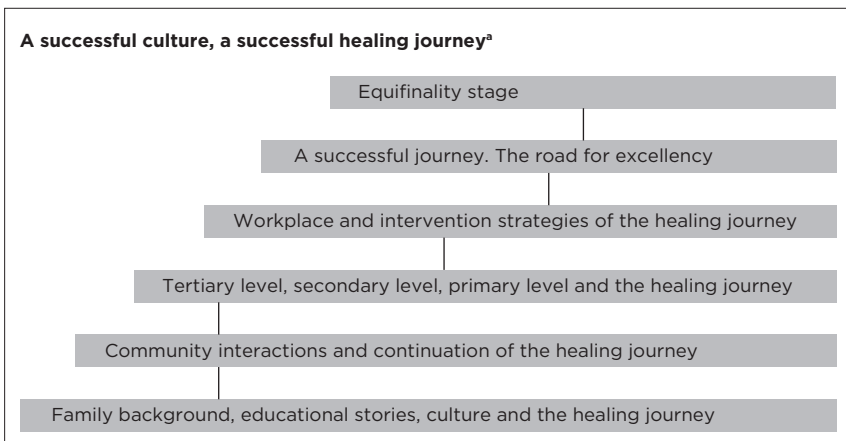
It is because of the storytelling method that practitioners, educators and academics are able to have a comprehensive knowledge of the people they serve from different cultural settings. However, they also need to have a self-introspection of their cultural beliefs and practices in order to develop respectful relationships with the community system. One can ask himself or herself a lot of questions that relate to challenges of life in order to deal with reality for the acceleration of humility and cultural competency. Hereunder follows some of such questions:

- Where do you come from?
- What challenges and opportunities do you or did you encounter from the family background?
- What challenges and opportunities do you or did you face in the school and tertiary vicinities?
- How do you deal with challenges and opportunities in the work place?
- How do you heal yourself?
- How do you become innovative and strategic in workplaces and teaching and learning programmes?

- Do you incorporate culture and stories in dealing with the student system in social work?

In other words, to have a critical analysis of yourself in terms of your origin and the challenges that you face on a daily basis will enable you to be innovative and to develop positive coping mechanisms in dealing with diverse community systems and the student system.

Figure 6.1 uses family background, culture, stories and education to illustrate how the different stairs are connected for a person to succeed in life. Parallel to the education system lays the healing process. A human being has personal and work matters to accomplish simultaneously. Heal yourself in order to heal the community or the society within which you live. The mind and the soul of a human being need to be in a balanced position for development and success to take place. Ingredients of healing in this regard can take the form of stories, narratives, meditation, cultural practice, spiritual practice, music, sharing of stories among peers and class room setting. The student and the educator can engage in the process of healing, developing and learning along the path guided by African epistemology.



^a In a nutshell, a person's background is usually supported by his or her family.

FIGURE 6.1: The family background stand.

■ Salient features discussed throughout the chapter

■ Establishment of multidisciplinary stakeholders

The content of this chapter warrants a need for the establishment of a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders in various communities. The stakeholders can consist of social workers, academics, teachers, retired professionals, families, ministers of churches, traditional leaders and representatives of youth forums and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). There might not be a need to develop such a team in areas where such structures are already in place. The main purpose of such a team will be to conduct a fact-finding mission on how cultural diversity can be handled, particularly focussing on teaching and learning programmes starting from primary level up to tertiary level. The fact-finding mission will form a basic foundation for a narrative research to be conducted on how African epistemology, ontology and Western knowledge can complement one another to have a comprehensive decolonial education.

■ Learning of cultural diversity with humility and conceptualisation of a social work curriculum

Cultural humility should occur in the workplace environment interprofessional. Student social workers, professional social workers and academics should be familiar with the different cultures of the communities they serve in order to render effective and efficient services. The curriculum should be designed in such a way that the cultural diversity of Africans and Westerners are well represented, particularly in terms of policy matters. Both African and the Western culture should be exposed to students from different ethnic groups in order to promote

cultural diversity. The essence of the story is to capacitate students with qualitative information to render standardised services. Professionals should be aware of their own deficient knowledge of others. Self-learning and evaluation about other cultures should be regarded as a continuous process.

■ Conclusion

The road to success is accompanied by family background, culture, stories and narratives. Social work education is also based upon history, values, beliefs, principles and ethics. Social work education should incorporate the notion of coloniality and decoloniality into practice in order to transform the current educational system as well as to incorporate diversity of cultures. Culture cannot function effectively without the application of humility and indigenous knowledge. The inside and outside stories, narratives and research are basic concepts that focus on partnership in order for schools, institutions, organisations as well as societies to recapture the education system, particularly social work education as it centres on client systems, group systems and community systems. Change, transparency and accountability serve as good ingredients for good performance in the field of practitioners, academics and teachers. However, the current educational landscape pressurised practitioners, teachers and academics to recapture their roles and be connected to the outside world. That said, external forces or the outside world need to be engaged in the process of transforming the education system in social work.

■ Summary: Chapter 6

The social work profession is based on understanding the culture and the history of the people and communities. Stories have significantly played a historic role in the formation of knowledge. Professionals have also important stories to tell on a daily basis

based on sociocultural matters. Experiential learning based on narratives serves as a powerful tool for students to understand and relay the message in a practical way as students are able to articulate meanings based on experienced events. It should be understood that as human beings interact on a daily basis, they share meaning through stories that are culturally-based. Therefore, social work practice should be aligned with stories in order for the students to live with such stories and to understand the theoretical context based on social work curriculum. The main aim of this chapter was to understand teaching theory with practice utilising cultural stories.

Narrating the real story: The significance of communication and report writing in social work

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■ Introduction

Recording is an important component of social work practice. Social workers are obligated to keep records for every activity they perform. The SACSSP Code of Ethics for social workers

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emphasises and sets out the requirement to maintain competence in recording and being accountable when dealing with client information (SACSSP 2007). Social work report is one of the records that should be written and kept as prescribed. This makes writing one of the key activities of social work practice. Social workers interact with various people and they communicate the outcomes of their interactions. These encounters may be in the form of one-to-one, group or community interactions. Such communication is done by writing reports which are a culmination of interviews and process note recordings. They form the basic ingredients of different methods of practice in social work. These may be casework, group work, community work, and research and administration reports. Therefore, it is important that social workers should have an understanding of these aspects when compiling a report (Rai 2014).

Most social work reports have an impact on many people's lives as they are used to influence decisions regarding the circumstances of these people. It has however been discovered that social workers fail to master the art of report writing. The difficulty of the report writing task arises because social workers have to gather information, then analyse it in order to reach a conclusion and make recommendations about people's lives. The misinterpretation of this information can have tremendous impact in most people's lives. Social workers also face the difficulty of not knowing which and how much information to divulge as they deal with confidential information while writing for various audiences (McDonald et al. 2015).

In the teaching of social work, it has become more important than before to help students realise that every encounter between social workers and the recipients of their services mandates some form of taking notes. These are notes that will be used to construct narratives about what has taken place between them. This implies that social work students ought to be skilful with the basics of technical writing skills (McDonald et al. 2015).

This chapter reports on the workshop that was conducted at Ratlou Service Point with social work supervisors of various levels. This is one of the service points that fall under Ngaka Modiri Molema district. The workshop was conducted by social work veterans from the North West Provincial Social Work Veterans Organization (NWPSWVO), an NGO which is the functioning arm of the of the North West Social Work Veterans Forum. This organisation is mandated by the Minister of the Department of Social Development to provide support, supervise, monitor and coach the experienced and newly qualified social workers. Among the activities undertaken to implement the mandate, the organisation conducts a series of workshops to determine the professional and developmental needs and challenges faced by social workers. The outcomes of these workshops would assist both the social workers and the department to meet these needs so that they can improve service delivery.

This chapter has a broad descriptive goal of detailing practices of social work report writing and how these practices affect the client system. It is particularly important for exploring the aspects associated with professional report writing in social work. As such, this chapter aims to help social work students and qualified social workers to write clearly, accurately and objectively in all contexts so that their reports can exert effective influence on decisions made about their clients. It gives the social workers practical direction and advice on how to write proficiently, critically and analytically as well as demonstrating the importance of writing skills to the professional identity of social workers. The chapter highlights communication as a key competency in social work practice, identifies gaps in social work report writing and provides an overview of the significance of social work report as well as the importance of training in critical thinking and report writing. The different types of social work reports are also worth highlighting.

By the end of this chapter, social work students and qualified social workers will understand the fundamentality of communication

skills in social work and various important social work reports as well as their ethical obligations. They will understand the critical aspects and significance of their reports and be able to identify gaps in social work report writing. Finally, they will understand the importance of teaching report writing to social work students.

■ Theoretical framework

To understand communication and report writing in social work, it is important to employ a writing theoretical model such as social cognitive theory. According to Flower (1994), basic assumptions around this theory are that cognitive and social theories are interdependent. Social cognitive theory regards writing as a cognitive process that places emphasis on meaning construction. Social cognitive theory is applicable in social work as it involves cognitive process that requires application of mind when interpreting and making conclusions about the client and the interaction with the environment. According to Zastrow (2013), social workers should have the ability to explain the person and their environment interactions. As such, they construct meaning and generate ideas from the information gathered through interaction with the social context. Social workers, through communication and report writing, share this created meaning as new knowledge with various audiences. This helps various audiences to understand the social context and make decisions based on this understanding.

Bestowing to Flower (1994) as socially situated processes that take place in social contexts, the cognitive processes of writing are guided by attitudes and feelings of the writer, the society and other relevant people as forces that shape writing as a constructive process and give structure to the writer's meaning. Another perspective on writing takes into consideration the fact that writing is a crucial skill that is based on other skills, including literacy, and requires the writer to develop critical thinking skills. This includes analysis of the information at hand (Deane 2011). Based on the social and cognitive processes of communicating

and writing reports, social workers often revisit their field and process notes to get a sense of the clients' situation. Revisiting these notes helps to explore information that could otherwise be overlooked when creating meaning. It also allows them to critically analyse the information gathered.

■ **Communication skills as fundamental social work competency**

Communication is an important skill that social workers should possess because it plays a crucial role in social work practice. Based on this observation, Bogg (2012), Healy and Mulholland (2012), Rai (2014) and Firth and Martin (2015) emphasise the importance of effective and clear communication as social workers often communicate among themselves as well as with clients and other professionals to gather or share information as well as build relationships and trust. Crooks and Flockton (2005) define communication as a process of sharing knowledge, experiences, information, ideas and feelings. Social workers intervene at various levels using case work, group work and community work as the primary methods of intervention, hence their understanding of the importance of verbal communication. The ability to communicate verbally enables social workers to gather information that can help in developing an intervention plan or influence the decisions about clients (Harms 2007; Sedon 2005). This information has a great influence on writing and what or how it is written.

Communicating in writing is an important skill which is essential to social work practice, and report writing is part of this skill (Bogg 2012; Firth & Martin 2015; Rai 2014). Social workers are required to communicate effectively in writing for a range of audiences. Healy and Mulholland (2007) view report writing as a standard practice in which social workers use their power in various ways while assessing, recording and judging the client. They write to communicate with various professionals in the form of publications and reports, yet little emphasis is put on this

aspect (Bogg 2012; Healy & Mulholland 2012). Although little emphasis is put on written communication, Weisman and Zornado (2012) and McDonald et al. (2015) maintain that written reports play a pivotal part in a series of events and decisions about particular circumstances. As such, it is important that social workers develop good report writing skills in order to write accurate and accessible reports (Bogg 2012).

From the above, it is evident that communication, especially the written form, is crucial in determining the social workers' ability to write reports. This is emphasised in the following section as it focuses on defining and outlining different types of social work reports which indicate the influence and emphasis on good writing skills.

■ Defining a social work report

A social work report can be regarded as a record of social workers' interaction with a client system or other people on a formal or informal platform. According to Healy and Mulholland (2012), a report is a recorded text that exists as a soft or hard copy. It is a textual document compiled with the aim to describe the realities of social worlds and provide clear and factual details without undue alteration. Owing to legal implications that often emerge or are attached to it, a social work report is often written based on a rigid structure. Rai (2014) defines a social work report as an inter-professional document that is used as a source of information used to influence decision-making processes in various contexts.

Bogg (2012) argues that a report is not an academic essay, hence full referencing is not necessary. However, it is suggested that, when one conducts assessment, they should be mindful of key pieces of evidence within their specialist area to use these for formulation and analysis. For example, the social worker may begin with an initial report that builds up to a comprehensive report that may be submitted to different audiences such as the office of the family advocate, mental health board, as well as

the various courts of law, including the children's, district, regional and high courts.

The majority of social work reports are informed by the assessment conducted to determine the circumstances of an individual, family or a group. The results of this assessment assist in determining the needs and interventions to address various issues that are impacting on the clients' general well-being. Bogg (2012) suggests that the social worker's assessment should provide a holistic view of the people and their needs. This implies that the social worker should draw on a whole range of information to help determine the psychosocial needs, strengths and stressors of clients to make proper recommendations about what should happen. Regardless of why and for whom the report is written, social workers write some of the following reports based on theoretical understanding and ethical principles of social work.

■ Field notes

Rai (2014) views field notes as unofficial aid memoirs that the social worker completes by hand during or after the visit or discussion. Despite being unofficial, field notes contain important information that should be included in some of the official documents such as case records as well as assessment reports. It is from these field notes that social workers compile a comprehensive report about the clients and their circumstances.

■ Case recording

Case records take up an enormous amount of time within social work practice and form a basis for other core documents. In most instances, social workers have encounters with individuals who are relevant to the case at hand and each of these encounters is recorded with a clear purpose (Healy & Mulholland 2007). It is important to note that case records should provide objective descriptions of events and clearly stipulate social workers' opinions. This allows the social worker to narrate the clients'

true story. Failure to capture and narrate the clients' real circumstances can be misleading and consequential to both clients and social workers. It can affect the social worker's capacity to make reasonable conclusions about the potential risks.

■ Statutory reports

Social workers render statutory interventions which require compilation of reports such as foster care as well as adoption reports for court purposes. These reports are useful in assisting various courts of law in determining the status of the child and endorse the suitability of the recommended plan of action or placement option to meet the needs of the child in need of care and protection. According to Sibanda and Lombard (2015), social work practice within the legislative framework sets out specifications, obligations and the processes to be followed in statutory interventions. Legislation also prescribes the types and formats of reports for specific cases. For example, *South African Children's Act* (No. 38 of 2005) clearly sets out the procedures to be followed with regard to children in need of care and protection. It also has regulations that guide implementation of certain aspects and to ensure the uniformity of this implementation. The Act also prescribes the formats of reports that should be compiled under various circumstances.

■ Forensic reports

Forensic social work is a specialised area that is based on social work application of skills to issues relating to the law and legal system in mental health reviews and criminal court proceedings. This may involve the provision of expert testimony in a court of law and writing forensic reports (Butters & Vaughan-Eden 2011). Forensic social work reports are documents compiled by the social worker following the assessment conducted using specialised social work knowledge, techniques and tools. These reports should be indicative of the social workers' understanding

of the law (Roesch 2015). Forensic reports are important in helping the court in the sentencing process regarding the crime committed. They should reflect the individual's current mental status and functional abilities as aspects that help to determine if one is capable of participating in the review or trial process. Forensic reports should be based on facts gained through assessment. They should also contain conclusions and recommendations that can withstand critical analysis from opposing parties during court proceedings (Joubert & Van Wyk 2014; Roesch 2015).

■ The significance of social work reports

Social work reports serve different purposes for social workers and the receiving audience. As an important part of social work practice, reports can be beneficial and sometimes detrimental to clients' lives as well as the social work profession. Social work reports can be used as a point of departure and source of reference for plan of action. They provide direction for meaningful social work intervention. Hence, Healy and Mulholland (2007) emphasise effective report writing skills as they are essential to achieving outcomes in social work practice. According to McLaughlin (2009), social work reports are a communication tool used to give a synopsis of the situation at hand and reflect social work activities, including their interactions with various individuals. They provide an opportunity for social workers to share information about the past activities in order to ensure continuity of care. They also depict the rationale for the decision made and action taken. Social work reports reflect the social worker's views and analysis about various situations. These reports serve as representation of the client's interest, needs and social and objective realities.

D'Cruz (2004) views social work reports not only as a communication tool but as having the power to shape people's

lives and influence decisions on a wide variety of issues. For example, in court cases, they are tools for expert witnessing that gives the court a sense of the present circumstances (Joubert & Van Wyk 2014). This requires a social worker to construct a convincing argument that will influence the courts of law to make a suitable decision about the case at hand. Social workers increasingly have to form part of a team of multidisciplinary professionals. This implies that they may often be required to provide an opinion or share information about the social aspects of a client. For instance, in hospital settings, they provide additional in-depth information on the social circumstances that affect the health of clients (Whitaker et al. 2006). Often NGOs that provide social services struggle with funding; therefore, to keep the organisation afloat, they use social work reports to obtain funding. They use these reports to convince funders, including government departments, about the relevance and significance of their programmes (Alter & Adkins 2001).

Rai and Lillis (2009) point out that social work reports are not only significant to change clients' lives but also help the social workers and other professionals who have requested reports to see themselves as a team. In addition, social work reports serve as a representation of social work practice and a reflection of the organisations' type and quality of service they render. Therefore, social workers can use their reports to rate and evaluate their work. They serve as a tool for supervision and determination of the needs for development, resulting in the motivation for in-service training. Social work reports reveal a great deal about the skills and capabilities of the people who wrote them. As such, a well-constructed report influences other professionals to respect the social workers as experts in their field. The reports are an indication of the part the social worker plays in the decision-making process that is intended to improve the clients' well-being (Rai & Lillis 2009).

Although social work reports appear to have significant positive influence, a poorly written report can have serious

consequences on clients' lives (McDonald et al. 2015) and damage a social worker's reputation (Stanford 2010). For example, Joubert and Van Wyk (2014) reported that courts do not use some of the social workers' forensic reports because they do not meet the required standards. Poorly written forensic social work reports present the courts with a challenging legal predicament which results in negative impact on the sentencing process of the offender. This implies that the court might not understand the aspects regarding the circumstances of the offender as presented, thereby disregarding the conclusions and recommendations made by the social worker. As a result, social workers lose credibility and respect of legal professionals and clients. According to Stanford (2010), reports can be used to hold social workers accountable should things go wrong. By virtue of social work being an ethical profession, social work reports can be used as a tool for accountability.

■ Gaps in social work report writing

Social workers are expected to have writing skills from the start of their practice. Social work report writing is seen as a complex task that has to meet a range of information and decision-making needs. This involves getting an argument across to various audiences or professionals in a written form of communication. However, very little has been done in terms of available training (Bogg 2012). Earlier, Healy and Mulholland (2007) point out that social work practice and training put little emphasis on the development of writing as compared to verbal communication skills. Good writing is critical in informing sound decisions in the interests of service users, yet it is a skill that is often neglected in the face of demanding social work roles (Firth & Martin 2015; Rai 2014).

On the contrary, it is important to note the role of language proficiency in one's ability to write formal documents such as social work reports. Based on this observation, Pineteh (2014)

and Chokwe (2016) argue that language proficiency enables individuals to possess higher order thinking skills that help them to think critically and be analytical. Globally, use of English language as a medium of instruction has become a norm (Friedberg, Mitchell & Brook 2017). Common with other countries, South Africa uses English as the main medium of communication despite being a multilingual country with majority of the population being second or third speakers of this language. According to Chokwe (2016) and Friedberg et al. (2017), English language for second language speakers pose a barrier in their ability to engage in critical writing. As a result, many students and social workers are less adept in writing and preparing reports.

Results from the study to investigate the social work graduates' experiences after changing from diploma to a degree indicate that the acquisition of a social work degree increased the employers' expectation in terms of literacy in report writing. It was reported that the managers thought that the university would assess students and provide support where writing and related skills were lacking, resulting in newly qualified social workers who are able to write good reports using correct spelling and grammar. However, to the managers' disappointment, it was observed that the change from diploma to a degree did not bring any improvements. Instead, the standard of report writing, especially in children's services, deteriorated (Sharpe et al. 2011).

An earlier study found that writing challenges that social workers struggle with include failure to exercise discretion in terms of sharing confidential information, producing under tight time pressure and writing for various audiences (Carney & Koncel 1994). Social work reports have been perceived as lacking clear observations, judgements and recommendations. Social workers appear to fail to manage simple documentation tasks. As a result, their reports have been found to contain conflicting opinions, unfinished judgements and unsubstantiated claims (McDonald et al. 2015). Furthermore, their reports lack clear purpose that is relevant and should communicate to a specific audience with

convincing arguments that have objectivity, logic, brevity and a full coverage of the available facts (Rai 2014). Supporting the observation about the state of reports, Joubert and Van Wyk (2014) found the social work forensic reports to be of poor quality and often lacking in objectivity. As a result, the quality of reports is used to criticise social workers' competency and credibility.

The following section describes the practical report writing challenges as identified by supervisors who participated in the workshop. As such, poor construction and language use, lack of originality, poor referral to legislation and theory as well as misconnection between academic and practice report writing are highlighted as themes that thread through the report writing practices. Looking at these themes indicates that poor writing skills weave through social work practices.

■ **Poor construction and language use**

According to Nel and Müller (2010) and Chokwe (2016), South Africa has a high rate of functional illiteracy that result in many students entering and exiting higher institutions of learning with inadequate literacy levels that contribute to their inability to cope with required standards and demands of their disciplines. Supervisors, caretakers of the office and regulators of ethics are tasked with the responsibility of guiding social workers on aspects related to practice including upholding social work values through report writing. This has proved to be a difficult task as supervisors have difficulty understanding the content of most reports as they are characterised by the inability to construct a meaningful sentence to explain circumstances of the client. This indicates the influence of the use of adverbs, adjectives and semantic relations in sentences on the meaning of the message conveyed (Roose et al. 2009). Supervisors expressed how a poorly constructed report 'short changes' the client. It appears that different formats of reports such as those

prescribed in the *South African Children's Act* (No. 38 of 2005) add to the problem.

Gregory and Holloway (2006) view writing social work reports as a language-centred exercise. There was recognition among supervisors that it is important for social work students to master the language of learning to be able to process and understand. A challenge stems from relating to the language of teaching and learning in education. As supervisors observed, writing social work reports in second or third language is a disadvantage. While this has been a feature already evident in research in this area (Chokwe 2016; Nelson & Weatherald 2014; Pineteh 2014), it appears that lack of language proficiency is a concern in report writing. It was noted that a majority of social work reports are characterised with grammar, vocabulary and spelling inadequacies. This is seen as diminishing the meaning and causing confusion, especially for people who are not in the social work profession.

Supervisors noted the impact of social media on the already problematic use of language in report writing. From the supervisors' perspective, the 'WhatsApp' language is more dominant in the newly qualified and student social workers' reports. Given that social media has evaded formal academic language use and writing skills, it makes sense that students and newly qualified social workers are unable to use language or write according to the required standards (Harran & Olamijulo 2014; Pineteh 2014). While this impacts on the social workers' writing skills, it also affects their ability to analyse the information presented. This poor language use impacts on the supervisors' canalisation time, as they have to spend most of their time trying to make sense of what is written and correct the improper language.

■ **Lack of originality – cut and paste**

As research on report writing reveals, the use of language is crucial to the authenticity or credibility of the content message

and the weight that is given to it (Roose et al. 2009). Supervisors expressed the challenge of lack of originality in the social workers' reports. They spoke of the dominance of a 'cut and paste' practice that seemed to be dominating the social work reports such as psychosocial or extension reports. For example, a social worker who is required to write five reports for different clients would only change the most obvious information such as the demographic details and employment as well as educational background. As a result, most reports do not show the true reflection of the client's circumstances. According to supervisors, some common mistakes can be easily detected during canalisation of reports. However, they mentioned that this is not always the case, especially when they, as supervisors, are under strict time pressure to perform proper canalisation. Supervisors' concern was the damage caused by the quality of reports to their reputation.

Although supervisors feel responsible for monitoring and regulating social work practice including report writing, they are often hampered by the social workers' resistance to change and refrain from doing cut and paste. This is associated with their high caseloads. In addition, the formats of reports sometimes make it easy for social workers to submit cut and paste reports simply because of expediency and lack of resources for proper investigations. This results in social work reports that lack substance and critical analysis required to influence decisions about clients' lives (Joubert & Van Wyk 2014; McDonald et al. 2015).

■ Poor referral to legislation and theory

Some of the important elements of social work report writing are the integration of theory and referral to the relevant legislation. Throughout the workshop, supervisors elaborated on the importance of referring to legislation, especially for court reports and those that deal with placement of the children. They emphasised the importance of quoting a section or subsection in

a piece of legislation when making an argument, motivation or recommendations about a case. Supervisors reported that most social work students and newly qualified social workers have a tendency of using the same section or subsection without even verifying the relevance in the said case. In some instances, the references made in social work reports reflect little or no understanding of legislation despite its importance in social work practice. They expressed their concern in the implementation of report recommendations that are misguided by poor referral to legislation.

This view is supported by a research study on graduates' reflections of their experiences, which reported that social workers had not been adequately trained to apply the different pieces of legislation and policies in social work practice and practice settings. Social workers reported experiencing challenges regarding statutory work which forms the biggest portion of their workload. This study also reported that social workers were not well informed about court proceedings, the relevant forms that they had to use in court, knowledge about the best interests of the child during statutory intervention and writing court reports. This was attributed to little or no supervision received in practice settings, which resulted in anxiety and feeling overwhelmed (De Jager 2013).

■ **Misconnection between academic and practice report writing**

One of the critical aspects of student placement is that students should integrate theory with practice which is done by applying social methods in various case contexts (Dhemba 2012). This can be detected in their reports. When social work students are placed in various agencies for practicum, they often bring with them practice manuals with strict instructions of what is expected of them. The manual contains various report formats which in most cases are slightly different from the agency reports because

university reports have an academic element as they are used as an assessment task. For instance, the university reports require students to indicate how they applied social work skills as well as principles during the helping process. They should also give a critical analysis or evaluation of the case and their intervention. However, this does not seem to serve its purpose as students seem to struggle to indicate the application and provide critical analysis of the case. For supervisors, it is difficult to guide students on what they, as supervisors, do not understand as they lack the necessary skills.

Placement for fieldwork exposes students to various social environments but prepares them for the reality in which they will practice. It provides students with an opportunity to actively participate in professional activities and allows them to internalise professional values, beliefs and perspectives. Presumably, this means that students could develop more practical skills in terms of report writing. There seems to be a misconnection between what is required academically and what students are expected to do practically. As supervisors observed, complying with both the agency and university report writing requirements becomes difficult for students on placement for longer periods as it happens with the final-year students. While this compliance is imperative, students become overloaded and confused, resulting in poor report writing for both the university and the agency (Carelse & Dykes 2013).

While there is a sense of helplessness tied to lack of report writing skills, it is clear that supervisors acknowledge their weaknesses and to some degree are prepared to change the situation for the better. Supervisors suggested strategies that could be put in place to minimise report writing challenges. These include minimising the differences between the agency and the university reports, training on report writing with specific focus on critical and analytical writing, and training on supervision in general to help to improve their ability to provide the necessary support and guidance to students and newly qualified social workers.

Report writing challenges that are experienced by social workers are viewed as emanating from the social workers' under-preparedness from their training. It also emanates from lack of support and mentoring from their superiors when they enter employment for the first-time (De Jager 2013; Rai 2014). Within the South African context, the issue of under-preparedness is perpetuated by a number of interdependent factors. Language, as already explained, is among those factors. In addition, it is commonly known that the standard of South African education has lowered, resulting in the number of schools that lack the necessary resources to prepare learners for university (Pineteh 2014). For example, most schools have teachers who also struggle with language proficiency and lack the required writing skills that could be transferred to learners in preparation for higher education demands (Nel & Müller 2010). This gap is maximised at universities because they apply different teaching styles from those of high schools. In addition, universities are grappling with large class sizes that impede quality of training as lecturers do not manage to have one-on-one sessions with individual students (CHE 2013; Fowler & Boylan 2010). The teaching of social work students will be discussed next.

■ Importance of teaching report writing in social work

Writing forms an important part of social work education. McDonald et al. (2015) suggest that students should be taught writing skills through the lens of the profession's ethics and values to impart them with a greater understanding of the significance of writing. The current South African BSW programme is regulated by the CHE, SAQA and SACSSP, a statutory body that serves as an umbrella for various categories of social services personnel. The SACSSP also focuses on both social work education and training. In order to ensure that all universities adopt a uniform approach in delivering social work programmes that reflect minimum standards which are entrenched in the main values

that guide social work education, 27 ELOs were adopted (Lombard 2015).

These ELOs were categorised according to social work's primary and secondary methods. Although there might be institutional differences in terms of module content, it was mandatory that each social work module should address one or more ELOs. For example, ELO 5 states that students should be able to produce and maintain professional records of group sessions, individual interviews and community work contacts. The ELOs had since been reviewed and there was a motion to adopt CHE standard for BSW programme. These standards describe the application of knowledge through various core areas. Core area nine emphasises on the ability to correctly write reports whether they are for internal or external use. This implies that the development of writing skills is crucial in social work education. It is therefore important to design social work programmes in a manner that will help students to master general writing as well as report writing which is crucial in social practice (CHE 2015).

Social work programmes expose students to writing on both the academic and practical domains (Green & Simon 2012). According to Rai and Lillis (2009), students' academic writing takes place in the controlled environment of the university, while on the contrary they get an opportunity to write professional reports and produce portfolios while on placement. Placement is viewed as particularly important for social work students as it is the preparation for practice and writing future professional reports. Despite these opportunities, there is overwhelming evidence that social work students lack the ability to write and produce professional reports (Luna, Horton & Galin 2014). Earlier studies show that the university students' inability to write academic essays or professional reports is not confined to social work students, but applies to the whole student community. In addition, students have been reported to lack the necessary skills for writing within their discipline (Alter & Adkins 2006; Fallahi, Wood, Austad & Fallahi 2006).

According to Healy and Mulholland (2007), students in higher education are encouraged to complete academic writing tasks through which they are assessed, but training in social work specifying writing tasks such as case notes and report writing is inadequate. This assessment problem exists during student placement. According to Nelson and Weatherald (2014), the agency supervisors who have the responsibility to assess students on placement do not see teaching and correcting of grammar and spelling in students' written work as their responsibility but that of the university. As a result, their assessment mainly focuses on the students' competency and excellence in the direct work with clients, thereby overlooking their inability to write about the work to a professional standard. In addition, owing to strict time pressures as well as inadequate support and feedback, social work students on placement struggle to produce written material. Rai and Lillis (2013) point out that the non-appraisal of writing skills leaves students underprepared for professional writing that is essential for practice after they have qualified as social workers.

■ Conclusion

This chapter drew on a workshop aimed to provide support, monitoring and supervision to social workers in order to help them deal with challenges that have an impact on service delivery. This began with a brief overview of recording and how it relates to report writing. In the first section, the focus was on communication skills as an important competency in social work. Both verbal and written forms of communication and how they contribute to report writing were discussed. The second section defined social work report and examined different types of social work reports. This highlighted the importance and the need for good writing skills to facilitate the achievement of the purpose of each report. The third section looked at the significance of social work reports. This made clear the power of social workers' reports on influencing the decisions made for various aspects

from placement of a child, sentencing of an offender as well as obtaining funding for social work and related programmes.

Whereas the first three sections focused on communication, types of report and analysed the significance of these reports, the fourth section explored the gaps in social work report writing. It became clear that several factors contribute to the challenges of report writing. Four themes that were identified by participants in the workshop gave a practical indication of their experiences in writing reports. In the end, it was clear that social work education was the major contributing factor to the flaws in report writing. The last section looked at the importance of teaching report writing in social work. It was evident that lack of writing skills is common among university students. This is unfortunately carried over to the workplace; hence, even the qualified social workers have poor writing skills.

It can be concluded that report writing in social work is a challenge and a cause for concern. There is a need to emphasise on writing in social work curricula. Social work students should receive extensive training in all types of writing. To achieve this, both academic and practice environments should work together as equal partners in strengthening student's writing skills through supervision and assessment. The design of writing assessment criteria should be a joint venture between academic and practice environments. This implies that everyday social work writing should be embedded within the academic social work content. Scaffolding and constructive feedback are important in this regard. In addition, there is a need for policy and regulated social work writing model that incorporates the responsibilities of both the university and the practice agencies in ensuring that students master writing skills.

■ Summary: Chapter 7

Report writing is an important element of the social work profession. It forms a critical administrative component of social

work practice. Social workers write notes that are used to compile reports from the initial contact until the termination of their relationships with clients. These reports serve as records for planned intervention and can be used as legal documents. The social work report can emanate from a practitioner's initiative or be requested by an external audience. In both instances, it is important to write and submit a report that is based on facts to help facilitate decision-making. The aim of this chapter was to describe social workers' experiences with report writing amid heavy caseloads and the changing formats that encourage a repetitive supply of information that tends to misrepresent clients' interests. Data was sourced through discussions with social workers attending a workshop conducted by social work veterans in the North West Province of South Africa. Outcomes of the workshop show that social workers struggle with report writing as they lack the necessary skill to compile meaningful reports that can be easily understood by individuals outside the profession. Poor construction and language use, lack of originality, poor referral to legislation and theory as well as misconnection between academic and practice report writing were identified as persistent challenges. There is a need for strengthened partnership between the university and the agency, constant training sessions on report writing and record management for social workers at grassroots level as well as policy and regulated social work model.

What do American students learn from Africa? International service learning and social work education

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■ Introduction

Approximately 10% of college students in the US engage in study abroad programmes, spending a couple of weeks, a full semester and sometimes a full academic year in a different country to learn from a new perspective. In the academic year 2015–2016, there were 325 339 US students studying abroad (Institute of International Education 2017), and 12 730 of them were in Africa. While most studied in South Africa or Ghana, 217 went to Malawi, and of those, seven were with us, engaged in an academic service learning programme in partnership with a local NGO. It was a good experience, for the students and for us as faculty, and we returned in the academic year 2016–2017, this time with 18 students of social work and other human service professions and questions about the full complexity of students' learning.

Although the course was designed with academic and professional development goals in mind and not with a research question, faculty reflections on our experiences raised questions about the meaning and purpose of international service learning and the impact of our programme on students' development. Specifically, we questioned if we could see students' growth towards cultural humility and global citizenship, values that are embedded within the programmes' goals. Both are multifaceted endeavours not achievable in a single university course. Cultural humility necessitates lifelong learning and critical self-reflection (Foronda et al. 2016). Global citizenship requires understanding of the complexities of inequality and the ability to use the analyses as tools to work towards change (Andreotti 2010). We sought to understand, however, if movement towards these areas had taken place during the service learning programme.

Bringing US university students to an African country has important historical, social and political meanings in the American context. The economy and social structure of the US were built upon the genocide and forced migration of the people indigenous

to North America and the kidnapping, transport and enslavement of the African people. Today, 73.3% of the US population identifies as white people, while 12.6% identify as black people or African American and only about 1% identify as belonging to the ethnic groups native to the land: American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (US Census 2016). An additional 17% of the population identify as Hispanic or Latinx; they could be of any race and often have cultural ties to an ethnic group that is indigenous to North America that was colonised or conquered.

The US economy continues to reflect the race privileges upon which the country was founded, and the poverty rate among the black or African American population is more than twice that of white people (US Census 2016). Although racial segregation has not been legal in the US since the mid-1960s, generations of policies have entrenched de facto segregation in housing, which then determines where children go to school and subsequently guides future employment and other opportunities. In practice, American communities are highly segregated and financial poverty is concentrated in communities of colour. Disparities are seen in all social systems: health care, child welfare, education and criminal justice to name a few, where negative outcomes for black or African American people are seen at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts. These are the same systems with which social workers and human services professionals interface and where they are called for social justice action.

■ Cultural humility

Responsiveness to diversity and difference in practice and advancing human rights and social, economic and environmental justice are core competencies for American social work education (CSWE 2015). Working for human rights and eliminating discrimination are also fundamental principles of social work

internationally (IFSW n.d.). For years, education on engaging with people of diverse backgrounds has focused on cultural sensitivity or competency, both of which limit deep engagement with communities that experience oppression. With the focus on the 'other' and instruction to be sensitive to differences and competent in how one responds, neither approach requires accountability to power imbalances within the relationships.

More recently, education for social work and other human services speaks to the concept of cultural humility. Cultural humility requires openness to other cultures along with the ability to be self-reflective and self-critical regarding inter- or cross-cultural interactions (Isaacson 2014). Importantly, cultural humility draws attention to power imbalances and demands action directed at correcting institutional barriers to equity as part of accountability to people who have been historically oppressed (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015). As Foronda et al. (2016) note, cultural humility requires a lifelong process of development and can lead to partnerships that foster mutual empowerment and respect. We posit that cultural humility is a precursor to global citizenship.

■ Global citizenship

The history and dynamics of race and power in the US are complex, painful and, unfortunately, rarely discussed. Colour-blind ideologies prevail but promote individualism and have the consequence of masking race-based disparities among population groups (Bonilla-Silva 2010) and do not promote understanding of global disparities in wealth and power. Further, within colour-blind ideologies, there is scant attention to promoting self-reflection and accountability that is necessary to develop cultural humility. There is no mandate in US primary or secondary education to teach about imperialism or how the use of the wealth and global power of the US can negatively affect countries throughout the world. Thus, students often come to university with vastly different ways of understanding racial and

social justice issues globally, and some come with little or no prior consideration or awareness of racism as an issue for the US of the 21st century. Social work makes clear that the disproportionate negative outcomes for people of colour in the US are the result of structural and historical racism and calls for corrective action (NASW 2007) but does not clearly assert a global responsibility.

US students who study abroad almost always return to the US to finish school and begin their careers. Therefore, the overarching goal of education abroad is for students to engage in experiences that will shape their careers in the US and help them become globally oriented citizens (Appe, Rubaii & Stamp 2016). Global citizenship involves having a sense of social responsibility combined with global awareness and civic engagement (Perry et al. 2016), thus making it action oriented and not merely a philosophical stance. Further, it requires understanding on how inequalities came to exist in the context of colonialism and imperialism and the ability to engage with others non-coercively with an appreciation of ways of being that may be very different from one's own (Andreotti 2010). Some have questioned whether it is possible for the citizens of the US to transcend centuries of social, political and economic power imbalances and become true global citizens (Zemach-Bersin 2008). Others have found, however, that education programmes abroad that include experiential and academic learning with clear goals congruent with field experience can promote development towards global citizenship (Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner 2014).

■ Ethical issues in international service learning

A commonly used definition of international service learning comes from Bringle and Hatcher (2011) and includes three essential elements where students:

(a) participate in an organised service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)

There are clear benefits to service learning. There is evidence that service learning contributes to increasing students' self-awareness and that exposure to different cultural groups promotes cultural competence (Amerson 2010). International service learning can also teach students about interdisciplinary teamwork, communication, ethical awareness, leadership and cultural sensitivity (Kaddoura, Puri & Dominick 2014). There may also be evidence that immersion in the community along with the service activities contributes to the development of cultural humility (Isaacson 2014). Through immersion in a different culture, students improve critical thinking skills (Jackson & Nyoni 2012) and show a more complex understanding of, and commitment to, social justice (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman 2009). Service learning that integrates education on social justice and anti-oppressive practice from the classroom can help students apply these concepts in practice (Charles, Alexander & Oliver 2014) and may offer pathways to global citizenship.

The importance of students' engagement in ethical reflection as central to achieving these benefits cannot be overstated. There is an inherent gap in power and privilege when students from the US come to provide service in a community that is financially poor. Without ethical reflection and strong community partnerships, international service learning can reinforce negative attitudes for some students (Chupp & Joseph 2010) and become a vehicle for a new form of colonialism (Bamber & Pike 2013). Schneider (2015) has warned of a 'white savior industrial complex' whereby American and European volunteers and charities, whose imaginations are fuelled by pop culture icons and media misrepresentation, create an industry of do-gooding that

ultimately devalues and disempowers African communities. Students abroad must learn to understand and manage their privilege and trust the knowledge and capabilities of the people with whom they partner (Busher 2013).

Bamber and Pike (2013) discuss international service learning as ecological engagement, highlighting the aesthetic, moral and spiritual dimensions of learning that come alive through connections with others in the work, and they also emphasise the importance of ethical reflection. Ethical reflection moves beyond reflection on self and draws attention to the meaning of the service project to the community. Attention to the nature of the impact of the service project on the community and robust partnerships that are grounded in the cultural values of the local groups is fundamental. In the absence of these partnerships, international service learning can result in unintended negative outcomes for communities, including disruption of community relations or disaffection of home (Crabtree 2013). To promote strong partnerships with community, Donaldson and Daughtery (2011) suggest using an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach for service learning projects. ABCD focuses on local strengths and capacities that promote a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach and requires strong community partnerships to be effective (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

■ Theoretical framework

In the programme discussed here, the service of US university students in Malawi was informed by ABCD and included working closely with people in the communities to support their self-run projects. ABCD is an approach to community building that developed in opposition to needs-based approaches (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). Needs-based approaches often focus on community scarcities or deficiencies and tend to characterise communities as places and groups in need of something or lacking something. From a needs perspective, external agencies often provide goods and services that position

communities and individuals as clients or consumers. ABCD offers a sharp contrast to this approach and is especially oriented to community action, mobilisation and empowerment.

ABCD does not ignore hardship but recognises internal strengths that support communities to help groups of people build successful initiatives that promote well-being of children, youth and adults. ABCD starts by acknowledging that every community and every individual has assets that can be utilised to overcome their problems and promote development. Community assets include individual gifts and talents, voluntary community associations and local institutions such as schools. Moreover, ABCD recognises that peoples' knowledge of their own circumstances make them experts who know more about the problems to be addressed and the potential that can be developed.

Consistent with the ethics of international service learning (Bringle & Hatcher 2011), students' critical reflection on their role and the meaning of their service to the communities were crucial. The programme was designed to help students develop knowledge that enables them to reflect on local development and critique the role of the US and Europe in African affairs and development. Students engaged in self-reflection to understand their positions in the context of historical and structural privilege and oppression and clarify their responsibilities for social action. Students' written reflections on their own privilege in the context of deepening appreciation of culture, community and relationships developed during the service work were explored to determine if movement along the path to cultural humility and global citizenship had begun.

■ **The Malawi International Academic Service Learning Programme**

We designed our course as International Academic Service Learning (IASL) where service is integrated with academic learning (Howard 1998). Students completed coursework prior

to the trip to provide social and political context and inform their service. Students also engaged with social media, submitted personal reflection blogs before, during and after the trip, and completed an academic assignment when they returned. Designed from an ABCD framework, service provided by the US students was defined by members of the communities where service took place. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into details of the project, but the strengths and voices of the people, and the goals of the ABCD project, have been reported elsewhere (Blitz et al. 2018).

The IASL programme centres on a collaboration with the Malawi Children's Mission (MCM), an NGO that serves three communities in southern Malawi: M'bwana, Jamali and Mwanzama. The villages are home to approximately 9000 residents, with no electricity and one borehole per village for water. Most homes are made of *njerwa* [mud bricks], with dirt floors and grass-thatched roofs, mats for beds and scarcely any furniture. It is clear that the communities are among the poorest in financial terms, and many residents make well below the \$1.90 per day threshold for extreme poverty. MCM provides primary education, food, health care and social-emotional support services to 150 children who have been orphaned or are otherwise vulnerable and provides counsel with their families or guardians. Approximately, 130 children go to school at MCM and the older children attend local government schools and come to MCM for meals and afterschool activities. The villages are governed through the traditional authority of *mfumu* [chiefs] and *mafumu ang'ono ang'ono* [sub-chiefs; all chiefs together: *mafumuwa*], with whom MCM maintains positive relationships.

The course was designed to meet specific education goals guided by literature on ethical international service learning. Teaching and learning activities in the classroom before the trip helped students to, namely, (1) investigate what local development looks like in practice by identifying key players including local government, local community-based organisations and NGOs (Perry et al. 2016), (2) think critically about the roles of local

government and civil society organisations (Appel et al. 2016), and (3) explore the social, political, historical, cultural and ethical dimensions of international engagement (Reisch 2011). Service learning activities during the trip encouraged students to, (4) engage in personal and critical reflection on their practices as global citizens (Crabtree 2013), and (5) develop skills and competencies to enable engagement in-service learning that was mutually beneficial, and which promoted greater cross-cultural understanding and learning (Busher 2013).

As part of class discussions and reading, students learnt how colonialism and post-colonial development strategies led by the global north have destabilised the local economy. This included learning about health disparities, how slow and inadequate world health responses to the HIV and AIDS crisis devastated communities and how climate change, related to environmental damage largely from the global north, impacts rain cycles, drought and food production. Students are also helped to understand how all these factors work together to disrupt family and community life and undermine indigenous culture. One pre-trip assignment involved writing an issue brief, outlining the initiatives and responses to a range of concerns carried out by the Malawian government, world aid organisations and/or NGOs.

Personal and professional reflections were included at each phase of the learning process. Classroom time prior to the trip included activities to help the students develop trust within the group, knowing that the nature of the experience would be personal and emotional. Time in Malawi included daily large and small group reflection discussions, and faculty made efforts to speak with students one-on-one throughout the trip to help them integrate their learning. Guided by faculty questions and facilitations (Crabtree 2013), group reflection discussions included recognising and negotiating power and privilege differentials, locating community strengths and power, appreciating the role of the partner organisation in the community and attention to the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of growth and change (Bamber & Pike 2013).

US students were in Malawi for 20 days, provided service Monday through Friday and had time off on the weekends to enjoy tourist activities. The service activities varied according to MCM and community goals and the US students' abilities and interests. Each student was expected to be involved in two projects, one with children and one with adults. Projects were done in partnership with faculty and included business development with a group of women who are creating a business making and selling soap; professional development with MCM teachers on social-emotional concerns with children who have suffered traumatic loss; career motivation with youth aged 8 to 15 years to help them identify professional or vocational ambitions and goals; collaboration with the MCM Young Women's Initiative, working with girls aged 11-18 years on positive youth development; support for grandparents raising grandchildren; and arts, crafts and recreational activities with children after school.

The days were long and emotionally intense. Students stayed at a guest lodge about 15 min outside a large city and about an hour outside the villages. Each morning, the students left before 8:00 am to arrive at MCM by 9:00 am. They worked at MCM and in the communities, closely engaged with children, MCM staff and adults in the community, until approximately 4:00 pm. Upon arriving back at the guest lodge, they had a short break and then the group met for large and small group reflection discussions. Tears and expressions of shock were common during the first few days as the students talked about living conditions that seemed unimaginable to them and the affection they had for the children who attend MCM. After the first few days, as the students got more deeply involved with their chosen projects, they often worked into the night preparing for the next day's activities.

The local language is Chichewa. The MCM professional staff are all bilingual and the US students communicated with them in English. The drivers who provided transportation to MCM also functioned as translators when the students worked with community members who did not speak English. In this capacity, the drivers and students often engaged in conversations about

how words and ideas are translated as students turned to the drivers for help understanding Malawian history and cultural norms, and for insights to help them make sense of the profound differences between American privilege and the Malawian struggles they saw. The drivers were also available during the weekends, and it was during tourist time that the US students were exposed to other sides of Malawian life as they attended church on Sunday, visited upscale nightclubs in the city, ate at a variety of restaurants and, for some, visited the drivers' homes. Thus, while exposed to extreme poverty in their work, the US students were also exposed to middle class and working class Malawi.

■ Methods

Along with other assignments, students were required to write blogs before, during and after their IASL trip. The blogs were short essays, approximately 500–700 words, which reflected on their experience. Each student submitted four blogs, one due immediately before they left the US, one during their first week in Malawi, one during their final week in Malawi and one within the first week of returning home. Students understood that the blogs were submitted as part of their grade for the course and might be posted on the university's website. Thus, while the blogs were personal in nature, they were written for an audience beyond the IASL faculty.

With students' consent and with the approval of the university's institutional review board, we used an analysis of these blogs to understand the process of learning and to identify areas of growth. The students' blogs were compiled into four single documents, combining all blogs from the four assignment submission points. Once combined, the blogs were reviewed using thematic analysis as an inductive and data-driven approach to coding (Boyatzis 1998) to, (1) develop open codes and condense the data into categories, (2) identify concepts that

cluster together through axial coding and (3) use selective coding looking for cases that illustrate themes to make comparisons or contrasts. Through this process, we sought to understand overarching themes in the learning, and then discuss those themes in the context of our research question regarding the progress towards cultural humility and global citizenship.

■ The students

Between the two trips, one in 2016 and one in 2017, 25 students participated and 24 responded to the faculty's email request to use their blogs for analysis to inform a manuscript on IASL. One student had graduated and could not be reached. Of the 24 students, 20 were female and four were male; 17 identified as white, three as black or African American – including one who identified as African American and Latina – two as Latina and two as Asian. One student was an international student studying in the US while all the others were US citizens, including two whose families had immigrated to the US when they were very young. Twenty were graduate students: 14 masters of social work students, two of whom were studying for a dual masters in social work and public administration; five students studying for a master's degree in public administration, including two who were working towards a dual master's degree in public administration and student affairs administration; and one student who was working towards a master's degree in student affairs administration. Of the four undergraduates, one was a business major, one was majoring in human development and the other two were studying humanities.

Most of the students were young: 18 were in their early- to mid-20s, although each trip included some non-traditional aged students in their 30s, 40s or 50s. They were also new to travel. Only five had travelled outside of the US prior to this trip, including one who had travelled to Malawi as part of a high school service trip and two who had travelled to visit family outside the

US but had not travelled beyond that. A few had never flown on an aeroplane before, and several had never travelled more than a few hundred miles from home. Information about family income was not gathered, but tuition for the state university systems is significantly less than private intuitions and thus attracts many students who could not otherwise afford college. We know anecdotally that the students represented a range of the middle class, from those at the lower end who relied on governmental assistance for food and took out substantial student loans to pay for college and this trip to those at the higher end who had ample family financial support.

■ Findings

There were several themes that came up repeatedly during all phases of the learning experience and showed up in blogs before, during and after the trip. While we identified nine themes overall, they tended to cluster together into four groups.

- *Group 1.* The first was related to the students' very limited experience with international travel and provided important context for all other learning. We labelled this group *Learning outside their comfort zone*, and identified three sub-themes: (1) sentimental and idealised notions of Africa, (2) Malawi is a country in Africa and (3) new travellers in a world of hospitality.
- *Group 2.* We labelled the second major group *Confronting and moving beyond bias*, and noted two sub-themes: (1) challenging stereotypes and (2) people are people.
- *Group 3.* The third major group revolved around *Negotiating American privilege*, with two sub-themes: (1) financial and resource poverty versus American wealth and (2) the desire to help, the impulse to 'save' and learning to partner.
- *Group 4.* The final group focused on the belief that the experience will positively influence their professional development, which we labelled *A different sort of professional now*, with two sub-themes: (1) awareness of privilege and responsibility in the global context and (2) improved social work skills and competencies.

■ Learning outside their comfort zone

□ Sentimental and idealised notions of Africa

Some version of the term ‘outside my comfort zone’ was used multiple times in the blogs, often presented alongside romantic, wistful ideas of Africa. While these ideas were most present in the pre-departure blogs, they continued in different forms throughout the experience and provided a context for all other learning. Social and racial position in the US was a factor, as black or African American students framed their sentimental ideas differently than white students and students of colour without African heritage.

Among the three students who identified as black or African American, each spoke of Africa in terms of finding ancestry, or returning to the motherland, with sentiments tied to their families’ place in the diaspora. For example, Essence⁴, a black woman with family ties to the Caribbean, wrote, ‘I must say my excitement stems from my soul feeling, finally, being “home.” Taking a trip to the motherland was once a dream that has now turned into reality’. Aisha wrote directly to her lost connection because her ancestors were trafficked to the US and enslaved:

Being a biracial woman of colour (African American and Latina) I have little connection to my roots [...] Due to slavery I do not have direct ties to where my ancestors come from. I expect this trip to assist in, to complete, my journey of self and ancestry exploration, bringing me closer to my African roots.

White students’ ideas of Africa usually showed up subtly in their blogs and appeared more romantic or mystical, as when Joshua wrote, ‘The chance to study and explore one of the more remote corners of Africa was an opportunity I could not pass up’. For some the romanticism was clear, including two who spoke of African soil as if it possessed some ethereal qualities. For example,

4. Names have been changed.

Kayla wrote, 'I am excited to wiggle my toes in ancient soil that has survived the tests of time and human evolution'. Lucy shared similar sentiments:

Arriving in Blantyre, I went straight for the dirt. I could not wait to put my hands in it. As others watched me, I did not care because the connection I was making was beyond their comprehension.

□ Malawi is a country in Africa

In the beginning, students made frequent references to 'Africa' in their blogs, but over time students were more likely to speak of Malawi specifically rather than Africa more generally. For example, in pre-departure blogs, 'Africa' was mentioned 39 times, while in the post-trip blogs it was only mentioned 17 times, whereas 'Malawi' appeared 124 times. Even in pre-departure blogs students were discussing the Malawi they anticipated, but reflections on both Malawi and Africa as separate yet joined places increased as time went on.

Both the tone of reflections and the frequency of the mentions of place indicate that as the students got to know the people and the communities they became more focused on understanding Malawi and its culture. Megan spoke of this directly, but this idea appeared in multiple ways in other students' reflections:

Africa is a continent made up of very different countries, cultures, languages, traditions, etc., but it seems as though we often just lump all of Africa together making it seem as though it is just one big country.

□ New travellers in a world of hospitality

Another overarching theme that appeared to impact other aspects of learning related to the students' very limited travel experience. The students' general newness to travel was noted in many ways, including how they reacted to the kindness of the

people they met. Almost all students shared surprise at how nice people were to them, and Allison summarised it well:

We were all welcomed by the exceedingly friendly staff at [*the*] Lodge, with [*the housekeeping supervisor*] quickly trying to teach us Chichewa. The next day we met our drivers, who have continued to be incredibly patient, protective, and wonderful to us slightly boisterous Americans.

While it is true that the people with whom the students interacted were genuinely kind and generous, the students seemed to lack awareness of their position as visitors and guests interacting with people employed in the hospitality industry. The students often compared their experiences as international travellers with how they are treated at home by people they experience as less friendly and welcoming. Students' reactions may also reflect the current political climate in the US, where people who are assumed to be 'foreign' are increasingly treated with suspicion and hostility. In Malawi, however, the foreigners were welcomed into the community and the communities were seen as embodying qualities the US has lost. Danny was among several to comment on this:

The sense of community [*in Malawi*] does not compare to even the most advanced villages within the United States. Despite the immeasurable challenges the folks in Malawi encounter, their love for each other and their community is extraordinary.

■ **Confronting and moving beyond bias**

□ **Challenging stereotypes**

Embedded within the generalisation of Africa, students were sometimes grappling with stereotypes and US media stories about African countries that emphasise troubles and do not illustrate day-to-day life. Megan noted what others also spoke about, 'When I thought of Africa, I thought of flat land, starving children, war-ravaged villages, sex trafficking and poverty'. Heather wrote specifically about wanting to challenge her biases:

As a person of European descent, I chose to participate in-service learning for personal and political reasons: To challenge, through

my own experiences, some of the stereotypes and biases I have as someone who has grown up in American culture.

□ People are people

As they formed relationships with people through their service learning experience, the students began recognising commonalities among people even in very different cultures. Coming to understand that people are more alike than different had a profound impact on many students. For example, Cathy wrote:

I have discovered a very important piece of knowledge: people are people. We all understand smiles and respond well to kindness. We all love music and dancing with our friends no matter what continent we come from.

Many, like Shirley, found these human commonalities through connections with the children:

They are just kids who love to run and play, are excited to learn new things and they want to be heard and share their lives and they really love electronics!

Even towards the end of the trip, however, as students reflected on the people they met, there was still evidence that some white students held sentimental ideas that seemed to simultaneously embrace universal humanity and yet hold African people as different, other and special. One example is from Gretchen, a white student, who stated in a blog she wrote during her final week in Malawi, 'I am unworthy to have known such true human beings. Those who have been forged from the sun itself. Our ancestors. Our brothers and sisters.' Most of the students, and all of the black or African American students, however, moved away from romantic ideas and saw commonalities with the people they met. As Chloe, a black student, noted, some people they met felt like friends, 'One of the women who works at MCM took me to her [hair]stylist. [She] could definitely be my friend; she's awesome and has been so helpful!'

■ Negotiating American privilege

□ Financial and resource poverty versus American wealth

Although the stereotypes were quickly dispelled, exposure to extreme financial and resource poverty in the context of an absence of state-sponsored social welfare resources, which are available in the US, was shocking to almost all of the students and challenged their worldviews. At this, students were all emotional, even those who generally considered themselves more stoic such as Kevin who wrote:

Growing up, my friends have always made note that I don't have emotions and if I do, you certainly won't see me showing them in public. This week, my emotions were tested.

Students often reflected on a new understanding of daily hardships that had been unimaginable to them. For example, Dina shared:

After the village visit, I felt very overwhelmed with emotions. It was very hard. I was very emotional, and I cried a lot. It was not tears of sadness or pity but tears of admiration because of the strength that these individuals have shown through their obstacles.

Like many students, Renee struggled with making sense of the profound disparities between her life in the US and life in the Malawian villages:

Seeing these homes was very emotional. Imagining these happy children who giggle and smile and play games with us all day sleeping in a place many Americans wouldn't even keep their pets was difficult to understand.

Lauren also struggled to make sense of inequities:

When the group first arrived, there were a lot of tears, coming from myself included. The tears were not out of pity, but due to the extreme privilege that I feel as a woman from the United States. The poverty we have seen is overwhelming.

Most often, as students reflected on the financial poverty they witnessed, they expressed surprise at the resilience and warmth

they saw in the people with whom they interacted. As they developed affection for the people, the idealised Malawian became a strong, almost heroic figure who endured with optimism and generosity. Joshua wrote:

What struck me the most was that in face of unimaginable poverty and hardship these people possessed a resounding fortitude and drive [...]. All this while never losing kindness and a generosity I never expected to receive.

The experience taught Essence that people can be both financially poor and happy, 'These families are strong and resilient and ARE happy. Experiencing economic poverty does not equate to unhappiness'. Similarly, Lydia was impressed with people's focus on seeing good qualities in others, 'Despite all of the hardships and poverty that Malawians face, they all try to see the good in situations and the good in people'.

Reflections on American privilege continued when the students returned home as they considered how different things looked to them now. For example, Kayla wrote:

Everything looks bigger than it used to. The aisles in the grocery stores, the lanes on the highway, the food on our plates, my home, my bed, my bank account.

Heather shared a similar experience:

My first full day home was spent mostly on the couch. I felt ungrounded [...]. Every room I wandered through at home, I made calculations of volume, mentally determining how many brick homes from the villages we saw would fit in my kitchen (three), my bedroom (two or three), the living room (three).

Many others simply wrote of the difficulty transitioning back into their lives, such as Alexis, who wrote that she wanted to 'avoid shopping and socializing and the accompanying culture shock', and Scott who stated, 'It has been five days since I returned back from Malawi and I am still trying to readjust to life here in the States'.

□ The desire to help, the impulse to ‘save’ and learning to partner

The blogs, often filled with glowing and dramatic language, also showed evidence of cognitive processing as students struggled to find their place as visitors and service learners. Early in the trip, as students struggled to make sense of the situations they witnessed, there were often indications that they felt inadequate to address the enormity of need they saw. Gretchen was the only one to bring the language of ‘white saviour’ into a blog, echoing a theme in the required pre-trip readings, but others also expressed these ideas, ‘Through experience and education, I have previously learnt that “swooping in as the great white savior” or “the great white hope” does not sustain nor does it necessarily succeed’. Understanding that a saviour is not needed and would not be beneficial, however, seemed to leave some students at a temporary loss as to what they could contribute. Kayla wrote what many others shared:

What am I doing here? I've spent the last week in a place where people have so little food that they dry poisonous beans on their roofs to eat because there is nothing else [...] the nearest borehole is five kilometers away from a house [...] a home with glass windows instead of holes in the wet brick is considered to be very good quality. Yet what have I brought? What have I contributed?

By the end of the trip, as students reflected on their projects and accomplishments with their Malawian partners, it was clear that the students believed they had contributed to something sustainable and owned by the community. For example, Kevin wrote, ‘[w]hatever we provided to MCM [...] needed to be sustainable and able to be continued once we leave. I believe we accomplished that across all our projects’. Students also reflected on the positive working relationships they developed, such as Shirley, who primarily worked with the MCM standard six teachers, ‘[The two teachers] were so great to work with and it felt more like team teaching, even though we have only known each other for a little over two weeks.’

Other students wrote about their pleasure at having found ways to transcend language barriers and develop a sense of camaraderie in the work. Along these lines, Alexis wrote:

Only one week before, we were strangers seated across from one another in stiff, blue seats: soap-making women on one side, [*university*] students on the other. Now we were joining together in spontaneous outbursts of song, as 'joyful as the fish in the water,' singing snippets of the tune while we worked side-by-side.

Similarly, Essence shared being impressed with the girls in the Young Women's Initiative:

To my surprise these girls were so motivated to complete this project. The girls never complained, never gave up [...] The girls exceeded my expectations and their work ethic surpasses that of most people I know. They were also very grateful to not just be given something but to learn such an important skill.

■ A different sort of professional now

□ Awareness of privilege and responsibility in the global context

All students expressed feeling changed by the experience, both personally and professionally. Although they often had difficulty articulating what this might be, they always talked about it as a positive transformation. For example, Kevin wrote, 'My view and scope [of understanding] on education, children living in extreme conditions and poverty, has drastically changed and change for the better'. Jenna wrote about her observations of her peers:

Every single individual on this trip has been changed in some way. We all walk away from this trip with a new outlook on the world and a desire to give. The change within yourself is almost impossible to explain.

Others, like Vanessa, reflected on painful self-awareness that developed in the process:

My trip to Malawi was truly a life changing experience. Before going to Malawi, I was very confident in my abilities...However,

after my trip to Malawi, everything changed. My arrogance and flaws became visibly apparent as the trip went on.

Reflections on growth and development were often contextualised in a new awareness of global concerns. For example, Elena wrote about how her learning can inform her future actions for social justice, 'By being knowledgeable of the things that are going on around us, there is a higher chance that we can take some type of action'. Some, like Lucia, found a calling for international development work:

I always knew that I wanted to help people, but my passion has evolved on a greater scale. I want to travel, to help communities develop self-sustainable businesses. I want to fight for social justice alongside these communities that have been affected through exploitation, selfishness and greed.

Some students reflected on their evolving understanding of race and diversity. Danny titled one of his blogs – in all caps – *IDENTIFYING AND ACKNOWLEDGING WHITE PRIVILEGE IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT*, and wrote of the difficulties coming to terms with this, 'I am starting to realise that this experience will forever impact my future practice. Identifying the privileges I have as a white male has been particularly challenging'. Shirley was among those who talked more generally about her increased awareness of the complexity of diversity, 'I have been studying diversity for 4 years now. I thought I had thorough understanding of it. Now I know I wasn't even close'.

□ Improved social work skills and competencies

Social work education in the US is guided by nine competencies developed and promoted by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE 2015). With competency-based education, the language of the competencies shows up on field work evaluations, in course syllabi and in class instruction so that the social work students are very conscious of how their learning is organised. Some social work students reflected specifically on this and often linked this with

global awareness and new understandings of privilege. For example, Allison wrote:

All nine social work competencies were practised while in Malawi... I learned the utmost importance of cultural competency and sensitivity to different belief systems, as well as beginning to understand where I stand as a white American woman with privilege and opportunity.

Lydia shared similar thoughts:

As a student of social work, the service learning trip to Malawi has been an invaluable experience for my professional development. This trip has allowed me to fine tune my skills and to further practice social work ethics and competencies. Going to Malawi has given me personal insight to the struggles that are faced due to extreme poverty in a global perspective.

Others did not specifically mention social work competencies but related to competency areas such as engaging individuals, families and groups in practice, as in what Chloe wrote:

This life changing experience will definitely shape my professional development and how I interact and engage with my future clients. The quote 'meet clients where they're at' definitely resonates with me now.

■ Discussion

The Malawi IASL programme offered the US university students immersion into some aspects of Malawian village life and exposure to a range of opportunities and challenges faced by the Malawian people. As reflected in the blogs, and confirmed through faculty observations, the students developed strong positive working relationships with the MCM staff and community partners, which is crucial for ethical service (Busher 2013). Students grew to respect the people in the communities and consistently acknowledged the reciprocal nature of the experience, expressing that they were receiving as much as they were giving. Although the scope of this chapter did not allow for illustration of the many examples of this, the students were guided in their learning by conversations with their drivers and

translators, the social worker and teachers at MCM, staff at the lodge where they stayed and the people in the communities, as much as they were by faculty leadership. Congruent with other findings (Berg, Paige & Lou 2012; Busher 2013; Perry et al. 2016), the students clearly learnt a good deal and left believing that they had been changed by the experience, confident that these changes will make them better professionals in social work and other human service fields.

The first two thematic groups that emerged revolved around students learning outside their comfort zone and confronting, struggling with and ultimately moving beyond bias, which is consistent with what others have noted (Isaacson 2014). The students began the trip with notions of a romantic, magical Africa and quickly constructed Malawian people as resilient, joyful and generous. To an extent, romanticism is predictable as students who choose to invest time and money in an experience like this are likely to be those who are predisposed to think of Africa as a wonderful, even magical, place. Perhaps emphasising the unique aspects of their adventure, even to the point of seeing things as exotic, helped to validate the worth of their investment. It is possible that this idealisation of Africa is nothing more than travellers to Paris viewing it as a wildly romantic city or imagining Manhattan as pulsating with vibrancy.

In the US context, however, it is important to note that stereotypes of people of African ancestry are both negative and positive, yet equally dehumanising. Understanding the range of possibilities regarding the students' characterisations of the Malawian people was important in facilitating reflection processes that helped students move beyond stereotypes.

The notion of the heroic African is part of American mythology and stands as an alternate stereotype to more negative portrayals. Personified in Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and reified today in notions of 'the strong black woman' (Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2017), African people are depicted as stoic, brave and long-suffering. The students' insights into the strengths

and resilience of the Malawian people were important and their observations of generosity and optimism were true reflections of the people they met. Their characterisation, however, may have reflected an unconscious bias that holds African people as different, albeit better, than themselves, still hindering acceptance of African people as equals.

Because the students were unable to imagine themselves as able to survive the hardships they saw, it is also possible that seeing the people as equals, with fears and vulnerabilities similar to their own, may have been too painful – so they made the people heroic. The students' limited exposure to people in the US, or other places in the world, who experience trauma and difficulties yet also find resilience and happiness in the context of their struggles may also be a factor. For social work students who were in field work internships, their exposure to adversity would be contextualised in the clients' requests for help and the social agency's mandate for services. In Malawi, however, the students were invited into the families' community culture; there were no clients or recipients of services, only partners in learning and development. Thus, the students were seeing for the first time the sort of strength, joy and spirit of humanity that is universal, but which they ascribed as unique and admirable in the Malawian people.

Whatever the underlying factors, most students moved away from these idealised notions as they developed relationships with children and adults and formed partnerships with community members in their work. Although this was the first time most of the students had been in multiple social and professional situations where everyone else was of African descent, this received few direct comments. The black or African American students were the exception, and they clearly loved the experience and spoke of feeling at home. A few white students directly focused on race as an element of their learning. Most students, however, did not mention race directly but commented frequently on a sense of commonality (e.g. 'people are people')

and mutual caring and friendships they enjoyed with the people they met and with whom they worked. While these relationships challenged stereotypes, it is important to note that this did not directly address issues of the students' positionality in the context of privilege and power.

The third and fourth thematic areas involved understanding American privilege and the students' beliefs that they would be different professionals now, echoing IASL literature (Busher 2013; Crabtree 2013; Gaines-Hanks & Grayman 2009). These areas are closely linked, particularly for students of social work and other human service professions, as understanding the dynamics of privilege and power is fundamental to ethical professional development. Students consistently expressed the belief that they had increased awareness of diversity and a better understanding of privilege. Students also expressed a greater commitment to human rights and social justice, and a few declared commitments to pursue globally directed social justice or community development work upon graduation. Despite the students' statements of their belief in their growth in these areas, however, evidence from the blogs was complicated.

All students struggled with how to understand the profound financial poverty, poor living conditions, food insecurity and the absence of state-sponsored resources they saw. As many of the students were struggling financially in the US, including some who relied on government subsidies for food, their new insights were powerful and painful. Seeing evidence of the historical consequences of colonisation, exploitation and structural privilege and oppression at play in Malawi, where signs of injustice were blatant, was disruptive and changed how the students viewed the world and their place in it. In the blogs, however, there were rarely mentions of historical or structural barriers or power imbalances that create inequity.

Students were exposed to complex diversity, highlighting difference and illustrating multiple intersections of privilege, power, marginalisation and oppression, but this was seldom

mentioned in blogs. No student wrote about the racialised wealth distribution in Malawi, although there were clear economic disparities between indigenous African people and those with Indian or European heritage. Only one discussed differences in gender roles and norms, and none discussed the oppression of women. None wrote about the illegality of homosexuality or oppression of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and Others (LGBTQ+). Only one student commented on learning more about Islam, although one of the villages served by MCM is predominantly Muslim. Only one mentioned meeting the *mafumuwa*. There were, however, many issues that came up in group reflections and individual discussions between students and faculty that did not make their way into the blogs, including these topics.

As students' conversations demonstrated awareness of these concerns, it is possible that they chose not to write about them because they did not want to appear critical of their host country in a blog format that could become public. In their final assignment upon returning home, however, students were given latitude in choosing their thesis focus and many opted to engage in a politically oriented or social justice themed paper. In these, some students considered the role of the US in the international stage and most reflected on their individual responsibility. It is likely that students were too emotionally drained by their service learning experiences, and perhaps lacked enough knowledge to explore these issues in-depth while in Malawi.

There are limitations in using blogs submitted for a grade and which were written for public posting to understand students' full range of learning and development. There was undoubtedly a great deal of self-censorship that occurred as students crafted their essays. It is also probable that some of the learning that was poignant during the trip will fade over time as students return to their lives back in the US. It is not possible to predict long-term change, nor is it possible from this information to determine the ways in which their IASL experiences will truly influence their professional development. Despite the limitations, the students

understood that cultural humility and global citizenship were important values to the faculty leaders of the programme, so it is likely that the students presented their learning and development in these areas to their best ability. Thus, the question remains: Do these themes show growth towards cultural humility and global citizenship?

■ Cultural humility and global citizenship

We defined *cultural humility* as a precursor to global citizenship that embodies, (1) an openness to and respect for other cultures, (2) capacity for self-reflection and self-critique, including appreciation of one's positionality in the context of power, privilege and oppression, and (3) action to correct power imbalances (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015; Foronda et al. 2016; Isaacson 2014). The students' blogs clearly demonstrated that most engaged in meaningful self-reflection and developed critiques of themselves and American culture more broadly. Most were able to move beyond stereotypes and demonstrated an eagerness to learn about the people and communities with which they connected. They readily accepted leadership from MCM staff and valued the wisdom of other local people.

The students saw the ABCD projects as self-run and sustainable and many noted that as very important to them. While this understanding does not translate directly into action to correct power imbalances, it does give some indications that the students understood sustainability and community-ownership as important for community power, as noted by Donaldson and Daughtery (2011). In their blogs, students wrote about a greater understanding of people's inherent strengths in the context of struggle and believed that their future professional practice would be influenced by this understanding. Faith in people's ability to work towards change they identify as important is fundamental for social justice work, and the students' experience appears to have taught them important lessons in this area.

We defined global citizenship as integrating cultural humility with a sense of social responsibility that is reflected in social justice action and other forms of civic engagement conducted with an appreciation of global concerns and impact (Perry et al. 2016; Tarrant et al. 2014). The students' reflections on American wealth and privilege represent one important step towards social responsibility. While in Malawi, some students made a habit of reading local newspapers, and some watched English language television news from Al-Jazeera, which offers a global perspective not readily accessed in the US. Nonetheless, students' written reflections on American privilege primarily focused on disparities in material comforts and food security. However, although their blogs did not address local or international political issues, these issues did come up in conversation and several students engaged with these ideas in their final course assignment. The choice to engage in these matters after the trip may be an indication that some students were taking initial steps in considering their role as global citizens.

We conclude that many of the students did take important steps in progress towards cultural humility and some demonstrated movement in the direction of global citizenship, but with an important caveat. The students' revelations that 'people are people' are pivotal, as this simultaneously validates a universal truth and harkens back to colour-blind ideology. While the students' often painful reflections on American material privilege may be indications of movement towards cultural humility, they are fragile beginnings in a lifelong process (Foronda et al. 2016). It is not clear that the students understood the nature of colonialism and imperialism as expressed in post-colonial global relations or fully appreciated their positionality within the socio-political structure, factors necessary for global citizenship (Andreotti 2010). Thus, the students' clarity about their accountability for taking action to oppose and correct abuses of power (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015) is unclear.

■ Recommendations

Education abroad programmes can be transformative but require an adequate pedagogical framework (Perry et al. 2016). We recommend that IASL programmes pay particular attention to education on global economic and political power. Education that includes critiques on how the US and Europe use their power, how this can impact the autonomy of other countries and ways in which economic and socio-political practices can maintain - or disrupt - exploitative power structures, is crucial (Andreotti 2010). Prior to the trip, students are likely to be very excited and have no way yet to imagine the experience, so they may have difficulty fully understanding the socio-political issues. Linking global issues to the students' country of service and locating specific examples while they are in the country providing service is important to help students integrate classroom learning with the place and the people (Tarrant et al. 2014).

To promote global citizenship that includes domestic civic engagement, it is critically important to help students make connections between what they saw in their country of service and how similar dynamics are mirrored at home. Teaching anti-oppressive approaches so that students learn effective strategies as alternatives to oppressive practices is fundamental (Charles et al. 2014). Classroom learning needs to be transformed into action, and IASL can provide opportunities to practice new skills. To translate learning from abroad to home, assignments that ask students to apply their learning to a domestic social justice issue can provide ways to look at familiar problems through a new lens and promote social justice action at home.

■ Conclusion

While most literature on international service learning focuses on pre-trip preparation and ethical considerations during the service, our findings indicate that attention to student

development post-trip may be necessary to anchor cultural humility and deepen commitments to global citizenship. Moral and spiritual dimensions of learning are important for cultural humility and are tied to the unique experience of the students' IASL programme (Bamber & Pike 2013). Expanding IASL programmes to maintain the learning community built during the trip, continuing community partner relationships and orienting new student travellers can provide ways to support student growth both before and after the trip. IASL alumni can engage in a range of activities designed to support community-initiated projects, such as fundraising for a community-run project. As new students are recruited into the IASL programme, former travellers can help orient them to provide continuity to the service provided. Through this, we can hope to capitalise on the IASL experience to foster the development of new generations of professionals who embody cultural humility and engage in global citizenship.

■ Summary: Chapter 8

This chapter explored student learning and development during an IASL programme that brought students from a university in the US to Malawi to work with an NGO and the communities it serves. The value of cultural humility, a concept that moves beyond simply responding to cultural differences and draws attention to inequities and power imbalances, was embedded within the programme along with the responsibilities of global citizenship. Previous research has attempted to understand the pathways to developing the knowledge and personal transformation necessary for social workers to fully embody these values as part of their professional identity and approaches to work, but gaps in understanding exist. Although students are often motivated by social justice ideals, they may have limited exposure to critical reflection about social justice issues and little knowledge of how equity ideals can be put into action. In this programme, student service was informed by ABCD and included

working closely with people in the communities to support their self-run projects. Critical reflection on the process was crucial for student learning. The programme worked to help students develop knowledge that enabled them to intervene and reflect on local development and critique the role of the US and Europe in African affairs and development. Students engaged in self-reflection to understand their positions in the context of historical and structural privilege and oppression and clarify their responsibilities for social action. Students' written reflections on their privilege in the context of deepening appreciation of culture, community and the relationships developed were explored to determine if movement along the path to cultural humility and global citizenship had begun.

This side ... that side? Social work transcending national borders through international exchange programme

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■ Introduction

International academic cooperation between universities requires that each institution have knowledge of the cultural and social background of the counterpart in addition to their collaboration on disciplinary knowledge. To work towards this goal, international exchange activities between UNIVEN in South Africa and Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst (HAWK) in Germany collaborated on an international partnership. The international partnership between the two universities was established to achieve results on two levels: Firstly, on the professional level wherein students, lecturers and scientists engage in subject-specific exchanges. Secondly, on the personal level of individual experience where interaction between participants is of considerable importance and cultural sensitivity and intercultural communicative competencies are acquired and expanded. Unfortunately, the importance of preparing culturally sensitive and linguistically adept participants for international partnerships is often underestimated. Foreign language skills are essential and must be developed through professional offerings and ought to be consistently revised for the purpose of relevance and consistency of the collaboration programme needs. Their emphasis lies on the important role in the partnership as it provides formats, course offerings and resources at UNIVEN as part of its institutional partnership with the HAWK, and its potential benefits for UNIVEN students cannot be underestimated.

This is an aspect that UNIVEN has to consider in the preparation of HAWK students despite resources and budgetary constraints. Finally, future prospects will be discussed regarding preparatory formats and the transferability of these offerings from student groups to individual instructors and other academic personnel.

The chapter's main emphasis is on the collaboration between the two partners from European and African cultural backgrounds. Being aware that there are wide academic discourses about the question of what 'culture' is, in this context the term culture will be used as described by Matsumoto (1996:16), 'the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next'. In the actual setting of international academic exchange issues, it is easy to observe that bilateral influences and interactions of all partners from different cultures are happening. As Gray, Coates and Hetherington (2008) assert, culture is significant in social work intervention with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Scientists, academic staff and students who are part of international exchange activities are well advised to get broadly prepared in advance of any international contact with partners from different cultural backgrounds. Basic rules of interpersonal interactions of the partner must be known, not only to pay tribute to the counterpart by knowing about and respecting the other culture but also for better verbal and non-verbal communication. Even when there is a common disciplinary framework, international cooperation also needs harmonious personal contacts among partners to be sustainable and successful, and knowledge of cultural background is essential.

However, the importance of cultural sensitivity, intercultural communicative competencies and language capacities are often underestimated. In other disciplines, for instance in social sciences, knowledge about culture and social structures of the counterpart is crucial as social sciences are always linked to culture.

Scientists are well advised to get broadly culturally prepared ahead of international interactions; preparatory trainings should focus on the following aspects:

- a professional level, respecting the particular discipline
- a level of personal and individual competencies for all scientists, irrespective of disciplinary affiliation
- adequate and respectful contact between partners
- communication skills with language competencies on both sides.

■ Theoretical framework

Cultural competence is espoused as a theoretical framework of this study. This framework was applied for the academic student exchange in social work to understand how culturally diverse populations from Germany and South Africa experience their uniqueness and deal with their differences and similarities within their larger social context (Gilbert, Goode & Dunne 2007; Link & Ramanathan 2011). For the stated reasons, a cultural competence framework was found suitable for the preparation of student groups in international exchange programmes as it permitted a methodology of intercultural trainings (Kumbruck & Derboven 2016). In this regard, Kumbruck and Derboven (2016) affirm that intercultural training could be applied as the starting point for developing understanding of the other culture and in order to prevent problems that may be encountered. We concur with the explanations drawn from Link and Ramanathan (2011) that culture is a universal phenomenon reflecting diversity, norms of behaviour and awareness of global interdependence. Conferring with Gilbert et al. (2007), the concept of culture implies the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes but is not limited to thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. Thus, the preparation of the student social workers involve aspects such as 'self-awareness, cultural humility, and the commitment to understanding and embracing

culture as central to effective social work practice' (National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (2015:4). The whole idea of UNIVEN and HAWK academic exchange is to assist the social work students to be sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity. This will in the end strive to end 'discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice' for the populations (vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty) serviced by the social workers (NASW 2015:1). In this regard, the social work coordinators from both the institutions (HAWK and UNIVEN) applied culture-specific information trainings and intercultural case studies for both the German and South African contexts as well as applicable and relevant discourse analysis in their preparation programme. Furthermore, an example of such case studies could involve practical-orientated simulation and games relevant to multicultural backgrounds (Erlil & Gymnich 2011).

■ Social work in the context of society and culture

In both the German and South African contexts, the main frame of reference for social work as a scientific discipline is the administrative nation state determining within legislative boundaries the operational ranges for social work. Social work research is defined by national government, which sets boundaries as to what social workers in practice and research can do. Nevertheless, global developments and transformations also influence social work at personal and national level, which at the same time is capable of interacting with and constructing global streams of social development (Wagner & Lutz 2009). For this reason, social work is always seen in the context of a society and its development over time, as well as within the cultural background(s) of the society. As history includes different interpretations of culture, particularly in multicultural societies like South Africa, the development of the social work profession should be embedded in the context of culture (Smith 2014).

'Helping' in Western societies has been professionalised and specialised by continuously creating theories that inform a system of professionalised social services, carried out and supported by powerful economic social service industries. The question of whether the Western approach should be transferred to other countries, societies and cultures is widely discussed. In Africa, and in South Africa in particular, decolonisation and indigenisation has become an important discourse across all disciplines. The social work profession has realised the need and importance to partake and engage in such debates. The need to transform social work knowledge bases in both academia and practice to address local challenges has been strongly echoed. Granted, there is a wide agreement of the impossibility and undesirability of transferring Western solutions to African social contexts. In student exchange programmes, it can be constantly observed that many participants who are actually very aware of the non-transferability focus on exactly that.

The origins and roots of modern social work are found in ways of helping within neighbourly or kinsman-like relations in times of need. What is meant by 'help', 'neighbour', 'kinship' and even what a 'challenge' is, are all culturally anchored. In terms of modern societies, these definitions have gravely changed and differ greatly not only between nations but also and even more profoundly between different cultures that may exist within a nation.

While the development of social work in countries like Germany, among others, is characterised by differentiation, specialisation, scientification and secularisation (Rehklau & Lutz 2011), African societies claim solutions for very different challenges with very different instruments. For example, in South Africa, the social work profession has begun 'embracing notions and discourses such as decolonisation, indigenisation and Africanisation in order to be in alignment with the current emerging transformative agenda in South African higher education' (Shokane & Masoga 2018:2). Moreover, the IFSW (2016) mention that:

[T]he holistic focus of social work is universal, but the priorities of social work practice will vary from one country to the next, and from

time to time depending on historical, cultural, political and socio-economic conditions. (pp. 1–3)

Furthermore, even the holistic focus, which should be universal, definitely varies in direct comparison between German and South African cultures. Hence, international collaboration in social work requires a profound understanding and awareness of how to connect with people from different backgrounds. Recognising that people are working from different foundations and that their ways of being may not be easily transferable to the other is important, but it is also important to know that within the dynamic culture.

Therefore, some methodological and systematic comparison of social work practice is required and was first operationally implemented in the short-term international student exchanges according to Friesenhahn et al. (2013). Thus, these comparisons were implemented in the partnership between the Departments of Social Work of both UNIVEN and HAWK.

■ International exchange in social work discipline

In 2012, HAWK University visited UNIVEN as part of an educational tour of South Africa. The purpose of the tour was to learn the different cultures in South Africa and to understand how social work institutions operate in South Africa and how it could be different from how they are run in Europe, particularly in Germany. It was during this time when the two universities engaged with the students and staff of UNIVEN and the idea of partnership came up.

Management took up the idea and the end of 2013 saw 10 students from UNIVEN going to Germany for a 10-day visit aimed at learning how social work is run in Germany. The social work academic exchange programme between HAWK and UNIVEN was recognised in 2013 and later contractually manifested in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and since then has been constantly expanding.

The focus of the educational exchange programme between the two universities is for both departments to undertake annual educational exchange visits to each university, with delegations comprised of staff and students. Comparisons of social work discipline and professional practices across national and cultural borders within different settings (teaching, excursion, practical placement) were foci of the exchange. Comparisons offer opportunities to broaden the scientists' and practitioners' minds when the comparison is scientifically based, reflective and follows a predesigned methodological structure.

The methodology for these scientific comparisons is based on the work by Friesenhahn et al. (2013). Bestowing to Friesenhahn et al. (2013) examinations within comparative social work are to be worked out on three levels, namely, micro, meso and macro, followed by a fixed process structure of comparison in five steps. On the macro level, the structure of the respective societies and welfare regimes are analysed and described. On the meso level, data about social services or educational systems are collected and incorporated into the analysis and description. The micro level is about everyday life of the clients, the needs and coping strategies of service users and daily challenges for the professional social worker. Once data are collected and documented for each of these levels, the process of comparison follows five steps, as noted below:

1. *Detailed determination of the object to be compared.* What is the guiding question?
2. *Selection of categories regarding the guiding question.* How is the object structured? Important issues?
3. *Description.* Collection of country-specific data.
4. *Juxtaposition.* Confrontation and systematisation of data, commonalities and differences.
5. *Comparison.* Interpretation of the findings with regard to the object, validation of the results with regard to the guiding question.

In this subject-specific context of comparing social work, it is obvious that knowledge about the cultural and social background

of the persons, clients and groups to be compared are essential for a holistic analysis.

■ Preparation of students

In planning and preparing, the academic Departments of Social Work at HAWK and UNIVEN appoint a designated support office or officer to support the exchange students. The designated officer designs a programme for exchange students visiting their university to cover information on all relevant aspects of the students exchange programme as well as any other relevant matters including local norms, cultural matters, local amenities and businesses. In addition, all BSW students from second to fourth year level are invited to apply for an opportunity to participate in the annual international academic exchange programme between UNIVEN in South Africa and HAWK in Germany. The following selection criteria are applied:

- *Motivation.* Why the student is suitable to participate in the international educational student exchange programme.
- *Qualifications.* In reviewing these letters, categories of qualification are filtered and students who match most of the qualifications are accepted into the group.
- *Performance.* 65% and above in social work modules.
- *Leadership and membership.* In university and student activities will be an added advantage.

After a successful selection of the students to participate in the academic exchange programme, the students are assisted in applying for travel documents such as passports, visa applications and/or permits necessary for the engagement. The selected students are a constant group on both sides for the duration of the bilateral exchange.

Parallel discussion on the explicit curricular preparation of exchange programme takes place between the two universities. As explained before, cultural knowledge and sensitivity in addition to linguistic capacities are crucial for social work

academics who take part in international exchange projects. The short-term German–South African exchange programme is only one of a couple of international exchange programmes that are offered to the BSW students of the Social Work Departments at HAWK and UNIVEN.

The students are offered the opportunity to learn about professional social work of another country and culture in case work and community work. While visiting social institutions in and around Holzminden, Germany, and Thohoyandou, South Africa, the students (the same group of students who tour both areas) are invited to get into an intercultural dialogue and by that having the chance to sharpen and form their own view of their professional identity. Furthermore, the students have the chance to develop a critical view towards their own profession on the basis of observing cultural differences, and socio-political and social changes within the respective society.

The exchange programme is aimed at learning how social work is conducted in the two countries and to make students aware of the similarities and differences in how the various programmes are run. In addition, it also aims at understanding different cultures through visiting various places of historical significance to the nations. This is supported by a recent study by Shokane and Masoga (2018:15) that urged ‘social work educators to be socio-culturally sensitive and to demonstrate the relevant knowledge and skills for effective education’. So, first of all, every partner has to be open minded, curious, tolerant, patient and respectful to learn and accept the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours of the other and experience that as different and diverse but never judging the culture of another person.

□ University of Venda

The student exchange programme has become an exciting project to work on, especially when realising the excitement it

carries among the social work student population at UNIVEN. The preparation of the students commences at the beginning of the South African academic year in January. However, it is essential that students should have registered for that particular year. Although students become part of the meticulous planning, UNIVEN is yet to emphasise on establishing a programme that adequately prepares students to tackle issues such as language, culture and diversity which will assist students in coping better with adjustment challenges. As part of preparing students for Germany, a workshop on German culture and language is presented to students who are selected to visit Germany by the South African Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). The training is provided to both students and academic staff selected to participate in the academic exchange. The programme entails a basic Introduction to the German language and some brief introduction to German culture as well as intercultural hot spots in Germany. In addition, in the workshop, previous students who have been on the exchange programme are requested to come and share their stories and experiences. This immensely helps in equipping students with coping and survival skills as they prepare themselves to venture into the unknown yet exciting journey.

It is imperative though to mention that the social work curriculum at UNIVEN does have components across years of study that prepare students to general life issues such as modules on self and social awareness which deal with the personality of the student and understanding that of others, and understanding culture, ethnicity and diversity.

□ Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst

In HAWK, students start with the preparation for the exchange programme in October, at the beginning of the German academic year, with curricular integrated courses in the module 'Education

and Socialization' and a workload of 180 h and six credits within the first semester (1/2 year) until February of the following year.

Teaching and learning contents include:

- *Geography*. South Africa as the most southern country of the continent between two oceans and along an old important trading route; local authorities like provinces, municipalities, urban metropolitan centres and rural areas.
- *History*. Pre-colonisation era with migration of African indigenous people, colonisation era with English people and Boers and different wars, post-colonisation era, apartheid and post-apartheid era since 1994.
- *Politics*. Political system, programme of the main political parties, history of the African National Congress, election system.
- *Business*. Export nation for fruit and other agriculture products, mining industry, tourism.
- *Society*. Studying statistics like community report, youth context report; social inequality, poverty, unemployment, migration and xenophobia; educational system.
- *Culture*. Different ethnic groups and many different languages, spirituality, role perception in family systems, gender, generations.

Included in the classes are exercises of language training where an English teacher of the Language Centre of HAWK supports students by reading dialogues in English language. Most of the students did not speak English after completing secondary school and therefore many of them were not familiar with speaking the language. Beyond that, a very specific opportunity for the students is an intercultural training in-block for 1.5 days, taught by an intercultural trainer (ethnologist) from the Free University of Berlin. The trainer lived in Limpopo Province together with an indigenous divine healer. The intercultural training gives a very authentic insight into the way of living in rural South Africa. Students also role-play to prepare for unforeseen situations that might happen between students from both sides.

After the first class is completed in February, the second semester term starts in April and within the second class (360 h workload, 12 credits) the organisation and logistical preparation of the actual exchange is the focus of teaching. At the end of the class, a comprehensive documentation of results is required, and reports have to be written by the students where they reflect on intercultural experiences and project how this will impact their professional development as a social worker.

■ Funding of the international exchange programme

Despite limited resources and budgetary constraints, UNIVEN continues to support the Department of Social Work as a confirmation of the significance of the exchange programme. The DAAD in Germany mainly funded the particular international exchange, while at UNIVEN the budget to fund the exchange programme is sought from UNIVEN Academic Liaison. This is done to enable the Department of Social Work to provide the students with accommodation, daily meals and local transportation during the excursion. DAAD mainly funds and provides scholarship opportunities to students who want to study and conduct research in Germany.

The DAAD is the largest scholarship organisation in the world supporting the international exchange of students and scholars. Its programmes have the strategic goal of supporting outstanding young students and academics in South Africa as well as encouraging them to travel to Germany for study and research visits. The DAAD aims to qualify young researchers and professionals with a spirit of tolerance and acceptance at the very best institutions around the world while promoting the internationality and appeal of Germany's institutions of higher education (DAAD 2017). In addition, they fund in-country programmes in South Africa and in-region programmes in Africa.

■ Going forward

■ German language teaching at University of Venda

Language learning and the development of intercultural competence in an international environment, with special attention to the German–South African context, are crucial elements in preparing academic students and staff for projects within the exchange programme. Prah (2017) affirms that language is a central feature of social interaction. Dominelli (2004) further put an emphasis of language in social work as a tool used for practice. The most important of these aspects is competence in the foreign language.

No matter which scientific field the focus is, communication is indispensable, and the time needed to learn a foreign language is of fundamental consideration. There are crucial differences between a learner with experience in foreign (and ‘neighbour’) languages and a first-time foreign language learner. The experienced language learner has a clear advantage in achieving his or her aim easier and faster, but language learning can also depend on many other factors. One of the most decisive of these is time, and an early start is essential.

□ The Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Language Centre

In the last 20 years, most European universities have built language centres which have become central institutions (or part of one) of a university. At HAWK, the language centre is part of a larger central institution and offers language courses (Arabic, Chinese, English, German as foreign language, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, as well as examinations for students going abroad and English for faculty members.

A large number of language courses are developed in order to support individual departments and their specific needs. Learning a

foreign language means learning about another culture. The interaction between speakers of two different mother tongues is always intercultural communication. A fundamental part of the language courses is the analysis of this type of cultural interaction. In addition to the English courses that are offered at HAWK as part of the preparations, a need exists for HAWK students being taught or exposed to indigenous languages of South Africa, namely, Afrikaans, Ndebele (*isiNdebele*), Sepedi, Sotho (*Sesotho*), Swati (*siSwati*), Tsonga (*Xitsonga*), Tswana (*Setswana*), Venda (*Tshivenda*), Xhosa (*isiXhosa*) and Zulu (*isiZulu*) which are closely related to ethnic groups and cultures (Shokane & Masoga 2018:14). The official languages spoken in South Africa, including English, are 11 in total.

□ German as a foreign language at the Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Language Centre

A fundamental part of the work of the HAWK Language Centre is teaching German as a foreign language. Recently, this field has become increasingly important as refugees have become a new and large group of learners. Many of these are interested in studying at HAWK or other universities and have relocated to the Lower Saxony area. Further courses for foreign students (Erasmus, long-term students and so on) are also offered, as well as language-tandem (at the moment German-Spanish and German-English with language counselling in all the three languages). Language learning in tandem is a very successful way for improving the target language, the intercultural competence and developing learner autonomy (Brammerts & Kleppin 2010).

■ Ideas for the development of learning German as foreign language at University of Venda

In order to develop the South African-German exchange, language training for UNIVEN students who are coming to

Germany for a semester abroad has to be established, including cultural aspects specifically targeting intercultural competence. The requested language level for being able to study abroad is normally at least the B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (this requirement applies for students who require to study for a longer period in Germany). This requires intensive learning of German.

As South African students are already fully conversant in English and many of them also have basic knowledge of Afrikaans, it provides a good foundation for learning German. This 'pre-knowledge' provides them with familiarity to other related languages.

Possible classes should be established:

- *Basic German*. Courses from the beginner level to A2 with rapid progression because of English and Afrikaans 'pre-knowledge'.
- *A2 to B1 Level*. Which also includes the reading of basic texts about social work, intensive improvement of intercultural competence and gaining an increased familiarity with Germany, Lower Saxony and specifically the HAWK.
- *B1 to B2 Level*. Open to discussion as to whether the language course should be taught in Germany or at UNIVEN. It may be possible to attend the seminars without having attained this level through a combination of courses in German and support.

Resources and ideas for establishing German as foreign language courses at UNIVEN are being explored. One notes that there is no perfect recipe for establishing a foreign language programme. It is important to consider a country's teaching and learning traditions without excluding changes. In order to establish a long-lasting programme in German as a foreign language, it is necessary to have a resident German teacher or programme coordinator at UNIVEN.

Furthermore, it is important to develop a programme that considers many factors: time available, previous experience in foreign and 'neighbour' languages, and learning objectives.

Further possibilities could include students from Germany participating as interns in language instruction at UNIVEN, online courses in German and e-learning material organised by the HAWK Language Centre, establishing an online language and cultural tandem programme between students from Germany and South Africa, and virtual language counselling.

■ Further steps for collaboration

There is a wide range of activities that are aspired to as next steps for improving the academic collaboration. Besides designing German language offers at UNIVEN, English classes and courses at HAWK, Fak [m] in cooperation with the University of Applied Science in Höxter (HS OWL) will be offered soon. Once English classes are established, students from UNIVEN will be introduced to a specially designed studying programme with modules (6 months duration) on German language, culture and subject-specific courses of social work. Prospective students will be expected to register for some Bachelor of Social Work modules offered in the German language but be allowed to write assessments in the English language.

Furthermore, after students from HAWK and UNIVEN completed their fieldwork placements and their experiences are evaluated, preparations for an institutional exchange fieldwork placement should be made, including finding prudent or appropriate placements for prospective students.

As a way forward, German students, who were part of the exchange group, will be working on their BSW thesis about designing a joint Basic Protocol Introductory Manual to be used by exchange students and staff from HAWK on issues such as specific cultural protocols, language codes and expressions, hints and advice. Both universities are to be involved in the development of such a manual.

Staff exchange for teaching and research is an important issue to be initialised as well. Extended educational residency and

research collaboration with staff and students is planned for the future. Possibilities of exposing lecturers from UNIVEN and HAWK to fieldwork assessment processes must be explored. The present focus of the partnership, thus, has been merely based on learning and sharing of experiences. Collaborative research work is to be undertaken by both UNIVEN and HAWK, where possible areas to be looked at include the Innovation Center Holzminden-Höxter.

■ Conclusion

Academics of whatever discipline and academic status are well advised to prepare for international activities, not only subject-specific activities, by gaining linguistic and cultural skills. Mogorosi and Thabede (2018:13) uphold that 'Even though social workers have been trained to respect all forms of diversity, they sometimes fail to integrate the knowledge of cultural differences when dealing with clients'. The importance of knowing about cultural backgrounds of international partners is widely underestimated and often a reason why collaborations do not achieve the expected intentions. Cultural sensitivity can be taught and learnt, just as linguistic skills can be specifically acquired respective to the country and culture of the partners.

■ Summary: Chapter 9

The Higher Education Quality Council expects universities to offer qualifications that are internationally comparable to that offered in other parts of the world in order to assist with determining best practices or standards. The collaboration between UNIVEN in South Africa and the HAWK in Germany has been established to favourably respond and to further explore such qualification practices in the international arena. The rationale for this collaboration is to give social work a global face by transcending national borders. In social work all over the world, there are commonalities in theory and practice across

widely divergent contexts. The two institutions employ vigorous process, determined by both universities to academically assess students and select staff members with appropriate specialisms for the agreed-upon theme of that particular year in preparation for international exchange activities. In addition, all parties need to get prepared in professional, cultural and linguistic contexts. DAAD mainly funds the particular international exchange on which this chapter focused. This chapter focused on an overview of the preparatory activities related to an already established exchange programme involving students and academic staff. In addition, subject-specific current topics in the field of social work, culture-specific training on social and political framework conditions, and language exercises offered before the exchange were presented.

Towards collaborative social work supervision: Your voice or our voices?

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■ Introduction

This chapter focuses on collaborative supervision towards the improvement of quality of social work services in the South African context. Supervision is regarded as a tool by which social work services are facilitated for effectiveness and efficiency. However, there are some social workers who do not see the importance and function of this tool based on how it is executed and its

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approach. Engelbrecht, cited in Engelbrecht (2014:125), avows that 'many commentators on practices in social work regard supervision and its practice as outdated, unnecessary and insult to the profession'. On the contrary, Engelbrecht (2014) points out that:

Research conducted by Jacques and Kasule in 2007 in Gaborone regarding issues affecting performance by social workers, pointed inadequate supervisory and technical competence of many supervisors as one of the reasons towards social workers ineffectiveness performance. (n.p.)

The inadequate supervisory and technical competence, among others, refers to specialised skills and knowledge needed to conduct the supervision process as pointed by Jaques and Kasule, in Engelbrecht (2014). However, the research conducted by Engelbrecht (2010) reveals that 'the way supervision and its functions are usually depicted by the supervisor tends to consider the social worker to be in deficit'. This label, however, makes the social worker passive in supervision processes or developing a powerful resistance to supervision (Cohen 1999:462). Hence the question: Your voice or our voices? The chapter begins by explaining the concept 'supervision'. The reasons why supervision is necessary are also outlined in this chapter. Collaborative supervision with reference to major concepts and principles of the strength perspectives are highlighted. Various roles of the supervisor in collaborative supervision are outlined as they conclude the chapter.

■ The myth about supervision

Supervision is a term that is frequently used in social work practice; however, many practitioners misinterpret its meaning and function based on its application. The author, based on her experience as supervisor in social work practice, observed and heard various comments regarding supervision from social service practitioners. The comments uttered made some of the social workers develop a negative attitude and less interest

towards the supervision process. The comments are outlined as follows:

- *Supervision is about authority and power.* This refers to the fact that the supervisor always uses his or her powers negatively in supervision. Therefore, social workers always fear the supervision process. A case in point is when the supervisor is seen as a non-questionable, decision maker to whom the social worker should be subservient.
- *Supervision is merely about policing and trying to find fault in the social worker.* The supervisor, instead of guiding and supporting the social worker, serves as a police officer always looking for faults. The supervisor goes to an extent of spying on the social worker if he or she is out on field work assignments such as visiting clients in their homes.
- *Supervision is merely trying to prove a point as to who is in power.* The supervisor always reminds the social worker as to who is the boss. The social worker is always reminded of the fact that if he or she does not adhere to the demands of work, he or she will be negatively affected.
- *Supervision is merely criticising the work of the social worker in a hostile manner.* The reality is that effective and productive supervision is about empowerment, partnership and support.

■ What is supervision?

Supervision is defined in a number of ways by various authors. The definition, however, depends on the goals for supervision and the organisation where the services are rendered. In the context of this chapter, supervision is defined within the context of social work more relevantly to social development approach. The *New Dictionary for Social Work* (1995:64) defines supervision as ‘a process whereby a supervisor performs educative, supportive and administrative functions in order to promote the efficient and professional rendering of services’. Furthermore, Kadushin and Harkness (2002:23) define supervision as ‘the process of overseeing, directing, coordinating, enhancing and evaluating the

job performance of social workers'. In this definition, supervision is seen as more of a managerial task, as most of the supervision activities are administrative in nature. The activities ensure compliance and are authoritative in nature to benefit the agency, the social worker and the service users. In addition, Botha (2002:11) defines supervision as 'a learning process that occurs within a specific reciprocal relationship between the supervisor and a social worker and during which knowledge is developed'. Based on this statement, supervision is not unilateral but a bilateral process, hence both voices are indispensable. Furthermore, Falender and Shafranske (2004:3) define supervision as 'a distinct professional activity in which education and training are aimed at developing scientifically informed practices facilitated through a collaborative interpersonal process'. Because one of the supervision reasons is to integrate theory into practice, this definition serves well here. Social work services are guided by theories that the social worker learns from the training institution; therefore, those theories need implementation. That is where supervision fits in. The Department of Social Development (2012:10) Supervision Framework for Social Work Professions in South Africa defines supervision as 'an interactional and interminable process within the context of a positive, anti-discriminatory relationship, based on distinct theories, models and perspectives on supervision'. Thus, this definition suggests that supervision is a process that involves two or more people based on the notion that it is interactional. The interaction in this context refers to the exchange of ideas, action, etc. that collaborative supervision emphasises. The definition itself provides an environment that both parties should interact. Obviously, the definition showed that supervision should be guided by theories, models and perspectives. Engelbrecht (2014:130) clearly puts supervision as 'one of the management tasks in social service organisation, whereby theories, models and perspective underlying supervision are based on the organisational school of thought in management'. It clearly implies that when the supervisor renders supervision, sessions should be guided by

what the organisation strives to achieve and apply relevant theories, models and perspectives. One size fits all is not always the case as the needs of social workers and organisations are unique. In summing up what the supervision means, also based on definition provided by various scholars, the author concludes that supervision is a process, and not a once-off occurrence, as it follows certain processes depending on the need identified. It can be attested that it occurs between two or more people; hence, it is an interactional and reciprocal relationship. Supervision gives both the parties voices to be heard in supervision process. It is also a professional activity that involves learning; hence, it performs educative, supportive and administrative functions. It can be concluded that supervision is a tool that drives the organisation, the social worker and the client system towards the desired goals.

■ Reasons why supervision is necessary

Research conducted by Engelbrecht (2010) reveals that 'other South African supervisors perceive the main goal of supervision being to develop the social workers' competencies, to be independent and autonomous being'. This goal encourages collaborative supervision whereby the social worker is able to identify his or her competencies and capabilities in order to perform well. It is well documented by Kadushin and Harkness (2002) that supervision is 'necessary to cultivate the social worker's professional personality which will enable him or her to render most effective and efficient social work services'. On the contrary, supervision also assists the social worker to successfully integrate theory into practice (Kadushin & Harkness 2002). The social worker during undergraduate years is taught theory and the supervision should assist the social worker to link theory into practice.

Besides providing the skills and knowledge, supervision provides a caring and supportive environment to the social worker (Kadushin & Harkness 2002), hence the supportive aspect

of supervision. Social workers are exposed to high-risk situations and witness traumatic experiences. These situations could somehow overwhelm the social worker; therefore, supervision steps in to normalise the situation. The other goal that necessitated supervision is that social work services are organisationally bound; therefore, accountability to the service users and the organisation are paramount (Kadushin & Harkness 2002). In addition, Engelbrecht (2014) mentions clearly that the 'effectiveness and quality of supervision could potentially become a yardstick for measuring the performance of organisation, supervisors and social workers'. Social work services are rendered and guided by legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines; therefore, it is imperative for supervisors to train and empower the social workers with regard to the above parameters. Hence, this is another reason as to why the supervision is necessary. One could conclude that supervision serves various reasons which all benefit the social worker, agency and the service users.

■ Theoretical framework

The strength perspective was assumed as a theoretical framework for this study for better understanding of its use in supervision. Healy (2005) defines strength perspective within the social work context 'as focussing on the strengths, competencies, capacities, capabilities and resilience instead of problems or pathologies'. In addition, Poulin (2009:2) states that 'the strength perspective focuses on social worker's available resources and coping abilities and the view that social workers are viewed as capable of change'. On the contrary, Saleebey (2006:xiv) explains that the strength perspective 'is a way of viewing people and situations'. Potgieter (1998) points that in strength perspective:

[7]he focus of the helper (in this context 'supervisor') is not much on problems or what is lacking or wrong but rather on the growth of and the potential of the social worker to develop through the utilisation of the available resources. (p. 9)

In support, Hepworth and Larsen (1993:62) assert that ‘the strengths provide basis for the stimulation of realistic hope for change and gives impetus perseverance by the social worker’. Synthesising the definitions highlighted above, the author concludes that strength perspective focuses on what the social worker is capable of rather than what the social worker lacks. Strength perspective can be further viewed as identification and analysis of social worker’s strengths and capabilities. Therefore, in collaborative supervision, social workers can analyse themselves. This will make him or her aware of what he or she is good at and use it for improvement of service delivery. The more a person introspects, the more he or she is able to do a self-discovery. Among other things, the person is encouraged to acknowledge what he or she is capable of and what he or she can use as opportunities. Saleebey (2002:1) points that the strength perspective ‘assists in exploring and exploiting the individual’s strengths and abilities’.

■ The brief overview of traditional supervision

For better understanding of collaborative supervision, the author firstly describes how supervision was previously likely to take place. There are different perspectives used in applying supervision, but traditional supervision was dominant. Historically, in social work supervision processes, as Engelbrecht (2014:133) asserts, supervision ‘is controlled by the supervisor which definitely means the social worker is controlled’. In this case, the supervisor is the one who has authority and he or she participates more than the social worker. In this kind of relationship, the voice that is loud is that of the supervisor; hence, Engelbrecht (2014:133) says that the supervisor talks and the social worker listens. However, owing to little experience, some social workers do not have a say in the process, resulting in suppression of their voices. In such circumstances, the social worker succumbs to what the supervisor says or decides,

thereby inhibiting the supervisee's capabilities. This sometimes makes it difficult for social workers to showcase their abilities or develop professionally as they always implement what the supervisor decides is appropriate. This is what Engelbrecht (2014) highlights that 'in traditional supervision, the supervisor educates, and the social worker is being taught (learner) because the supervisor is an expert'. Therefore, this chapter advocates for collaborative supervision, for reasons stated above, so that the social worker becomes an active member in the supervision process.

■ Collaborative supervision

■ Major concepts that are incorporated in collaborative supervision

It is important in this chapter to highlight some of the major concepts of the strength perspective that can be incorporated in collaborative supervision process. There are seven major concepts from the strength perspective, but for the purpose of this chapter, only four are discussed as they fit well in collaborative supervision. The concepts are empowerment, dialogue and collaboration, membership and resilience.

□ Empowerment

Empowerment is defined by Zastrow (2009:213) as 'a process of helping individuals, groups and communities to increase their personal, interpersonal, socio-economic and political strength and influence towards improving their circumstances'. In view of this explanation, it can be stated that empowerment involves two or more people with the idea of transferring information for the purpose of knowledge and use. Thus, through collaborative supervision, the supervisor will not only transfer skills but discover the social worker's underlying talents and

empower him or her to use them profoundly. The author sees empowerment as a capacity-building process. Murrell and Meredith (2000:3–28) highlight four aspects of empowerment as follows:

- *Empowerment as mutual influence and as a joint shared responsibility.* Murrell and Meredith (2000:3–28) state that empowerment is mutual and there should be the sharing of opinions. This is for creating a common understanding or common ground (co-responsibility) regarding any decisions made in supervision. It is a give and take situation without judgement, and this creates a conducive environment for supervision.
- *Empowerment enables talents and capabilities and fosters accomplishment.* Saleebey (2009:15) points out ‘that people are born with capabilities or talents of which they are sometimes unaware’. The author believes that empowerment affords a social worker the opportunity to discover their talents and capabilities which later enable them to achieve the desired goals.
- *Empowerment builds an effective relationship.* Relationship is a contributing factor in supervision, because a hostile relationship makes it difficult for supervision to flow accordingly. Thus, the author finds that empowerment creates an effective environment for positive relationship. The social worker in a collaborative environment learns and grows.
- *Empowerment informs, invests in learning and liberates.* Empowerment is basically a capacity-building process as it provides information, training and builds knowledge. It should be noted that empowering a person is like investing in the savings, because what is learnt can be used or reused. Therefore, an empowered social worker is like an investment for the future. Empowerment further liberates the social worker from always being dependent on the supervisor. Empowerment thus fosters social worker independence and autonomy as Engelbrecht (2014) puts it.

□ Dialogue and collaboration

The *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English* (2009) defines dialogue as a way of communication or discussion between people or groups of people, such as government or political parties. According to Zastrow (2009:119), it is 'through communication where members argue, debate issues, arrive at goals desired and assume tasks and responsibilities'. From the definitions provided above, a dialogue is referred to as a way of communicating or a conversation between two or more people regarding a certain topic or idea with the purpose of arriving at an agreement. The main aim of a dialogue is to share information and open the way for new thoughts, views and ideas. Therefore, dialogue in supervision is essential and it is a two-way process. Dialogue makes collaborative supervision more effective as all views are put on the table for discussion. Non-verbal and verbal communications are easily identifiable through a dialogue. Some of the strengths of the social worker might not be verbally communicated but are expressed through non-verbal behaviour which can lead to certain strengths of a person. The reason why dialogue is relevant in the author's view is that openness and freedom of expression are facilitated and encouraged. Collaboration and dialogue are relational. The *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English* (2009) defines collaboration as the act of working together to produce a piece of work. According to this definition, collaboration encourages teamwork. If people work together, their voices will be heard. Poulin (2005:54) views collaboration as 'closely tied to self-determination'. In support, Poulin (2005:54) states further that self-determination is fostered by the social worker participating in decision-making processes rather than being told what to do. Collaboration makes social workers feel more honoured and respected if he or she is involved in the matters that concern him or her. Dialogue and collaboration are essential in facilitating a working and helping relationship in relation to supervision.

□ Membership

One may ask how membership fits in supervision. The *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English* (2009) refers to membership as ‘the people who belong to a certain organisation’. Membership may be in the form of affiliation or registration. It determines the position of a person in the organisation. Although the person does not need to affiliate in supervision, one has to feel accommodated in supervision session. Saleebey (2009:11) posits that ‘people need to be responsible citizens and valued as members of a specific community’. To answer the question asked above, the social worker needs to belong in the supervision process. If he or she is always uninvolved or feels that they do not fit in with the supervision, it could result in passivity or resistance to supervision. Saleebey (2009:12) observes that membership assists people because it makes them band together to make their voices heard and their needs met, as well as also assisting them to redress inequities and to reach their potentials. To ‘belong’ means that a person has a resource for bonding which can be used as a strength mechanism in supervision.

□ Resilience

Saleebey (2009:12) further explains resilience as a ‘process of continuing growth and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insights and virtues derived through meeting the demands and the challenges of one’s world’. The definition clearly explains that people are in fact often able to survive life’s traumas and are able to take the steps necessary to overcome adversity. Therefore, the supervisor should acknowledge that as much as the social worker has undergone harsh life situations, he or she can bounce back. What the supervisor should consider is understanding and knowing how and what they did to overcome adversity and the lessons learnt. Therefore, collaborative supervision embraces the resilience concept because people cannot be written off as they have a way of bouncing back. Reflecting on the concept of resilience, it is then established that ‘what assists people to bounce

back are the protective factors around them such as a supportive supervisor and a caring and nurturing relationships'. Strong support systems contribute towards building people's capacity to face life's challenges and at times to even use them as opportunities to change the world around them. Therefore, supportive and collaborative supervision serves as a vehicle for change.

■ **Through the incorporation of the strength perspective's principles**

Saleebey (2009) summaries six principles of the strength perspective which could be incorporated in collaborative supervision that will be discussed in the next section. Moreover, Saleebey (2009) concedes that the principles are tentative guides; hence, this chapter suggests using them. The existing principles are nevertheless in line with social work values and fit well in the supervision process. Furthermore, Saleebey (2009: 15–19) outlines the following principles:

- *Principle 1.* Every individual, group, family and community has strength.
- *Principle 2.* Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious and challenging, but may also be a source of opportunity.
- *Principle 3.* Assume that you do not know the upper limit of the capacity to grow and change, and take individual, group and community aspirations seriously.
- *Principle 4.* We best serve clients by collaborating with them.
- *Principle 5.* Every environment is full of resources.
- *Principle 6.* The value of caring, caretaking and context.

□ **Principle 1: Every individual, group, family and Community has strength**

Saleebey (2009) and Healy (2005) remarked that 'all people have or are born with strengths, capacities and resources in their possession'. This principle serves as a reminder to the supervisor

that every person has strengths, though they differ in types and complexity. However, those strengths need to be discovered and identified. Collaborative supervision provides a platform for discovery of these talents and strengths through empowerment. During the supervision process, a supervisor has to engage the social worker and provide some task to perform. Based on the tasks performed, the supervisor and social worker could easily identify the strengths available. This is unlike when the supervisor informs the social worker on what and how to do, as Engelbrecht (2014:133) puts it, in traditional supervision which delimits the discovery of the strengths and talents of the social worker. The ignorance or prohibition of the social worker's strengths may deleteriously impact the social worker's self-confidence and may be incapacitating. The importance of this process thus motivates the social worker and energises him or her to perform the social work services with confidence. Botha (2002:203) clearly says that, 'tension may develop if supervisees are not afforded the opportunity to apply their skills and abilities'. She further says that if they are not allowed to be creative in their thoughts and actions or if their ideas are mostly criticised without reason, that could create tension. The supervisor mostly closes this opportunity by telling the social worker what to do without first hearing the social worker's opinions or what they intend to do, as outlined by Engelbrecht (2014:133) who states that the supervisor talks and the social worker listens. Therefore, the social worker might feel not recognised, lacking knowledge or feel insignificant in the process. The conclusion might be, 'what benefit am I (social worker) gaining if I am attending supervision only to be told what to do?' It is important to understand that a positive environment enhances the identification of the social worker's strengths. Thus, Botha (2002) found that 'effective characteristics of the supervisor should show positive attitudes, skills and knowledge for supervision to be effective'.

The research conducted by Mamaleka (2013) discovered that strength perspective in supervision is essential. The most common points highlighted in the study were that the supervisors enable

social workers to bring new ideas, be creative, identify their strengths and show their talents which the strength perspective alluded to. From these findings, it is clear that social workers are engaged in supervision when the process is empowering. Zastrow (2009) remarked that, in contrast to the pathological perspective, the strength perspective is closely related to empowerment, because 'it seeks to identify, use, build and reinforce the abilities and strengths that people have and demonstrate'. Therefore, collaborative supervision capacitates the social worker, most importantly in what he or she is good at.

□ Principle 2: Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious and challenging, but may also be a source of opportunity

Zastrow (2009:213) acknowledges that 'clients who have gone through difficult times or have been victimized are dynamic and developing individuals'. Moreover, Zastrow (2009:213) further acknowledges that, 'through their traumas, people learn various skills and develop personal attributes that assist them in coping with future struggles or resilience'. Collaborative supervision should acknowledge the use of this principle in supervision process. The reason that could be advanced is that the circumstances that people went through end up being lessons to them. Some social workers take up the social work profession because they were once victims of the circumstances. Therefore, they practice social work because they desire to remedy problems that the society is facing. In her experience in teaching social work students, the author assesses the reasons why students opted to study social work. The majority of them responded that they were victims of the circumstances and some were indirectly victims based on what happened around them. In collaborative supervision, the social worker could share with the supervisor mainly on how his or her experience could assist in rendering social work services.

In some cases, people who experience certain incidents can deal with them unlike those who did not, as they have the feeling

of what it is like and may intervene with passion. This view is supported by Saleebey (2009:16) who notes that ‘people who experience problems, adversities and hardships may have emotional or physical scars, but they are nonetheless able to acquire traits and capacities that are life-affirming’. However, in some instances, the opposite may be true in the sense that they may shy away from some of the incidents or may make the situation worse. As people have different ways of coping and different means of survival, one would argue that this principle views people as being able to survive and overcome difficulties and hardships irrespective of their circumstances. Healy (2005) further indicates that:

[P]eople usually demonstrate resilience rather than pathology in the face of adverse life events because problems often do exist, but one has the strength to turn these problems into a positive measure or attribute. (p. 157)

People are often able to learn from their adverse conditions and (re)use their success in future. This principle emphasises that a person should not remain stuck in a difficult situation but should use it as a learning curve or as a way to grow and develop. Collaborative supervision assists social workers to be open and transparent in the way they assist their clients, as it allows working together. Therefore, collaborative supervision facilitates a way of dealing with many problems encountered as a stepping stone to deal with other challenges in life. This principle encourages the social worker to escape the confines of adverse circumstances and use them for the benefit of the clients.

□ Principle 3: Assume that you do not know the upper limit of the capacity to grow and change, and take individual, group and community aspirations seriously

A non-judgemental attitude must be applied when dealing with social workers, because it is not always known what their

capacities are. This is one of the key principles in social work that is supported by Zastrow (2009) that:

[/]ndividuals have the capacity for restoration and when the supervisor connects their hopes and dreams, they are apt to have greater faith in themselves and are thus enabled to try towards achieving their goals. (p. 214)

This shows that no one knows the limits of a person's strengths and, therefore, a social worker needs to always be given the benefit of the doubt by his or her supervisor. There may be hidden attributes the supervisor is unaware of; therefore, the supervisor should not undermine or underestimate the social worker's capabilities. For the stated reasons, Poulin (2005:31) points out that this makes it possible for the social worker to understand himself or herself and realise what he or she is capable of, which may lead to self-actualisation. It is therefore suggested that the supervisor should not draw conclusions regarding the social worker without getting to know him or her first. If effective and efficient work performance is to be maintained, the supervisor should realise that he or she does not know everything about the social worker. Saleebey talks of 'exploring and exploiting the person's strengths and capabilities'. Collaborative supervision is a platform to explore the person's talents and capabilities, not to delimit them.

□ Principle 4: We best serve clients by collaborating with them

The primarily role played by collaboration is to ensure that all parties are bound to take ownership, responsibility, participate actively and voice their opinions. As one major aspect in strength perspective, collaboration is essential in supervision. Engelbrecht (2014:133) points that 'both the supervisor and social worker are involved in the education and learn from each other'. Unlike in traditional supervision, the social worker in collaborative supervision becomes an active participant to ensure his or her contributions are recognised. The positive aspect of collaboration

makes the social worker alert. If the social worker knows that he or she is part of the process, he or she will come prepared for the supervision.

Collaborative supervision encourages a joint session of equally exchanging knowledge. Poulin (2005:31) points that the strength perspective calls 'for partnership which is characterised by reciprocity and mutual respect between the social worker and the supervisor'. Saleebey (2009:17) remarked that 'helping professionals make a serious error when they subjugate the client's wisdom and knowledge to their own views'. The main aim of collaboration is to solicit different views and opinions towards achieving a common goal (service delivery in this context). It is clearly indicated that the social worker has skills and knowledge that can contribute to the process rather than prescribing what he or she must do. Engelbrecht (2014:133) shows collaboration by saying that 'the supervisor and social worker are both in jointly reflective, critical, and imaginative thinking'. If the supervision is one sided, where will reflecting, thinking, critical thinking emanate from? Healy (2005:161) points that 'the strength perspective views the partnership approach as consistent with social work values and shows that collaborative decisions are more likely to be useful for both parties'. One of the principles of social work advocates the right to self-determination. In other words, a person has the right to determine or decide what is best for them, and this can be done only if he or she can participate in a collaborative supervision.

It is thus understood, as Healy (2005:162) suggests, that 'collaboration in the strength perspective focuses on the following, (1) promoting a collaborative physical environment, (2) promoting a collaborative interpersonal relationship and (3) encouraging collaborative and creative solution-seeking'. Furthermore, Kadushin and Harkness (2002) as well as Engelbrecht (2014) concur that a social worker learns best if actively involved in the learning processes, which even makes collaboration practical. This kind of engagement diminishes vulnerability and reduces the chances of

being intimidated by viewing the supervisor as the expert in the process. Collaboration in this manner facilitates the positive relationship between the supervisor and the social worker, and the positive relationship yields positive performance. Hence, Saleebey (2009:17) states that 'collaboration brings the best service delivery to the people one serves'.

Collaboration further encourages taking ownership, but if the supervisor decides alone, the social worker may feel reluctant to implement a specific decision taken or will possibly implement a decision based solely on the supervisor's view, hence the question: Your voice or our voices? As such, the social worker may sometimes be unable to account for a specific action taken or result attained as the supervisor is the one who would have decided. However, collaboration is a means of empowerment. Saleebey (2009:11) states that 'empowerment only becomes a transformative phenomenon when it is constructed through dialogue and action'. These statements and opinions are significant because collaboration goes hand in hand with communication. There is a need for dialogue in supervision rather than the social worker listening to the supervisor. This is confirmed by Saleebey (2009:13) when he states that 'humans can only come into being through a creative and emergent relationship with others'. He further notes that 'without such transactions, there can be no discovery and testing of one's power, no knowledge, no heightening of one's awareness and internal strengths'. Hence, Saleebey (2009:14) argues that 'sometimes we act on our own beliefs because we think that, they are valid representation of the reality'. Therefore, collaborative supervision dispels this kind of thinking in a social worker because he or she is part of the process.

□ Principle 5: Every environment is full of resources

Zastrow (2009:214) points that the strength perspective 'seeks to identify resources and make them available to benefit people

who need them'. The author agrees with Saleebey's (2009:15) view that 'resources are everywhere but are sometimes unnoticed or underutilized'. There are various structures such as schools, social workers' forums and associations, community committees, educated and experienced people and so forth that may be helpful to the social worker in time of need. It is true especially in the Department of Social Development (2012) that resources are scarce, owing to financial constraints. However, if possible, that should not restrict the service delivery. It is a fact that resources are needed for quality and effective rendering of services. But in a collaborative supervision, the social worker and the supervisor could assist one another in identifying resources around them. Saleebey (2009:15) indicates that the strength perspective is 'about discerning those resources and respecting them as well as recognising the potential that they may have for reversing misfortune and reaching goals'. Sometimes, the social worker might not be able to identify the resources around him or her; however, the supervisor, by his or her experience and knowledge, is able to assist the social worker in identifying and using them.

□ Principle 6: The value of caring, caretaking and context

Kadushin and Harkness (2002), Botha (2002), Nicholas, Rautenbach and Maistry (2010) and Engelbrecht (2014) mentioned supportive function as one of the functions of supervision. As mentioned by these authors, the supportive function therefore ensures that the supervisor provides care for the social worker to promote the social worker's psychological and functional well-being, morale and facilitate growth and development. Social workers are exposed to different situations that involve risk, trauma and so on, which could lead to stress or burn out. These consequences could lead to deterioration of job performance. Collaborative supervision assists social workers to freely and openly discuss their frustrations with their supervisors.

Botha (2002:89) points that ‘the supervisor must create the right climate for the social worker’. Botha further states that ‘the environment should also be supportive and acceptable to stimulate the learning processes’. Supportive relationships provide an environment of reinforcement, good modelling and constructive feedback for physical, intellectual, psychological and social growth (Botha 2002). The reason behind a positive environment is to instil confidence in the social worker, to make him or her feel free and comfortable. A caring and positive environment simply communicates to the social worker that the supervisor is interested, listening and valuing the social worker. Reamer (1999) emphasises that significant human relationships form one of the essential social work values. Supervisors are required to understand that the relationships between and among social workers are essential vehicles for change, and that they need to engage themselves in the helping process. Good relationships may restore or maintain the well-being of the social worker. Bernard (2004:200–201) states that ‘caring relationships convey loving support, the message of being there for a person, of trust and of unconditional love’. Bernard (2004:252) adds that ‘care in a relationship reinforces the verisimilitude of the social worker’s theme and hence selfhood by communicating back to him “I see you that way too”’. Comparing this with traditional supervision, collaborative supervision creates an environment conducive to telling the social worker that I care for you, not only about the work. As Trevick (2000:2) puts it, ‘people have a desire to be understood, to be accepted for who they are, to be cared for and to have meaning and purpose in their lives’. Therefore, a caring and professional environment is vital for the success of supervision process.

■ Supervisors’ roles in collaborative supervision

In collaborative supervision, the supervisor plays specific roles in order to enhance the competencies, strengths, capabilities and

capacity of the social worker. For the stated reasons Engelbrecht, cited in Engelbrecht (2014), clearly stipulates that the roles of the supervisor give an indication of what the supervisor actually does. Various roles have been identified by numerous scholars. The following are the roles that the supervisor can apply to ensure collaborative supervision: motivator, educator, supporter, facilitator, empower, negotiator, mediator, advocate, activist, broker, modeller and enabler and many more (Nicholas et al. 2010; Zastrow 2009). All these roles should be performed based on what needs to be achieved based on the social worker, the organisation and the service user. For example, an enabler's role could be used to identify the social worker's concerns and discuss with her or him the plans of action (Zastrow 2008). For the stated reasons, the supervisor should not impose his or her decisions but collaborate with the social worker to achieve the intended outcomes of the supervision process. Similarly, Nicholas, et al. (2010) affirm that the supervisor should exercise his or her supervision role in a positive manner and reinforcement engagement should take place throughout the supervision process. This will in turn empower the supervisee to come up with own solutions to change their own situation.

To sum up, there is no way collaboration could take place without proper facilitation. For that reason, the supervisor should play a facilitator's role to ensure that the social worker's strengths are identified. Collaborative supervision encourages empowerment, and this could be facilitated through training and educating the social worker on various aspects of social work practice. Social work practice uses theories, models, processes, policies, legislations and many other aspects to ensure that services are provided efficiently. Therefore, the role of an educator fits well in collaborative supervision.

■ Conclusion

This chapter discussed the definition of supervision whereby various scholars provided various definitions. However, it is

noted that supervision is indeed a process that involves interaction. It is a reciprocal process which encourages collaboration. It could also be emphasised that supervision is a professional activity to be provided only by trained and qualified people related to social work practice. Various reasons as to why supervision is particularly important in social work were outlined. They range from developing social workers' skills and knowledge to promoting social workers' independence and autonomy. Basically, supervision is rendered to safeguard the profession, social worker, agency and the service users. The major concepts such as empowerment, collaboration, membership and resiliency and how they can be incorporated in collaborative supervision were discussed. The principles of the strength perspectives were discussed with a view to show how they can be incorporated in collaborative supervision to make supervision more effective. The main aim was to acknowledge the participation and involvement of the social worker in the supervision process. Collaborative supervision dispels the notion of one voice and advocates that two or many voices create more impact. It is crucial to acknowledge the social worker in the supervision process in order to make the process more fruitful and beneficial to him or her, both professionally and personally. As one of the supervision principles, as previously indicated, 'we do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change', so each person has to be treated differently.

■ **Summary: Chapter 10**

The quality of social work services is, among other factors, constructed on the quality of the supervision provided. Traditionally in social work, supervision was the responsibility of the supervisor, with the authority and the procedures entrusted to the supervisor restricting the prospects and potential of social workers. This chapter focused on collaborative supervision with specific reference to the strength perspective. The focus was on

incorporating the major aspects and the principles of the strength perspective. However, social work management, social work administration and supervision form the core component of social work qualification for the BSW programme. Thus, social work students are expected to acquire and demonstrate knowledge on supervision and management from their BSW undergraduate training.

Supervision during social work fieldwork practice: A case of the University of Venda

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■ Introduction

The role of the practicum in social work education programmes is recognised as an integral part of students' professional preparation, with significant structured practice experiences being provided in field agencies under the supervision of a qualified social work practitioner (Maxwell 1999:85). Nunev (2014:461) postulates that social work supervision is an integral part of the professional training and development of social

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workers and boosts the quality and effectiveness of the provided services. It is one of the social workers' key activities throughout their higher education training and their career. Its significance is obvious at the time of social work students' training because it allows for integrating theory and practice and contributes tremendously to develop critical professional thinking and effective practical learning. Barlow and Hall (2007:400) argue that students in field work practice face both epistemological and emotional uncertainty as they move from the 'high hard ground' of the academic classroom to the 'swampy' ground of practice. A research study conducted in Canada by Rompf et al. (cited in Barlow & Hall 2007:400) found that students reported high levels of anxiety as they prepared to enter field practicum. It is therefore important that students get support to deal with emotions associated with being in a stressful environment.

This chapter begins with the review of literature about fieldwork supervision. The chapter simultaneously incorporates the most recent research regarding student social workers' experiences of supervision during fieldwork placement, with specific attention to a study conducted by Budeli at UNIVEN in 2016. The study was a mixed-method approach where 30 final-year undergraduate student social workers participated in the study. Four students were interviewed, while 26 students completed self-administered questionnaires.

■ **Conceptualising social work supervision and fieldwork supervision**

■ **Social work supervision**

Kadushin and Harkness (2002:23) define social work supervision as the process of overseeing, directing, coordinating, enhancing and evaluating the on-the-job performance of workers. According to Skidmore (1990:206), the term 'supervision' means 'oversight, control, surveillance'. It is concerned with helping staff to use

their knowledge and skills in getting the job done effectively. In social work, it is mainly used to define the function that one individual, the supervisor, assumes in relation to the other, the supervisee. Supervision essentially entails on-the-job teaching and the supervisee has to participate actively in his or her own learning. Cheon et al. (2009:53) define social work supervision as ‘a continuous relationship in which a qualified supervisor monitors the professional development and competency of social work students as he or she gains practical experience’.

From the above description it is clear that in social work, supervision is ordinarily used to describe the function that one individual, the supervisor, assumes in relation to the worker (supervisee). Supervision is a teaching–learning process, which is educational as well as administrative and enabling (Skidmore 1983:209). Skidmore further explains that the supervision of field work in social work is essential, as staff members responsible for the work of other staff members have an obligation of providing leadership guidance that results in the development of worker competence. In the same vein, it also applies to new and inexperienced social workers. Students also require supervision as a fundamental foundation to enter practice.

■ Fieldwork supervision

Maidment (2001:284) defines ‘fieldwork supervision’ as the oversight of a student on fieldwork practicum by a more experienced practitioner who holds the responsibility to ‘guide the student through the placement [practicum], providing a measure to support and advocacy, facilitating learning opportunities that address student learning needs, evaluating practice development, and assessing work performance’. Furthermore, Nunev (2014:463) asserts that social work supervision with students is a managed reflexive process, which is oriented towards integrating theoretical and practical education of every student and their commitment to particular resources in order to improve the study and development process.

□ **Goals and objectives**

The primary goal of student placement is to provide an opportunity for the integration of theory with practical experience under the supervision of a social worker. A major emphasis is the development of the ability in students to apply critical thinking skills in social work practice and encourage participation in addressing issues of social and economic justice, particularly among disadvantaged populations. A further goal is the preparation of students for pursuing graduate-level education in social work fieldwork supervision which is aimed at enabling the professional development of the students in terms of mastering the core skills such as observation, interviewing, relationship, recording, administrative procedures, training, fact-finding, planning, implementation, analysis and organisation. Further, it facilitates identification of needs and resources, intervention, listening and communication, programme development and resource mobilisation. It also becomes an opportunity for reflection and self-reflection; openness; support; trying new things; feedback; modifying old habits; developing professional competence, knowledge, skills and attitudes; facilitating personal and professional growth; assisting students to make connections between practical work and theory and role modelling (Department of Social Development 2012; Padmore, Bailey & Johnson 2012; Paracka 2014).

■ **The differences between staff supervision and fieldwork supervision**

Supervision of qualified social workers should be distinguished from supervision for students (fieldwork supervision). Tsui (2007:3) argues that for a long time, student supervision and staff supervision were often mistakenly assumed to be similar. It was not until the mid-1960s that scholars and researchers began to recognise the conceptual, methodological and practical differences between staff supervision and student supervision. Nunev (2014:462) asserts that exercising supervision within

bachelor's students' practical education is an integral element of the whole educational process.

Fieldwork supervision is distinct from staff supervision, because it has a particular focus on the educative function of supervision. It can be defined as the oversight of a student on practicum by a more experienced, qualified practitioner. The qualified practitioner holds responsibility to 'guide the student through the placement, providing a measure of support and advocacy, facilitating learning opportunities that address student learning needs, evaluating practice development, and assessing work performance' (Maidment 2001:284). The supervisor also helps the student to gain experience, study and overcome difficulties and challenges in practical situations (Maidment 2001; Moorhouse, Hay & O'Donoghue 2014; Nunev 2014).

■ Theoretical framework

The social work profession is guided by many theoretical frameworks, but in fieldwork 'attachment theory' is highly relevant because students need strong attachment with their supervisors in order for learning to be enhanced. This theory will be briefly discussed later.

■ Attachment theory

A theory is defined as a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relations between variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena (Barker 1999; De Vos et al. 2005). Attachment theory was first formulated by psychologist John Bowlby (1907–1990). Attachment theory is a psychological, evolutionary and ethological theory concerning relationships between humans. An attachment is an emotional bond between individuals, based on attraction and dependence, which develops during critical periods of life and may disappear

when one individual has no further opportunity to relate to the other (Barker 1999:34). The most important tenet of attachment theory is that a young child needs to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for social and emotional development to occur normally. This means that the student needs to develop a relationship with the supervisor (caregiver) for emotional and professional development. Similarly, the supervisor needs to create an opportunity (secure base) where the student can explore the practice of social work with confidence, knowing that he or she has support. Students need to know that the supervisor is dependable, and this creates a secure base from which the student can move out to explore the wider professional world (Bowlby 1988). The key characteristics of secure attachment are seen as (Harris & White 2013:30):

- *Safe haven.* When the student feels afraid, she or he can obtain comfort from the supervisor (caregiver).
- *Secure base.* The supervisor provides a dependable base from which the student can explore outwards.

Bennett (2008:97) argues that an attachment theory framework is particularly appropriate for understanding dynamics in the relationship between social work students and their field supervisors. Attachment theory is applicable to supervision because it provides an empirically based framework for understanding both the nature of relationship and the process of establishing a supportive, secure base for supervision.

■ Purposes and functions of supervision

The primary goal of supervision is to ensure that the quantity and quality of service leads to a successful client outcome as a result of social work intervention. Supervision is also considered as a means to enhance staff development. It helps to equip the supervisee with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to do the job effectively (Tsui 2004:20). Coulshed et al. (2006:163) add that the ultimate objective of supervision must be to enhance

the standard of work undertaken so that, in return, vulnerable members of the public will have an improved quality of life.

Garthwait (2011) argues that in order to understand practicum supervision and how to make good use of it, it is necessary to examine the purpose and functions of supervision within an organisation. Kadushin and Harkness (2002) and Skidmore (1990) identify three functions of agency-based supervisory practice, that is, the administrative function, the supportive function, and the educational function. Bittel and Newstrom (1990), Weiner (1992) and Harmse (1999) further the debate on the functions of supervision and add modelling and motivation functions, which are discussed next.

■ Administrative function

Kadushin (1992:19) defines the administrative function of social work supervision as a process of getting the work done and maintaining control and accountability. Skidmore (1983) asserts that in administration the supervisor directs, guides and helps with management matters, including aspects such as salaries, promotions, the assigning of cases, advocating for staff, monitoring and the evaluation of staff performance, appointments to committees or other agency work. The supervisor should also ensure the uniformity of quality and quantity in the work of the staff. Garthwait (2011:43) asserts that the fieldwork supervisor will employ many of the helping skills and techniques that the student and other social workers use in working with clients such as offering guidance and support, providing feedback, recognising strengths and confronting when necessary.

■ Educational function

Educational supervision refers to training that is tailored to the needs of a specific worker who has a specific caseload and is dealing with specific problems, that is, the programme of education is individualised to meet the needs of that worker.

Through educational supervision, the supervisor helps the worker apply the generic training offered by in-service training. Teaching is aimed at helping workers to increase their knowledge and understanding in order to deepen their understanding and professional attitudes. It also involves assisting students in increasing and improving their social work practice skills (Kadushin & Harkness 2002; Skidmore 1990).

■ Supportive function

The supportive function of supervision has to do with sustaining staff morale, cultivating a sense of teamwork, building commitment to the agency's goals and mission, encouraging workers by providing support and dealing with work-related problems of conflict and frustration (Skidmore 1990). Garthwait (2011:38) asserts that this aspect is extremely important in human service agencies in which stress and burnout are common risks. The supervisor must strive to create a work environment that is conducive to the provision of quality services to clients, while also supporting staff who may at times feel stressed and unappreciated. Another important function of supervision which is paramount in the supervision process is the modelling function.

■ Modelling function

Bittel and Newstrom (1990) assert that the modelling function of social work supervision can be defined as:

[A] process in which a skilled co-worker or supervisor demonstrates the performance of key job skills and simultaneously explains steps involved and the reason for doing them. In simple terms, modelling has to do with learning by watching or observing an experienced worker doing the task. (p. 236)

Harmse (1999), in Mbau (2005:37), goes onto say modelling implies that the supervisor provides an example that is worth following in terms of being a professional social worker and a professional person. In other words, the assumption in modelling

function is that the supervisee learns to be a professional social worker from behaviours of the supervisor.

■ Motivation function

Weiner (1992) defines motivation as an internal, inspiring and appealing force that leads a person to act in a certain way. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to motivate supervisees to provide effective and efficient services to the clients. Harmse (1999:56) asserts that in order for the supervisor to carry out the motivational function of social work supervision effectively, he or she needs to understand and be able to implement the correct motivation theories to the right person at the right time and at the right place. Harmse classifies motivational theories according to physiological theories, cognitive theories and social and behavioural theories. Physiological theories state that the behaviour of all human beings is influenced by the presence of basic needs, because they are motivated to satisfy these physiological needs. Cognitive theories state that before individuals act in a certain manner, they make a conscious decision regarding the outcome and perceived value of such behaviour. Social or behaviourist theories recognise the influence of societal and environmental factors upon behaviour. All these theories can be used as guidelines for motivation, because it is still the responsibility of the supervisor to provide motivational conditions for social work students during fieldwork. By encouraging and even requiring the social workers continually to upgrade their professional abilities and by providing them with the means for professional development, the supervisor can upgrade motivation and work performance.

■ Models and methods of supervision

Coulshed et al. (2006) assert that supervision can be individual or group oriented, formal or informal, direct or indirect. A good team manager will employ several within the organisation

approaches in response to the exigencies of the context. A staff team discussing a case over lunch would be an example of informal, indirect, group supervision.

■ Individual supervision

Individual supervision allows for the development of professional and personal practice. It recognises each staff member's stage of development, experience and confidence and deals with needs that cannot be met or may be threatening in some way when talked about in groups. The individual may talk about problems that may be affecting his or her work through which he or she can receive acknowledgement of work well done. This method has been the norm in social work settings and was traditionally embraced by the first-line manager, but its use is decreasing nowadays (Coulshed et al. 2006:166).

■ Group supervision

Group supervision may be chosen as the way in which everyone will get the support they need, given the time available (Coulshed et al. 2006). But a more positive rationale is that each person learns from all the other members' experiences and this sharing strengthens the team, making it less reliant on a top-down mode. There is also greater scope in a group for using different methods, such as role-play, case study or sculpting. Ford and Jones (1987), cited in Coulshed et al. (2006), add that groups reduce the impact of personality clashes or of the supervisor imposing ideas on the supervisee.

■ Informal supervision

Informal supervision is inevitable and necessary and is one aspect of the support offered. It can be useful as an addition, either when the staff member is new in the post and needs to feel that he or she can 'pop in' for practical information or advice, or in a crisis situation when an individual needs immediate help

(Coulshed et al. 2006). Within the parameters of easy access, the supervisor might witness an incident that holds tremendous learning potential for the novice worker. The supervisor can point out the strengths and the novice can return to his or her work with a clearer sense of what to try and what not to try in the future. On its own, though, informal supervision is an insufficient and an inherently unreliable model. Ad hoc chats do not allow individuals time to reflect on their work or to plan the agenda beforehand, and neither do these types of discussions get recorded. Managers who do not offer planned supervision, by contrast, are likely to be bombarded with unstructured queries and concerns or excluded from vital information that they need to know (Coulshed et al. 2006:167).

■ Formal supervision

Coulshed et al. (2006:168) point out that formal supervision geared towards developing practice to an optimum level and in which the supervisee is formally accountable to the supervisor is distinguished by the following four dimensions (Coulshed et al. 2006):

1. *Structure*. This is needed to ensure that there is adequate preparation, it is regular, has a flexible agenda and time boundaries.
2. *Focus*. It has aims and objectives for the sessions, which are spelt out and reviewed from time to time and result in a formal learning agreement.
3. *Setting*. There has to be a context within which supervision is undertaken and which actually features as a basis for any discussions about strategies; and as the organisational context has implications for practice, it has to be at the forefront of supervisory discussions.
4. *Record-keeping system*. This consists of a planned agenda and a note of points discussed, action to be taken, by whom and when, and a note on any issues that are to be referred elsewhere. Future training needs can be noted and acted upon, and both parties have a record of each supervision

session just in case a need arises when they need to refer back. It is good practice to alternate between supervisor and supervisee in taking the notes.

■ **Direct supervision**

Direct supervision is fairly new to field agencies, but less so in residential and day-care establishments (Coulshed et al. 2006). It is now a requirement in all the professional awards in social work that there must be observation of the candidate's practice in order to verify the claim that competence has been demonstrated. 'Live' and sitting-in supervision are further examples of gaining direct access to an individual's practice, with scope, if appropriate, to correct any bad habits (Collinge et al. 1986 cited in Coulshed et al. 2006:168).

■ **Indirect supervision**

According to Coulshed et al. (2006:168), indirect supervision is normally the main approach available to most supervisors who cannot directly observe what contacts the staff member is making or what skills are employed, although in open-plan offices a great deal of information about dealings with others is evident. The supervisor has to rely on free-ranging or topic discussion methods, reading through records and possibly some experiential exercises, such as role-play or simulations.

■ **Peer supervision**

Skidmore (1990:217) adds that peer supervision is one of the models that also assist social workers the most, especially when the supervisor is not available. Traditionally, supervision in social work has been on a one-to-one basis, and a supervisor, or an experienced person, has helped a newer worker. In recent years, different patterns have developed. One of the most interesting and challenging is peer supervision. In this model, the workers

assume the basic responsibility for their own cases and then consult and interact with other staff members when they need help. This pattern is one in which co-workers help each other in supervising work.

■ Co-supervision

Coulton and Krimmer (2005:154) defined co-supervision as two or more workers who supervise a student. This means that a student will have more than one social worker who supervises him or her. They further pointed out that co-supervision is an efficient and beneficial supervision model and offered students increased accessibility to support and advice, greater breadth of knowledge and diverse learning.

■ Challenges faced by student social workers during fieldwork block placement

According to Garthwait (2011:2), the practicum is a very positive and meaningful experience, but for some the practicum can fall short of expectations. The quality of every practicum experience can be enhanced if students are provided with guidelines for identifying and making use of learning opportunities. A structure that helps students to examine and analyse their settings in ways that build on prior classroom learning is of critical importance. Some of the most meaningful learning opportunities occur as a result of having to deal with unexpected events and frustrations. There are quite a number of social work students' supervision experiences and challenges that have been documented by Shokane, Nemitandani and Budeli (2016) where it was affirmed that students face some challenges, including limited income, accessibility, lack of clear guidance, motivation and support in carrying out their fieldwork practice. In this chapter, only challenges concerning adequacy of supervision and the supervisory relationship will be briefly discussed.

■ Adequacy of supervision

A common view of supervision is that it is a formal activity, usually on a one-to-one basis, that takes place in the form of regular meetings at a prearranged time and place. Indeed, for many this is the only recognised form of supervision (Hughes 2010; Thompson 2002). Conversely, not to have 'supervision' usually refers to the absence of regular, formal supervision sessions. With informal supervision, workers often seek support and guidance outside formal meetings to resolve more pressing concerns. However, this does not mean that such conversations are devoid of the accountability of more formal supervision sessions, only that the context may be more informal, not what is discussed or agreed. While regular and formal supervision is important, it is also an informal activity that can take place with not just individuals but also groups (Watson & West 2006:138). Bogo (2010:105) argues that when students feel that their field supervisors are interested enough in their learning to provide regularly scheduled field supervision sessions and to be available when needed, there is the opportunity for a working relationship to grow and develop.

Coulshed et al. (2006:165) emphasised that supervision sessions be cognisant of the following:

- They can be relied on to happen regularly.
- They take place in uninterrupted privacy.
- There is often enough time to talk (typically around 60–90 min).
- They occur at prearranged times so that both parties can be adequately prepared and can contribute to the agenda.
- They are based on mutual respect between supervisor and supervisee.

The above guidelines for supervision also apply to students. The supervisor and the students should have a clear understanding of supervision arrangements and matters for discussion so that both can come to the supervision sessions prepared.

■ The supervisory relationship

According to White and Queener (2003:203), the supervisory relationship is the collaboration between the supervisor and the supervisee for change in the supervisee based on mutual agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision as well as a strong emotional bond. Garthwait (2011:38) pointed out that the quality of practicum is closely tied to the nature and quality of the teacher-student relationship. Bowlby (1988) asserted that an integral component of supervision is the development of a healthy supervisee-supervisor relationship. This strong bond of relationship determines the knowledge of student needs, helps for charting learning experiences and deciding upon the best way to achieve the learning objectives in relations to the assignments in field work. Much of a student's learning in placement is mediated through a student-supervisor relationship. The relationship helps to define and structure the range of learning tasks and experiences (Cleak & Smith 2012:244; Garthwait 2011:38; Nobble 2011:7).

A similar study by Tanga (2013) revealed that participants had mixed feelings regarding the relationship with agency supervisors. Out of 60 students who participated in the study by Tanga, 85% of the students supervised by social workers reported warm feelings and attachment. A study conducted by Hall and Barlow (2007) about the emotion and tension in social work field education revealed different findings from Tanga. The findings revealed that students in need of direction and support were critical of field instructors who were unsupportive. Some students reported that problematic relationship with their field instructors left them feeling very vulnerable. Relationships with field instructors were strained when students received unsupportive feedback from their field instructors, experienced value differences or interpersonal conflicts with the field instructors.

■ Brief description of study method

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study population

were final-year bachelor’s degree social work students at UNIVEN. Availability sampling was used to select participants. The study data was collected through 26 self-administered questionnaires and four one-on-one interviews. Data was analysed statistically and presented as tables and charts and thematically as themes and sub-themes.

■ Research findings

■ Profile of participants

Participants were drawn from final-year (fourth year) student social workers who have completed their final-year social block placement practical work at UNIVEN in 2015. Out of 50 distributed questionnaires, 26 questionnaires were returned, and four students participated in one-on-one individual interviews. Table 11.1 shows distribution of study participants by gender and organisation where they were placed for fieldwork placement.

Table 11.1 shows that the majority (70%) of participants were females and 30% were males. Most (83%) were placed at the Department of Social Development. The NGO and the Department of Correctional Services scored 7% each. Only 3% of students were doing practical at the Department of Health.

TABLE 11.1: Gender of participants and nature of organisation.

| Category | Sub-category | N | % |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----|----|
| Gender | Male | 9 | 30 |
| | Female | 21 | 70 |
| Nature of organisation | Department of Social Development | 25 | 83 |
| | Non-government Organisation | 2 | 7 |
| | Department of Correctional Services | 2 | 7 |
| | Department of Health | 1 | 3 |

□ Theme 1: Models of supervision used during fieldwork placement

Participants were asked to indicate the model of supervision used by their supervisors during fieldwork placement. Their responses are shown in Figure 11.1.

The study revealed that the most common models of supervision preferred by social workers during students' placements are one-on-one or individual supervision, and informal and group supervision. Figure 11.1 indicates that out of 26 students who completed questionnaires, 35% were supervised individually, 21% were supervised informally and 17% were supervised in groups. Formal supervision and planned supervision received little attention with only 11%.

□ Theme 2: Frequency of supervision

Table 11.2 represents views of students regarding the frequency of formal supervision sessions during fieldwork block placement.

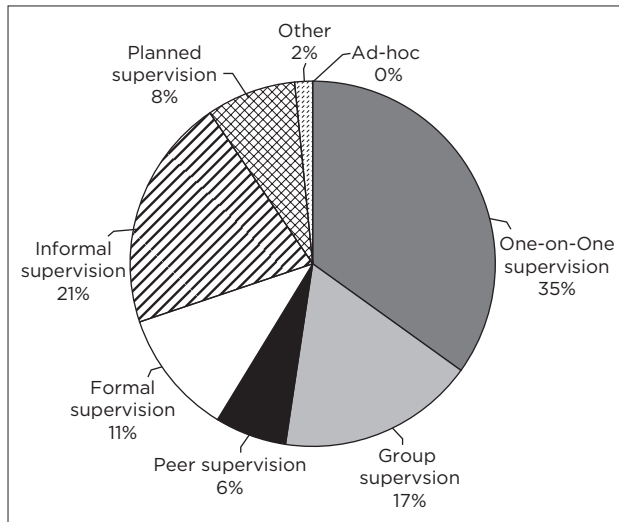


FIGURE 11.1: Model of supervision used during block placement.

TABLE 11.2: Responses regarding frequency of formal supervision during fieldwork.

| Responses | N | % |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Once a week | 5 | 19 |
| More than once a week | 1 | 4 |
| Fortnightly | 1 | 4 |
| Monthly | 15 | 58 |
| No supervision provided | 3 | 11 |
| No response | 1 | 4 |
| Total number of respondents | 26 | 100 |

Table 11.2 shows that the majority (58%) of respondents reported that they had one monthly formal supervision session. Although the majority of respondents received supervision monthly, some (19%) of the respondents reported that they had supervision sessions once a week. It has been found that 11% of the respondents reported that they were never supervised during their 4-month fieldwork block placement. Only 4% of students reported that they had supervision sessions more than once a week, while the same percentage (4%) had supervision sessions periodically (McKibben & Webber 2017).

Some participants also expressed the following views when asked how frequent the supervision sessions were:

Maybe three times in a month.

Basically my supervisor will just pop-in [...] for in a space of a week two or three times.

They were not that frequent, because we will only had sessions may be when we had to come back to school.

It could be, sometimes once a month, sometimes three times in a month. It will depend on supervisor’s schedule.

From the above figures and assertions, it can be concluded that students had irregular and infrequent supervision contact with their supervisors during fieldwork block placement.

□ Theme 3: Students’ satisfaction with supervision

The students were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with regard to supervision during their fieldwork placement. Their responses are depicted in Table 11.3.

TABLE 11.3: Responses on the satisfaction with the supervision received during practical.

| Satisfaction with supervision | N | % |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Satisfied | 14 | 54 |
| Very satisfied | 3 | 11 |
| Not at all satisfied | 8 | 31 |
| No response | 1 | 4 |
| Total number of respondents | 26 | 100 |

The majority (54%) of participants reported that they were satisfied with the supervision they received during practical. While 11% of participants indicated that they were very satisfied, the remaining 31% reported that they were not at all satisfied with the supervision they received during practical. Some participants still opine that they were not satisfied with the supervision. They state the following in corroboration with the questionnaires:

Honestly speaking I was not satisfied [...] from the organization where I was placed at there was a lot of workload since we were dealing with offenders. You find that our supervisor was always busy, busy to a point that she could not manage to supervise us as a group.

I don't think it was enough because it was just done because it has to be done for the purposes of filling forms that we had to return back to school, especially the individual session. But with the group supervision, at least they tried.

One challenge that I encountered was not having regular supervision. My supervisor just assisted us when we enquired, she did not like plan out things, and she did not plan for supervisions.

I would say they were enough, I mean they were irregular [...].

□ Theme 4: Supervisory relationship

Participants were asked to indicate how their relationship with the supervisors was during their fieldwork placement. Their responses are shown in Table 11.4.

Table 11.4 shows that students had good (31%) to very good (46%) relationship with their supervisors. In corroboration with

TABLE 11.4: Relationship with the supervisor.

| Relationship with the supervisor | N | % |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Very good | 12 | 46 |
| Good | 8 | 31 |
| Average | 3 | 11 |
| Poor | 2 | 8 |
| Very poor | 1 | 4 |
| Total number of respondents | 26 | 100 |

the quantitative data in Table 11.4, some participants who were interviewed indicated the following:

My supervisor was more like a teacher, somebody who was willing to listen, willing to help, willing to support [...] One would actually say probably more like friends, but we knew our boundaries.

My supervisor is a person who is flexible [...] generally a person who was not really that autocratic. She was not an enemy to me, in other words she was like a friend and workmate to me.

I would say we were just like friends. It was a very friendly relationship.

However, some students reported a strained relationship with their supervisor ranging from poor (8%) to very poor (4%). In support of the strained relationship with the supervisor, one student said:

Honestly speaking I was the victim. From the first week, my relationship with the supervisor was not well [...] the treatment that I got was not good. If it had something to do with my work, I would understand, but she did not like me from the first week we started with our supervision. We did not have good relationship.

□ Theme 5: Initiator of supervision session

Participants were asked to indicate who initiated the supervision sessions. Their responses are given in Table 11.5.

Table 11.5 shows that the majority (58%) of respondents had to ask for supervision to be provided, while 10% of the respondents reported that supervisors-initiated supervision.

TABLE 11.5: Who initiated the supervision sessions?

| Who initiated supervision? | N | % |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Supervisor initiated supervision | 10 | 38 |
| Students had to ask for supervision | 15 | 58 |
| Both the student and the supervisor | 1 | 4 |
| Total number of respondents | 26 | 100 |

Only 4% reported that both the student and the supervisor-initiated supervision sessions.

When asked about who ensured supervision, other participants expressed the following in corroboration of the responses from the questionnaires:

With the group supervision, the supervisor ensured supervision, but with individual, the student social worker did because I felt I needed support.

For the individual sessions, it was mostly students [...] we had to constantly remind the supervisor to have a session, but with group supervision because it was not done by the supervisor, but by the cluster supervisor, mostly she initiated the session.

The figures (38%) also show that supervisors ensured or initiated supervision sessions. This was also confirmed by one participant during interviews as follows: 'It was my supervisor'.

■ Discussion

The study revealed that social work students at UNIVEN are subject to irregular and infrequent supervision during fieldwork placement. Social work students are supervised mostly through one-on-one individual and informal supervision. As stated by Coulshed et al. (2006), informal supervision is insufficient and cannot be relied upon. The findings do not support the common view of supervision which (Hughes 2010; Thompson 2002) described it as a formal activity, usually on a one-to-one basis, that takes place in the form of regular meetings at a prearranged time and place. On average, the majority of students received

four formal supervision sessions during their four-month fieldwork block placement. For those who have had supervision sessions once a week, it means they had supervision sessions four times a month which is an acceptable supervision practice. This implies that there is a need for academics to develop a fieldwork supervision model which will be used to monitor if students are receiving regular, formal, planned and one-on-one supervision during fieldwork placement.

Participants had varied experiences regarding the relationship with their supervisors. From the findings, it can be summarised that students generally had good relationships with their supervisors. This is in line with the study findings by Tanga (2013) who reported that students had warm and welcoming relationships with their supervisors. Although the majority reported welcoming relationships with their supervisors, the 11%, 8% and 4% ranging from average, poor to very poor relationships raises a concern that needs attention. On the modelling function of supervision, Harmse (1999) said 'modelling implies that the supervisor provides an example that is worth following in term of being a professional social worker and a professional person'. From the 23% of students who had experienced a bad relationship, it can be deduced that the supervisors failed to model good professional behaviour to these future social workers.

There is a need for universities' fieldwork staff members to engage themselves in thorough preparations of supervisors and students before placements commence. Regular contact with the fieldwork supervisors throughout the placement period could help in strengthening the relationship between universities and placement agencies' supervisors. Incentives and rewards for fieldwork supervisors are encouraged and continuous professional development courses and workshops and money may serve as motivation. Students also need to be prepared about the reality of workplaces. They need to know that workplace relationships cannot be predicted as people differ in many ways and their behaviours and characters may not be as welcoming as anticipated.

Another challenge that students experienced was that they had to request for supervision to be provided during fieldwork placement. From the findings, the researcher is of the view that supervisors do not take students' supervision as one of their major priorities. This is evident from reports that the majority of the students had to ask for supervision to be provided. Importantly, it is encouraged for universities to get involved in the screening of students' fieldwork supervisors to determine their level of willingness to supervise students.

■ Conclusion

Supervision of students during fieldwork plays a vital role in preparing future social work practitioners. It is therefore imperative that fieldwork supervisors develop detailed supervision plans which will be used during the fieldwork placement period. The plan should ensure that supervision takes place regularly, is formal, usually one-on-one, with an agenda addressing students' needs or practicum objectives. The development of a plan will enable the supervisors and students to identify gaps, progress made and what need to be done before the end of placement. In addition, fieldwork supervisors need to develop working conditions conducive to facilitate students' learning. Proper orientation during the first weeks of placement could be the start to develop an environment conducive for learning. Students need assurance that the supervisor will always be there when needed even if it is not the day for supervision. Importantly, students need assurance that mistakes are normal and should be free to talk to their supervisors when those mistakes are committed. Such information could be shared with students during orientation at the placement organisations.

There is a need for research focussing on the supervisor's experiences with social work students during fieldwork placement. Such a study will help universities to understand the supervision experiences, issues and challenges during fieldwork placement, and incorporate such findings when planning

fieldwork in the future. Further research can focus on fieldwork supervisors' motivation to supervise social work students during fieldwork placement period.

■ **Summary: Chapter 11**

Social work training in South Africa and internationally employs some form of practical work to help students learn how to apply social work theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Proper preparation of social work students to enter practice will, therefore, require supervision of work done by students by an experienced social work practitioner. This chapter focused on fieldwork supervision of students as an important aspect of fieldwork practice. Much emphasis is placed on integrating the main components of staff and professional supervision into students' supervision during fieldwork practice placement in order to prepare them to enter practice. The aim of this chapter was to describe the experiences and challenges relating to supervision during a practical work block placement in 2016. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study population were final-year bachelor's degree social work students at UNIVEN. Availability sampling was used to select participants. The study data was collected through 26 self-administered questionnaires and four one-on-one interviews. The study revealed that one-on-one individual and informal supervision are the most preferred methods used to supervise students. The majority of students had a very good relationship with their supervisors, while few had an unsatisfactory relationship with supervisors. The study also revealed that fieldwork supervision, as it is practised with students, is irregular, infrequent and unplanned. The majority of students had to ask for supervision to be provided.

Social work with transnational migrant children in South Africa

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■ Introduction

Child migration is a global phenomenon which requires a global response. The children migrate seeking safety from oppression, discrimination, war (George 2012; Ostrander, Melville & Berthold 2017) and environmental concerns (Drolet n.d.). Children are already part of a vulnerable population, and migrating children are even more vulnerable as the actual migration may have negative consequences for their development and well-being

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(Bradby et al. 2017; Chames et al. 2016; Kalverboer et al. 2017). This argument has been further elaborated on by the UN (2017:1-2), which indicated that children who migrate could face a double vulnerability: firstly as children and then as children affected by migration who, (1) are migrants themselves, either alone or with their families, (2) were born to migrant parents in countries of resettlement, or (3) remain in their country of origin while one or both parents have migrated to another country. Additional vulnerabilities could relate to their nationality and ethnicity; gender, sexual orientation or gender identity; religion or spirituality; disability; migration, residence or citizenship status; economic status; political or other opinion; or other status.

Migrating children are generally at risk of individuals who exploit their unique vulnerabilities and sense of agency (Beise et al. 2017; Braunschweig et al. 2017; Lelliot 2017; White et al. 2011). According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), it is the responsibility of countries to protect children regardless of which countries they come from. The interventions accorded to migrant children are symbolically important and can be linked to the values of the receiving country (Abramovich, Cernadas & Morlachetti 2011; Bradby et al. 2017). There is a need to establish practical and viable solutions that respond to the protection of migrant children's rights. Social work with migrants is a growing area of practice (George 2012; Ostrander et al. 2017; Parker 2000). Worldwide, the continuity of quality care across national borders is a critical task required to uphold migrant children's rights, and social workers and other key service providers must make sure that these rights are respected and fulfilled.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. It can be noted that the SDGs include goals and targets that are relevant for migrant children. According to Bhabha and Dottridge (2017:5), 'the SDG framework provides a useful model for monitoring progress towards the achievement of goals concerning refugee and migrant children'.

SDG 3, which focuses on ensuring healthy lives and the promotion of well-being for all life stages, and SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning, apply to every child (including migrant children) (Tosun & Leininger 2017). However, SDGs 10 and 16 have targets that relate specifically to migration, mobilities and legal status:

- *Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.* Target 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- *Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Target 16.9: Achieve universal *legal identity and birth registration by 2030.*

Positive experiences of childhood are largely determined by the care and protection they receive (or fail to receive) from trusted adults (Save the Children 2017:1). For migrant children to recover, heal and contribute positively to their societies, it is vital that they have access to developmental opportunities as well as social and legal assistance (from empathic, skilled and knowledgeable frontline professionals) to overcome stressful pre-migration, migration and post-migration experiences. However, professionals should not assume that all migrants are traumatised and in need of psychological intervention (Woodcock 1997). Studies by Bradby et al. (2017) and Masocha (2015) argue that if migrants experience insensitivity from even one professional, it could lower their expectations of the service being provided and make them avoid future contact with the specific service provider and others.

Migrant children experience ongoing psychosocial, legal and other challenges and thus pose a particular challenge to social service professions and the institutions that are mandated to protect them. Therefore, social work expertise, as aligned to

professional values of social work, is required. The need to identify an effective social services delivery strategy in South Africa cannot be overstated. The purpose of this chapter is to, namely, (1) define key concepts in understanding child migration and distinguish categories of child migrants, (2) provide a general view of child migration and a synopsis of children migrating to South Africa, (3) highlight key international and regional frameworks and describe the legislative responses to address child migration in South Africa using a child rights lens and (4) understand the social work response to migrant children, while highlighting some challenges faced.

■ Concepts and definitions

Childhood and adolescence are significant developmental periods, and having to leave one's country can present more challenges for the migrating child. According to the definitions established by the UNCRC, the South African Constitution and the *Children's Act*, the term *child* refers to any person under the age of 18. In some countries, there are laws and/or cultural conventions that allow children between the ages of 14 and 17 to have adult-like responsibilities and be accountable for crimes committed.

According to Perruchoud and Redpath-Cross (2011:62-63), *migration* can be defined as the movement of one person or many people across an international border or within a state (Boulby & Christie 2018). It is a population movement encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes other displaced persons, migrant workers and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.

Migration is not necessarily a one-way process, and some migrants do return home, that is, to their countries of origin. According to McAuliffe and Ruhs (2018:1), migration 'encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people of all

walks of life and backgrounds'. In this chapter, a *migrant* is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his or her habitual place of residence, regardless of, (1) the person's legal status, (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, (3) what the causes for the movement are or (4) what the length of the stay is (IOM, n.d.). McAuliffe and Ruhs (2018:25) indicate that in the absence of a universally agreed definition of the terms *migration* and *migrant*, a number of definitions (based on various settings) have gained wide acceptance. This chapter will focus on child migrants who have crossed a regional or international border to be in South Africa.

■ Categories of migrant children

Select case studies will be presented to illustrate the definition presented. However, it should be noted that the presenting issues may vary from case to case.

■ Asylum seekers

A child presenting as an asylum seeker is seeking safety in a country other than his or her own and may be awaiting a determination on their application for refugee status based on the relevant national legislation. Before official recognition as a refugee, one is an asylum seeker. However, not every asylum seeker will acquire refugee status. If an asylum seeker's application has been turned down, he or she is still entitled to protection. Young people who are assessed and found to be 18 years and older are not considered to be children and thus are not given special protection in line with the UN recommendations. According to a study by Jacobsen et al. (2017), the mental health of youth asylum seekers is negatively impacted on by low support and refusal of asylum.

Section 7(1) of UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

states that all children seeking asylum, especially if they are unaccompanied, are eligible and should receive special care and protection. A conventional principle in the international refugee law indicates that asylum seekers may not be returned, repatriated or expelled pending decisions on their status. The protection of asylum seekers remains the primary obligation of the state, and they should not be detained as a deterrent.

□ Case study

Fathima, age 10, ran away from Somalia because her grandmother had taken her for female circumcision in her home village. Once she healed, she would have been married off as a third wife to her uncle's friend who was over 55 years old. Fathima used various means to get to South Africa and was placed at a residential care facility in Polokwane. The social worker, Mrs Dlamini, will assist Fathima to apply for asylum as per the requirements in the *Refugee and Children's Act*.

■ Refugee children

According to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, a refugee is:

[A] person who owing to the well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (n.p.)

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU)'s expanded definition includes people compelled to leave their country also because of external violence, occupation or foreign domination. The OAU definition acknowledges that non-state actors can also be perpetrators and does not demand that refugees show a

direct link between the individual and the future threat. Refugees generally spend many years awaiting resettlement and are mainly found residing in areas with high crime rates, inadequate or limited access to resources and poorly performing schools. Recent studies by Small et al. (2016) and El-Awad et al. (2017) reported that the majority of challenges to refugees' mental health mainly reflect post-migration stress during the resettlement period as the migrant faces new stressors related to relocation and resettlement, such as discrimination, cultural challenges, insufficient housing conditions and feeling like they are living in two different worlds, that is, the one left behind and the host country. Furthermore, Zetter (2007 in Bradby et al. 2017:3) reiterates that 'who qualifies as a refugee and can claim asylum is informed by the interests of the nation state in controlling immigration'. Unfortunately, this stance usually outweighs access to timely, appropriate and equitable services.

□ Case study

Khadija is a 17-year-old girl from Uganda. Her mother wanted her to undergo female circumcision because it is part of their culture and the family would have received very good marriage offers from suitors. She was in a same-sex relationship and had secretly been dating Amina, a girl from her neighbourhood. When one of her male neighbours saw her kissing Amina one evening, he threatened to expose them, report them to the police and have them arrested and also to mobilise other men so that they can teach her 'how to be a woman'. In addition, she comes from an indigenous ethnic group and her family has been persecuted in the past because of her uncle being a rebel 'and in the bush'. Khadija and Amina decided to leave the country secretly together and come to South Africa.

■ Unaccompanied children

These are children who are not in their country of origin and 'are not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other adults who by

law or custom is responsible for them' (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross 2011:102).

□ Case study

Mary is 13 years old and comes from a family of four. Her parents were killed during the war and her older sister, who is married to a human rights activist, looked after her. The day they came to arrest him, one of the policemen raped both her sister and her. They left and threatened to come back and arrest them too. Mary's sister advised her to leave the country and come to South Africa to look for her other aunt. Mary walked to and resided in several refugee camps before ending up in South Africa alone.

■ Separated children

These children (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross 2011):

[A]re separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from the relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other family members. (p. 90)

Separated children have to be aged under 18 years to be granted the special protection provided to unaccompanied refugee children. It can be argued that an institution can render a child 'separated' as in US cases where children enter the foster care system when their parents or caregivers are detained and/or deported, and children are left alone (Amuedo-Dorates & Arenas-Arroyo 2017).

□ Case study

Beatrice was 8 years old when Burundi recently experienced political violence. Beatrice and her family fled the country, but they became separated when their hideout was attacked at night. Along with her 22-year-old cousin and housekeeper they managed to find their way to South Africa.

■ Stateless children

According to the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a stateless child is a child who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law and ‘who lacks such rights that come from national diplomatic protection of a State and may not be entitled to return in case he or she leaves’ (Beise et al. 2017:56; Boulby & Christie 2018). There are several causes of statelessness among migrant children around the globe and in South Africa, and the circumstances leading to statelessness are linked to the following three main dimensions, (1) where the family link for a child cannot be established owing to obstacles to birth registration, (2) where children are born to stateless parents and (3) where discriminatory laws exist and prevent parents from transferring nationality to their children. Migrant children are at risk of statelessness because of lack of documentation or documentary proof of their citizenship and difficulty in obtaining such proof.

□ Case study

Malazwe (aged 11) and her sister Francisca (aged 17) escaped from Angola with their mother when civil war broke out. Upon arrival in Johannesburg 10 years ago, their mother met Jose from Mozambique, and they were married. She subsequently abandoned the two children and moved with her new husband to Beaufort West. The community members reported the case to the local police station and a social worker placed the children in a care facility. One month after the social worker managed to trace their mother in Cape Town, she died of HIV-related complications. The children are undocumented in South Africa and they do not possess any identity or travel documents from Angola and thus the Angolan embassy cannot assist.

■ Trafficked children

According to Article 3(c) in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children,

Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) also known as the Palermo Protocol, trafficking is:

[7]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (n.p.)

Section 4(1)(2) of the *South African Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act* (2013) provides the definition of trafficking and indicates that a child can be trafficked within, into or out of South Africa, with or without force. Furthermore, in South African-based cases of child trafficking, the 'means' does not need to be present or proven. Child victims of trafficking can be exploited within and/or outside their own country. Using a migration framework or lens to understand the vulnerable situation of trafficked children when they are entering the destination country, the trafficked children have few resources and limited control of the journey's outcome, and they are forced to depend on the trafficker's networks.

□ Case study

Maria, aged 9, from Malawi was allowed by her parents to accompany her aunt to South Africa so that she could access better education opportunities. Her aunt is married to a South African and they have two children who are Maria's age-mates and were attending a good school in Johannesburg. Maria was excited about this, but upon reaching Johannesburg the aunt refused to send her to school and asked her to assist with domestic chores in her house. In addition, Maria was expected to do house chores for the aunt's neighbours and the aunt got paid,

but she never shared any of that money with Maria. One of the neighbour's children reported this to her teacher at school and the teacher requested social workers at the Child Welfare Office to intervene.

Although categorising migrant children might facilitate service provision and ensure greater rights protection, it should be understood that when service providers decide on the specific category of a migrant child, in a way they are also determining the child's status, which is consistent with care and protection. However, 'this legal distinction is problematic as it fails to account for commonalities between each phenomenon, and the fluidity between situations' (Lelliot 2017:268). This distinction sometimes primarily serves to assist criminal justice and immigration responses while depriving the migrant children of adequate protection, yet any migrant children can also be exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation during the migration process.

■ Child migration

Globally, in 2015 it was estimated that there were over 244 million international migrants worldwide (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] 2016), with 37 million coming from the least-developed countries. Braunschweig et al. (2017) report that children constitute more than 50% of the world's 60 million refugees and that 40 million international migrants are younger than 20 years old to date; nearly, 50 million children have been displaced and have subsequently crossed borders, and they face numerous rights violations, including unlawful detention, separation from family, exploitation and deprivation of essential care, services and protections. The abuse and violence that migrant children experience constitute a grave human rights crisis. In addition, the number of migrant children who arrive in a country puts a considerable burden on those countries to provide the obligatory assistance, protection and resources required.

Children have been reported to migrate from the 'northern triangle', that is, from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in Central America to the US (Deckert 2016). In 2013, the Latin America Working Group reported that annually an average of 275 000 people attempted the passage from Central America via Mexico. In Africa, people typically migrate within that region or together with Somalis, Syrians and Iraqis, attempting to reach Europe. According to Article 3 in the UNCRC, when decisions are made, children have a right to have their best interests evaluated and weighed as a principal consideration. When applied to migrant children, this principle is crucial because any decisions regarding them being allowed into a country, access to services, reintegration and returning home should reflect that their best interests were or are the first priority.

There are various drivers of mobility. Children leave their homes, families, communities and countries of origin for various reasons including civil wars and violence, natural and man-made disasters, gang violence, lack of basic services, family conflict and dysfunction, human trafficking, religious oppression, better academic opportunities elsewhere (Boyden 2013) and/or work prospects, and harmful traditional practices, to join family members (Deckert 2016; Hopkins & Hill 2008). Furthermore, Lee's (1966) push-pull theory indicates that migrants are 'pushed' from their countries of origin by socio-economic hardship or oppression and 'pulled' by hopes of opportunities in countries of destination. Push factors are crucial in attaining refugee status and pull factors best explain why they leave their countries of origin. However, the reality is that both factors impact the decision to migrate. These factors can be understood from a systemic point of view, that is, at micro, meso and macro levels. The three-level approach is crucial to understanding the multiple factors which contribute to a decision to migrate. At a micro level, migrants' personal characteristics contribute to their choice and ability to leave. For example, older people and non-risk takers are less likely to migrate, whereas those with a higher education achievement but fewer opportunities in their home

country might consider migrating. At a meso level, one can interrogate relationships of those who move and those that remain. Those with strong ties in the community are less likely to migrate. However, chain migration might occur depending on where the migrants' families and relatives might be in another country. At a macro level, there are political, socio-economic and climatic factors that impact migrants both in their countries of origin and those they attempt to reach, such as poverty, globalisation, climate change, political unrest and violence.

The migration framework entails the three dimensions of the migration experience, these being, (1) the prevailing circumstances in the home country that prompts the desire or need to migrate, (2) the migration journey and (3) the experiences in the host country or place where migrants settle. The wide array of challenges (though not exhaustive) as experienced by the migrant children is depicted in Figure 12.1.

The three areas identified in Figure 12.1 have a complex relationship with one another and are not always easy to separate, that is, what appears on one list could easily be repeated in another (Masocha & Simpson 2011). However, it should be noted that the complexity of stressor manifestation and interventions might be because of the interactivity of challenges or stressors within the different stages. The relationships between the three areas are not simple or linear, that is, later challenges can cause unresolved issues to be intricate, just as prior issues can impact future coping capacity. The arrow can go the other way as well.

Social work practice tends to focus more on how to assist migrants cope with their present situation and rarely engages with their experiences before migration and during transit periods. Pine and Drachman (2005) suggested a three-tier approach to social work with migrants, that is, (1) understanding of migrants in their countries of origin (pre-migration), (2) understanding the migrants' transit period and (3) understanding the resettlement period (post-migration).



FIGURE 12.1: Migration challenges as understood within the migration framework.

Such a holistic approach is critical in designing appropriate individualised intervention for the child. Indeed, social workers who work with any migrant, irrespective of the migrants’ age, must first endeavour to understand their personal migration history in order to help them appropriately.

■ Positive impact of migration

Migration is often linked to rights violations, exploitation and crisis, and positive elements are often overlooked. However, this is not always the case. The complex and challenging

journeys undertaken by many migrant children, either alone or with their peers, without family or statutory support, show psychological growth (Copelj et al. 2017) and the children's resilience (Bradby et al. 2017; Forde 2007; Sleijpen et al. 2017). Migrants (including children) can acquire skills and social capital along the journey or upon resettlement in other countries. In addition, some acquire new ideas and ways of thinking or doing things, an education, new languages, occupational skills and cultural morals, all of which boost their development. Braunschweig et al. (2017) highlighted that child migrants can also make a positive contribution to host societies and to their countries of origin by applying the new skills and knowledge learnt as part of the work force and as advocates of human rights, gender equality and mainstreaming and nation-building and democracy initiatives.

Factors that support resiliency, improve functioning, promote healing from traumatic experiences and mitigate the adverse impact of stress in migrant children include the presence of cultural resources (Copelj et al. 2017), loving and supportive adults and a supportive community with whom the migrant interacts with, the child's temperament and intelligence and opportunities for healing and success (Cohen 2015; Sleijpen et al. 2016). Some questions that a social worker can ask to assess the child's strengths and needs include:

- If I could grant you three wishes, what would they be?
- What are you good at?
- What do you love to do?
- What would you like to be when you grow up?
- During the journey to South Africa, which lessons did you learn?

Indeed, a welfare and child protection system that prides itself on effective interventions requires that it operates within its laws and policies, but also that it widens its lens to incorporate migrant's strengths, positive spirit, resourcefulness and ability to overcome adversity.

■ Situational analysis of child migrants in South Africa

According to De Gruijl (2015), there are approximately 65 000 refugees in South Africa, who are most often reported to be children. A later report by Save the Children indicates that children represent 20% of the 4 000 000 migrants in Southern Africa. Save the Children (2016) reports that more come from the rest of the African continent. South Africa is a main destination country for children and/or adults travelling alone or in groups and for migrating families. Migrant children are non-nationals as soon as they cross national borders, but this should not limit their rights, irrespective of their immigration status. Although Save the Children (2016) reported that there are approximately 400 000 foreign children and adolescents living in South Africa, the actual number of children crossing into South Africa is unknown and difficult to estimate because of the manner in which they enter the country, and the lack of a proper registration process, follow-up and tracing system.

The majority of migrant children who come to South Africa are already vulnerable and at risk, and many brave the journey to access better opportunities (Magqibelo et al. 2016), escape poverty (Clacherty 2003) or abuse, or after the death of caregiver (Palmary 2007, 2009). They also come owing to the perception that South Africa is a country with better prospects (Hillier 2007; Save the Children 2016). According to Deckert (2016:20), the needs that trigger children to migrate 'are compounded by complicated and risky travel across long distances, yet necessary because of the dearth of safe and legal options for relocation in a safer jurisdiction'. Migrant children come to South Africa from Mozambique (Verdasco 2013), Zimbabwe (Clacherty 2003; Palmary 2009; Save the Children n.d.), Sudan, Angola, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Van der Burg 2005) and from the Horn of Africa (Save the Children n.d.).

The focus of the current child protection system in South Africa is to advance the quality of services to and to improve

outcomes for children at risk – including migrant children. In South Africa, similar to findings by Deckert (2016) in the US, upon arrival in the country of destination, these migrant children encounter an insensitive legal system, which treats them with suspicion, provides only marginal institutional standards of care, assumes they are illegal and subsequently labels them ‘aliens’. Discrimination towards migrant children has been reported in several studies conducted in South Africa. In South Africa, anecdotal evidence suggests that debates and discourses surrounding nation-building have given rise to the creation of harsh immigration controls, and this may contribute to increase in hostility and impact on the differential treatment that migrant children receive from service providers. High levels of hostility and animosity have also been reported between migrant children and local children in care facilities (Magqibelo et al. 2016). Migrant children in South Africa experience illegal detention, language difficulties, insecurity, inappropriate housing or homelessness or long stays in temporary safe care, denial of access to schools and access to social and health services, ill-treatment from service providers and lack of documentation (Palmary 2007; Save the Children n.d.; Schreier 2011; Van der Burg 2005; Willie & Mfubu 2016). A later study by Magqibelo et al. (2016) concurs with Van der Burg’s (2005) findings and further indicates that child care workers lack formal specialised training to intervene with migrant children which aggravates the children’s already dismal circumstances. The systemic challenges that prevent migrant children accessing services and hamper durable solutions are summarised in Table 12.1.

South African legal instruments position migration within the human rights framework that provides care and protection for children impacted by the migratory process. The human rights framework (1) provides a legal structure with recognised obligations and duty-bearers, (2) enhances development by approaching issues holistically and (3) ensures that the fulfilment of human rights is the main objective of policies and programmes. Similar to the US, as shown by Berthold and Libal (2016), in

TABLE 12.1: Systemic challenges in migrant's care in South Africa.

| Process | Systemic challenges |
|------------------------------|---|
| Identification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of proactive detection or identification mechanisms. • Certain children do not want to be formally and strictly regulated in care and protection system because it limits their freedom and work opportunities. |
| Assessment and documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent delays in reception and registration. • Social workers and immigration officers are not adequately trained and skilled to communicate with children and to gather pertinent information. • Professionals are ill equipped to do assessments and make referrals. • Assessments not concluded to present to court for decision on best options be undertaken based on child's best interests. |
| Care and protection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals tasked with providing assistance deny the children access to the protection system. • Children reside in shelters which are not registered. • Over-crowded shelters. • Quality of care is compromised. • Staff not qualified. • Children not accessing education. • Few organised programmes of intervention. • Lack of understanding on best interests determination and its application. |
| Family tracing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often delays and in some cases never initiated. • Bilateral collaboration weak. |
| Durable solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No viable alternative care placement scheme. • Incorrect use of the asylum process to access documentation. • Detention before repatriation. • Repatriation done through ad hoc process. • Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and South African Police Service (SAPS) return children without engaging (DSD) protection procedures. • Minimisation of repeat migration because of lack of reintegration process dealing with risk factors that caused initial migration. |

Source: Adapted from Save the Children (n.d.:31).

South Africa refugee status gives children stability with rights and benefits. In Africa, South Africa has the most progressive child protection mechanisms (Willie & Mfubu 2016), as migrant children's rights are protected in the South African Constitution, the *Refugee Act* and the *Children's Act*. The DSD has also developed guidelines for migrant children. However, maladministration, discrimination, lack of service delivery and corruption impact the implementation of legislative and policy responses to effectively address migrant children's needs

(Magqibelo et al. 2016). Willie and Mfubu (2016) further criticise South Africa's uncoordinated responses and argue that they do not provide a durable long-term solution to migrant children. Yet, social workers have a key responsibility of reclaiming and revisioning children's rights when addressing the influence of structural inequality and discrimination on the attainment of rights (Jones 2001:253). The protection and legal gaps show that South Africa as a state is failing to fulfil its duties as required by international and national law (Magqibelo et al. 2016; Save the Children n.d.; Van der Burg 2005; Willie & Mfubu 2016).

According to Save the Children (n.d.), migrant children are protected by the child protection system which is informed by the best interest determination process, although systemic challenges such as lack of proactive detection and identification mechanisms, children in unregistered care facilities, lack of appropriate programmes in care facilities, lack of viable alternative care placement plans and challenges with assessment reports are reported. Other practical challenges faced by South Africa when managing foreign migrant children are influenced by xenophobia, corruption and physical abuse (Van der Burg 2005). Van der Burg recommends training across government departments and of professionals who work with migrant children in order for them to understand their specific needs as children first.

■ International instruments that protect child migrants

The rights contained in the international instruments are assured to all persons in a country, that is, locals and foreigners, notwithstanding their legal status, gender or age. In addition, countries that are party to the international treaties are obliged to provide protection to foreigners as long as they remain in their country. The UN has developed several human rights conventions (to be presented next) that support and protect the rights of migrants.

Article 13 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* (1949) allows for the freedom to migrate, but this is not easily achieved because of lack of resources and the necessary support, and integration-related discrimination from the locals (Deckert 2016).

United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) was ratified by South Africa in 1966. The Convention sets out the definition of who a refugee is, although it did not give consideration to the needs and special vulnerabilities of refugee children and young people.

The Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) and *the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* (1961) provide definition of statelessness. These conventions have not been signed by South Africa and thus put children identified as stateless at further risk.

The *UNCRC* (1989) is concerned with basic human rights and the protection to which all children are entitled. All governments, except the US and Somalia, have ratified the UNCRC. The UNCRC requires states to see to it that suitable measures are taken in order to ensure that children requiring refugee status receive the necessary protection and assistance. In addition, family tracing and reunification should be undertaken, and in instances where the child's family cannot be found, the child should be accorded the same protection as any child deprived of his or her family situation and in need of care and protection.

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (1993) deals with international adoption.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) calls for children to be removed from situations where they are performing the worst forms of child labour, including in armed forces, in sex work and in debt bondage. This Convention also acknowledged the connections between poverty, child labour and need for basic free education (Chames et al. 2016).

UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000) provides the definition of trafficking and calls for states to develop national legislation to prosecute perpetrators and to provide assistance to victims.

The UN General Comment No. 6 (2005) gives guidance on issues regarding the protection of migrant children. It emphasises that enjoyment of rights is based on citizenship. Protections must also be accorded uniformly to all children residing in the country without discrimination.

The UN General Comment No. 3 (2017:3) aims to give 'authoritative guidance on legislative, policy and other appropriate measures [...] to ensure full compliance [...] to fully protect the rights of children in the context of international migrations'. It highlights that migration can have positive consequences. It stresses that information from children should only be used for protection purposes and treated confidentially. It further stipulates key elements that should form part of policies and practice if migrant children's rights are to be upheld.

United Nations Guidelines for Alternative Care for Children provides details about the care and management of migrant children in the destination country.

The UNHCR Guidelines on Refugee Children acknowledges the need that refugee children have for special care and assistance and, as such, recognises these children as vulnerable, dependent and developing.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants is a recent key affirmation by heads of state and government to wholly protect migrant's human rights, regardless of their status. The six key areas of child rights outlined in the Declaration are non-discrimination and integration, ensuring the priority of the best interests of the child, ensuring children's access to services, ending child immigration detention, promoting

durable solutions and child protection. These six issues were chosen because of their significance to migrant children and obligations affecting them, and further aligned to other binding commitments in international law, especially the UNCRC (Bhabha & Dottridge 2017).

Regionally, the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)* (1999) reflects the minimum standards acceptable for African children. It was created to contextualise the needs of children living in Africa, and most of the provisions offer a higher standard than those in the UNCRC. The Convention is based on the best interest principle and the rights outlined in the charter apply to every child and stipulate that they have responsibilities as well.

The goal of the *SADC Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in SADC* is to promote stress-free access to prospects within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. However, there is no mention of children in the draft protocol, and it is awaiting ratification by national parliaments.

The *Southern Africa Strategic Plan of Action to Address Mixed and Irregular Migration* (2014) sets out to respond to the main challenges of mixed and irregular movements within Southern Africa in a sensitive yet timely manner. The focus of the plan is legislative and regulatory framework reform, capacity-building, communication and outreach and regional cooperation and coordination. From a child protection perspective, it highlights the best interests of the child.

■ Legislative and judicial responses in South Africa

Migration should be situated within a rights framework, subsequently providing protection for all children impacted on by the migration journey. Countries that are party to the

international conventions are obligated to provide protection to the migrant's rights as long as they remain in their country, yet 'child rights-based perspective is generally absent from migration laws and policies' in many countries (Abramovich et al. 2011:27). Migrant children become non-nationals when they enter another country, but their 'new' circumstances should not limit access to their rights. The following legislative frameworks are applicable to migrant children.

The Constitution of the South African Republic Act (No. 108 of 1996) is a key legislation in promoting human rights in the country. Section 28(3) gives protection to children's rights and the *Children's Act* gives effect to these rights: it states that 'a child's best interests are paramount in every matter affecting them'. All children irrespective of their nationality or immigration status are protected by this legislation.

The *Children's Act* (No. 38 of 2005) prescribes that one must act in the best interests of the child. The Act does not make specific reference to migrant children, but it is implied that it protects all children (including migrant children). Section 15 can be interpreted to include the different categories of migrant children.

The *Refugees Act* (No. 130 of 1998) provides a definition of who a refugee is and further stipulates that refugees have similar access to services as South Africans. The process of applying for asylum can be found in Chapter 3 of the Act. A refugee application can be turned down if it is believed that the applicant, (1) has committed a war crime or crime against humanity, (2) has a non-political crime punishable by imprisonment in South Africa, (3) is already protected by another country or (4) has been found guilty of acts contrary to UN or OAU objects and principles. Refugee status can cease if persons, for example, (1) voluntarily place themselves under the protection of their country of origin, (2) reacquire their nationality, (3) become South African citizens or citizens of another country or (4) voluntarily re-establish themselves in their country of origin.

Chapter 5 outlines the rights and responsibilities of refugees. Once granted refugee status, refugees in South Africa enjoy all human rights outlined in the constitution except the right to vote. In addition, according to Section 24, they have a right to apply for a disability grant and Social Relief of Distress Award and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) benefits if they have been making contributions. This is the most gender-progressive legislation worldwide, as both gender and sexual orientation can be considered grounds for asylum application. The principle of non-refoulement prohibits a country from repatriating individuals to a country where they may be threatened or they risk being tortured, punished or treated in a degrading manner.

The *Immigration Act* (No. 13 of 2002) outlines the conditions under which a person may enter South Africa. The ruling in the *Centre for Child Law v Minister of Home Affairs* case was that detention for immigration reasons is unlawful. According to Section 31, although ministerial exception can be considered for certain persons to be permitted to stay in the country, the procedure has been slow and tedious, and there has been no positive feedback (Chames et al. 2016). In the fight against trafficking, recent amendments to the Act require that all children travelling from and to South Africa have copies of their unabridged birth certificate. Asylum seekers and refugees can register the birth of their children in South Africa by producing enabling documentation. Migrant children who come to South Africa rarely have documentation from their home countries, or they might have lost it en route to South Africa. This then makes it challenging for them to be documented or acquire birth registration.

The *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* (No. 75 of 1997) stipulates that any child under the age of 15 may not be employed. In addition, no child should be employed in any work that is not congruent with their age or work that poses risks to their development and well-being. Should there be no evidence of the child's age, the burden of proof lies with the employer.

Labour inspectors can visit workplaces and issue compliance orders. According to the 2008 *Discovery Health Ltd v CCMA and Others* case, the work conditions must conform to this Act even if the employee is an illegal migrant in the country.

The *South African Schools Act* (No. 84 of 1996) states that a public school must accept a child for enrolment without unfair discrimination, including learners who are not able to pay fees. The Act prohibits corporal punishment. In *Mubake and Others v the Minister of Home Affairs and Others*, the argument was that children should be considered dependants of the relatives caring for them and that they should be allowed to register in public schools. The *BM and 7 Others v the Minister of Home Affairs and 5 Others* case argued for the right of separated children to access basic education.

The *South African Citizenship Act* (No. 88 of 1995) indicates that a person is a citizen by birth when born to one parent who is a South African, whether the birth occurred in or out of South Africa. A child adopted by a South African citizen is a citizen by descent. A child can also become a citizen at the age of 18 if born to permanent residents, and if the birth was registered in South Africa and there is proof that the child has lived in South Africa until his or her 18th birthday.

The *Birth and Deaths Registration Act* (No. 51 of 1992) stipulates that it is compulsory to report all births and deaths that occur in South Africa. All births have to be registered within 30 days, and it is a crime not to do so. However, one of the criticisms of the act is that it is silent on procedures for registration for children born of undocumented or irregular migrants once the deadline has passed.

The *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act* (No. 3 of 2000) requires that any act by a public official that harmfully impacts an individual must be conducted in a clear manner, and the individual must be given the opportunity to make contributions regarding the decision to be undertaken. Reports have alleged

that some frontline professionals have been xenophobic towards migrants. Thus, this Act is crucial in assessing these kinds of unjust treatment.

The *Social Assistance Act* (No. 13 of 2004) indicates that social assistance is available to South Africans. The 2004 *Khosa and Others v Minister of Social Development* case found that refugees in South Africa are also entitled to social assistance grants, including disability, foster care, child support, care dependency, old age and social relief of distress grants. However, asylum seekers cannot access these grants until refugee status is granted. There is advocacy around social relief of distress grants being awarded to migrants and asylum seekers.

The *Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act* (No. 7 of 2013) is a response to increased trafficking, and it provides a wider definition on what trafficking is. It also indicates that illegal adoption and forced marriages for purposes of exploitation are acts of trafficking. In *Jezile v The State and Others*, it was found that the customary practice of *ukuthwala* (forced marriages) is not a defence in trafficking. The Act states that an 'illegal foreign child' who has entered the country illegally under the *Immigration Act* but is a victim of trafficking should be seen and managed as a child in need of care and protection (according to *the Children's Act*). The same is true of trafficked children who are rescued and/or identified in South Africa. In the *Santos v S* case, Adina dos Santos from Mozambique got life imprisonment in South Africa for sex trafficking, rape and living off the earnings of child sexual exploitation. Since this groundbreaking judgement, there have been more arrests though few convictions have been reported.

The *Child Justice Act* (No. 75 of 2008) takes a rights-based approach in creating a criminal justice system for children who have committed crimes. Detention is used as the last resort and diversion is the first option for these children in conflict with the law. Children under 10 are said to lack criminal capacity, and the Act further stipulates that criminal justice responses ought

to be age appropriate. In addition, children in prison must be kept separately from adult prisoners.

The DSD has developed the *Guidelines on Separated and Unaccompanied Children outside their Country of Origin*, which acknowledges the vulnerability of children when they migrate through irregular channels. It is grounded on the following principles: non-discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life, survival and development, non-refoulement and confidentiality. It lists international and national laws that were instrumental in its development. The steps to follow when assisting unaccompanied and separated children in South Africa include, (1) identification, (2) assessment and documentation, (3) provision of temporary care services and (4) formal placement and options for durable solutions. The guideline also outlines service standards that must be adhered to (Sloth-Nielsen & Ackermann 2016).

The objectives of *the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Tracing, Reunification or Alternative Care Placements of Unaccompanied and Separated Children in South Africa* are to provide guidance to the DSD and designated child protection organisations in South Africa on procedures to follow when working with unaccompanied and separated children and to promote uniform service delivery. These procedures are relevant for identification and reporting cases, assessment and statutory intervention, family tracing, reunification or placement, alternative care arrangements, follow-up and case closure. The following SOPs are also reported to be in place: SAPS' *SOP on Unaccompanied Children at Ports of Entry* and DHA's *Draft SOP on Registering of an Unaccompanied Minor*.

International Social Services guidelines: International Social Services (ISS) was founded more than 90 years ago as a response migration in Europe. It exists as a network of national institutions and a 'General Secretariat that helps children and families confronted by complex socio-legal problems as a result of migration [...] and has a presence in more than 140 countries'

(Braunschweig et al. 2017:6). It deals with family tracing and providing social assessments. The guidelines developed aim to familiarise local service providers with ISS's service delivery model. The guidelines are comprehensive, with the addition of two core principles, that is, gendered migration and the cultural competency. The guidelines also explain how a social worker can refer a case to ISS. The care framework can be delivered within a continuum of services as summarised in the eight-step model (Table 12.2). The model is child-centred, and the steps 'should not be considered in isolation but as interdependent elements with a whole single process' (Braunschweig et al. 2017:28). The DSD has attempted to align its SOPs and guidelines with this model.

■ The ecosystems framework

Ecological theory (also referred to as ecosystems framework) is important as a multi-dimensional intervention approach used by social workers, and it is a theory that is often cited and widely used in social work practice (Ahmed, Amer & Killawi 2017; Pardeck 1988; Ungar 2002). The ecological framework is not linear and mainly focuses 'on wholeness, interdependence and complementarity to understand people' (Perumal & Kasiram 2008:159). The framework has been widely applied to cultural competent social work practice with American Muslims (Ahmed et al. 2017), in reviewing alternative care options in South Africa (Perumal & Kasiram 2008), to understand youth violence in the US (Moon, Patton & Rao 2010), when intervening with children and parents (Jack 1997), in understanding social support in foster family resilience (Piel et al. 2017) and towards sustainable development (Peeters 2012). In addition, several studies have referred to it as an ideal framework when working with refugees (Harverson 2014; LeBrun et al. 2015; O'Driscoll, Serneels & Imeraj 2017; Ostrander et al. 2017; Sleijpen et al. 2017; Vostanis 2016).

TABLE 12.2: ISS framework for the transnational care of migrant children.

| S. No. | Activity | Description |
|---------------|--|---|
| 1. | Arrival, detection and identification | This is the first procedure in the identification of migrant children and any risks at hand which should be attended to. The aim is to get the child out of the vulnerable setting soonest possible and refer him or her to the appropriate service provider. |
| 2. | Immediate support and care | This process can be referred to as psychosocial first aid and it entails addressing the children's immediate needs in order to stabilise their state and safeguard their basic rights. This is the start to establishment of a caring trusting relationship with the child in their new environment. |
| 3. | Assessment of the circumstances of the migrant child | It involves collecting a required information to decide on provisional protection, support and care in the resettlement country, and assess the child's circumstances in their home country in order to formulate a quality sustainable solution. The aim is to develop a rights-based sustainable solution for the child (i.e. best interest determination [BID]). |
| 4. | Temporary integration and quality care arrangements in the host country | It is the process of executing the support plan grounded on quality care, access to appropriate programmes and services and one which stimulates personal development. The goal of this step is to work towards a sustainable solution. |
| 5. | Evaluation of the situation in the host country | This stage is based on the right of the child to maintain cultural ties, and the intervention involves family tracing and assessing family and community settings in the child's home country to establish if the circumstances are appropriate for successful reunification there. This step is critical in understanding the presenting risks and prospects that may hinder or support the reunification process. |
| 6. | Determination of a sustainable solution in the best interests of the migrant child | This process is the determination of the child's best interests (in the home country, host country or a third country, or a combination, until the child reaches a good-enough and stable situation). It is aimed at developing a holistic, unique child-centred sustainable solution that respects his or her best interests. |
| 7. | Implementation of a sustainable solution | The creation of the development or action strategy to implement the sustainable solution with the child's informed input. The aim is to set the child on the right life course that nurtures his or her growth and supports his or her aspirations into adulthood. |
| 8. | Monitoring and follow-up | This step should be done in agreement with the child to ensure permanency and continued development, well-being and sustainability of the life project. The aim is to make sure that ample resources are devoted to the child always or when needed and to consider newly identified risk factors that may require plan modifications. |

Source: Adapted from Braunschweig et al. (2017:28).

The framework serves as a holistic theoretical approach, and it can assist social workers to understand and organise information on migrants and their socio-political environment in South Africa. This is because migrant children do not exist in a vacuum but are part of larger social systems and networks that interlink and have an impact on each other. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework is still relevant today, as it posits an interconnectedness between a person and his or her environment. Applying this framework to migrant children to understand their experiences requires that social workers conceptualise migrant children as embedded in an interactive multi-level system separated into five nested subsystems, namely micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-system (Bronfenbrenner 1979). According to LeBrun et al. (2015:eS47), these 'systems are concentric, included in one another and characterised by complex and reciprocal relations at different levels'. Thus, these same systems ought to be targeted when interventions are being formulated. This is because when migrants think or feel that their right to access services is being interrogated, they are left feeling highly visible, more vulnerable and 'othered'. Furthermore, their sense of mistrust increases with a high possibility of further contact being curtailed (Bradby et al. 2017:13).

Ostrander et al. (2017) further recommend use of a theoretical approach together with structural competency approach because the latter approach shows how issues defined as symptoms and attitudes are also representative of structural decisions or violations. It is based on five intersecting skill sets, namely, (1) recognition of how structures shape interventions, (2) developing social work language to explain the influence of social settings on well-being, (3) understanding the importance of culture and identifying ways in which structural inequalities and other obstacles can present, (4) understanding that structures can be transformed by use of structural interventions and (5) developing structural humility to increase the ability to comprehend the diverse discourses in individual client narratives (Metzl & Hansen 2014). An eco-structural competency

framework incorporating an anti-oppressive focus is recommended because assessing the best interests of a child means ‘evaluating and balancing all the elements necessary to make a decision in a specific situation for a specific individual child or group of children’ (Nagda & Woltjen 2015:n.p.). In addition, in the South African spirit of *ubuntu* (one/togetherness), it is the duty of the society to create conditions conducive to the accommodation of migrant children and help them build positive futures.

■ Social work responses to child migrants

Social work is a human rights profession which aims to fight social injustices. The work that social workers do is inspired by advocacy, fighting for the rights of children and assisting children with their needs, with the children always at the centre. The IFSW, representing more than 800 000 social workers worldwide, promotes migrant rights. The IFSW developed an International Policy on Displaced Persons (2012) which emphasised notions of social justice and advocated for the rights of migrants, that is, access to similar rights, resources and opportunities as citizens. Writing on research conducted in Sweden and the United Kingdom, Bradby et al. (2017) note significant challenges in assistance provision because of the traumatic experiences migrant children have gone through coupled with the children’s ongoing uncertainties regarding their migration status. In the United Kingdom, social workers have been criticised for ‘acting as an arm of immigration control’ (Westwood 2012:351). How can social workers support migrant children in South Africa and build their resilience while giving due recognition to the children’s past trauma and uncertain future?

Allowing children’s voices to be heard is important. The views of migrant children are essential when facilitating best interest assessment and determination, that is, child-centred perspectives.

According to Bhabha (2014), children's battle for refugee protection can be equated to that of David and Goliath in as much as the child made the crucial best interest decision to escape from his or her country of origin. According to El-Awad et al. (2017), supporting migrant children in goal setting and goal achievement is crucial as majority of them harbour naive, impractical desires and unfeasible goals, which can be a threat to their well-being. In order to do this effectively, Potocky (2016) recommends motivational interviewing when working towards resettlement with migrants if we are to improve client outcomes. This approach entails collaboration, evocation and autonomy. It is an ideal practice approach when working with migrants because, (1) it aims to develop a working or therapeutic alliance, (2) the different worldviews between the social worker and the migrant often lead to goal incongruence and (3) migrants are often perceived to be reluctant clients. This is mainly a reflection of most African cultural contexts with professional help-seeking being a foreign concept - hence migrants in this context being reluctant or involuntary clients. Furthermore, according to George (2012:433), the extent to which a social worker 'can have multicultural perspective will affect the degree to which he or she can understand refugee clients' points of view, barriers, and strengths and incorporate effective interventions'. Thus, cultural competence is essential when providing psychosocial care to migrant clients coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. Use of interpreters is also recommended (George 2012; Warria 2016).

Micro practice should enhance children's rights and contribute to citizenship as well (Cemlyn & Briskman 2003). Practical work with migrants, for example provision of food, sense of physical safety, accommodation and health care, is vital as it can reduce stress and there are tangible results (Masocha & Simpson 2011). Working on an individual basis would entail maximising the child's sense of safety and assisting the child to manage overwhelming emotions with sensitivity. It is essential that all social workers working with migrant children have a basic understanding of migration and asylum and refugee application

processes and various stages of decision-making, as this determines the child's future (Deveci 2012; Hopkins & Hill 2008). During therapy, the social worker can assist children to address the impact of the trauma experienced, make fresh meaning and author different script(s) of their migration trauma past or history and current resettlement experiences. According to Deveci (2012) and Kohli (2006), migrant children are not victims but survivors who harbour numerous multi-layered narratives of their lives, which are either told or not, yet these stories continue to define them, where they come from and their connections. Basic social work practice frameworks can be used with migrant children during therapy, although there are added levels of complexity because of the children's language and cultural backgrounds (Masocha 2017). Specialisation in the work that agencies facilitate means that social workers will also have to make appropriate referrals and coordinate services with other organisations or institutions such as schools, immigration office and clinics or hospitals (Westwood 2012). In addition, it is crucial that the social worker supports and promotes positive and stable relationships in the child's life. According to Cemlyn and Briskman (2003:174), rights-based micro practice methods are crucial 'but must be framed by a wider commitment by the profession to political advocacy and campaigning, if social work [...] is not to perpetuate collusion'.

According to Sleijpen et al. (2016), an exploration of both risk and protective factors enhances an individual's capacity to overcome adversity. On exploration, it is evident that both resilience and vulnerabilities 'have allowed young migrants to represent the energetic hopes of building a better life against the odds, while also being vulnerable to death, despair and exploitation' (Bradby et al. 2017:2). Therefore, resilience is an aspect that must be tapped into when undertaking micro work with migrant children. There is a great need to listen to and provide opportunities for migrant children to develop potential without ignoring their vulnerabilities. Wells (2011) reports that interventions are more successful if they speak to the child's own

survival strategy and if the child's informal social and safety networks are tapped into, explored and expanded.

Article 8 of the UNCRC stresses the right to family life. However, certain tensions in the application of social work methods with African families have been reported by Bernard and Gupta (2008:352). These include reconciling divergent beliefs in child-rearing, parenting by extended family members and de-valuing of cultural-based parenting practices. The definition of families is changing with globalisation, and new ideologies are becoming more accepted. This has an impact on migrant children as well. Thus, it is crucial to understand that when working with different sets of migrants, the views of caregivers might differ from those of the agency. This is not uncommon (Cohen 2015). When this happens, Cohen (2015) recommends the following, (1) shifting the paradigm from *what is wrong with this family* to *what happened to this family*, (2) empathising with the family within their triple context of culture-migration-resettlement paradigm, (3) investigating and finding out alternative narratives from others who are familiar with the child and his or her family, (4) checking their views on child-rearing and (5) respectfully explaining their view and that of the agency to arrive at a mutual point of view which upholds the child's best interest. Some strategies that social workers can use to support the caregivers of child migrants in countries of resettlement include the following:

- listening to caregivers and focussing on their capabilities and resourcefulness
- encouraging them to talk about their hopes and dreams for their children as bleak as the future might seem
- offering information that will help families understand and 'listen' to their children
- assisting parents to manage challenging behaviours arising within their cultural context and parenting approach
- assisting caregivers to understand migration stress and its impact on themselves and their children and to learn how to integrate it in their own lives

- talking about the children's needs and concerns and discuss various options that can help
- developing strategies that respect the cultural and physical context of the family and can be incorporated on the parenting approach
- helping the family address basic needs
- linking families with available and accessible supports to expand their parenting capacity.

According to Small et al. (2016) and Sobantu and Warriia (2014), peers (individually or collectively as a group) can offer support through a model that is practical and less threatening and offers greater cultural acceptability. Although this has been reported to work well, it cannot be equivalent to the expertise offered by trained and experienced practitioners. However, it is important to recognise that a practice framework that includes networks of support, sustenance and referral offers a better model of care for migrant children.

Group work is useful when intervening with migrants (Berger 1996; Kira et al. 2012; Schwartz & Melzak 2005; Woodcock 1997). Schwartz and Melzak's (2005:296) observed regression, elements of 'magical thinking' and disconnect in young refugees and facilitated psychotherapy group work with them. Storytelling as a medium ignited the imagination and ingenuity of the group members and, in turn, a renewal in their 'capacity to explore difficult events safely and to restore the abilities to think, to reflect, and to make connections and relationships'. They reported that although not all children spoke and shared their narratives, the children listened and were touched by others' stories. The group therapy model used by Kira et al. (2012) focused on both management of individual psychopathology and community healing through development of social clubs. This shows the meso-macro nexus, and the model added an ecological dimension to traditional group therapy as the clubs promoted the values of the group members, offered social support outside therapy and provided opportunity for advocacy. Woodcock (1997:10) cautions therapists to be 'sensitive to our ability to participate in denial',

because individual group members' experiences are not readily part of therapists personal and/or professional experience. In addition, he reports that although migrants might have many common experiences which bring them together, vast differences exist between and within migrant communities.

Social workers can help facilitate psychosocial assistance to child migrants who encounter discrimination and systemic injustice by thinking out of the box when intervening as case managers working in service provision, advocacy and community development. For example, social workers can incorporate rights education in the life-skills programmes offered by their organisations. Thus, the social worker facilitates the group and at the same time provides the space, information and skills to harness their own capacity to further develop socio-political change. Migrant networking should be encouraged by developing the abilities of migrant groups to represent themselves to attain social change (Masocha & Simpson 2011:437). According to Haidar (n.d.), when social workers develop intervention programmes:

[T]hat promote storytelling and identify exploration among agency clients, they would be facilitating their development of a public narrative or lived experiences [...] aligned with an ethos of grassroots organizing. (p. 11)

Social workers can also mobilise the organisations where they work and contribute to policy advocacy efforts. Through their strategic positioning in relation to the migrant population, social workers can motivate and obtain funds to advance policies and act as crucial information channels on policy implementation, its impact and assessing whether it is working at grassroots levels. Masocha (2017) advocates for transnational advocacy, that is, a:

[S]ocial worker in one country establishes strategic alliances with social worker in other countries specifically to challenge and disrupt the dominant political ideologies and hegemonic identities which negatively impact migrants. (p. 68)

In this way, they are also able to mobilise international resources.

From the discussion in this section, it is clear that social workers can have different roles at different times in a migrant child's life and some of those roles might be carried out concurrently in one agency or through partnerships with other agencies. The discussion has further shown that through the dance of power, social workers intervene to fight unjust policies, programmes and services and assist in re-structuring public beliefs towards the promotion of justice for migrants. A combination of micro, meso and macro interventions and efforts in practice demonstrates and deepens social workers' commitment to social justice.

■ Conclusion

Borrowing from a study by Berthold and Libal (2016), an inter- and multi-disciplinary practice framework that holistically talks to the multifaceted impact of migration, including the physical, socio-legal and psycho-emotional needs of migrant children, is indispensable in South Africa. This approach, which acknowledges structural competencies, must be grounded in an eco-rights framework in the promotion of well-being. However, it should be noted that more than a model, a framework or guideline is required in assisting migrant children. Above all, migrant children are children. Therefore, the priority must always be to protect their all-encompassing rights as children irrespective of their immigration status.

Developing excellent social work practice demands attention to training at both pre- and post-qualification levels (Parker 2000). In addition to educating future social workers on social work values and ethics, it is crucial that human rights receive just as much attention in the curriculum (Congress 2014) and that evidence from research on social rights is shared with policy-makers to influence social policy. Furthermore, the training of service providers and practitioners in practice who might act as points-of-first-contact for the migrant children on rights, signs of

distress and intervention strategies or services available in South Africa is recommended. The rationale is that appropriate services and well-coordinated care can enhance and provide better opportunities for healing and recovery for migrant children.

The denial of rights to migrant children reflects national and global inequalities. Regardless of migrant children's immigration status, social workers must strive to advance a socially receptive and unbiased child protection system that supports migrant children's rights and they should refrain from participating in systems and/or actions that violate and problematise children's rights. In this way, social workers can respond simultaneously to protection of rights when they are denied to migrant children and to other explicit injustices that they (children) personally experience.

Transnational collaboration is vital when working with migrant children because of several stages involved in the child's migration journey. One of the dire consequences of a fragmented approach to social work and immigration enforcement's discourse of control and deterrence is the lack of care and protection for migrant children and their rights. Therefore, a wide range of care and protection by national and transnational stakeholders must always be involved. This is bound to strengthen regional and inter-country child protection systems for migrant children.

The needs of vulnerable children in a crisis situation or a traumatic life situation deserves high priority and timely intervention. If children live under challenging circumstances, it can have negative consequences for their transitioning to adulthood, and therefore, vulnerable young migrant adults may still require support after they turn 18. Formal supportive contact from social workers and other professionals is important, but informal contact at crucial moments from peers, fellow migrants and teachers can be a significant contributor to migrant children's well-being (Bradby et al. 2017; Sobantu & Warri 2014).

There are numerous additional issues and questions regarding child migrants that warrant further study. This chapter was not intended to provide a definitive account, but selective debates from a wider body of emerging research. One thing for certain is that social workers can be social anchors for migrant children and they should strive to make a difference in their lives.

■ Summary: Chapter 12

This chapter was based on studies undertaken in South Africa especially, and it challenged the public discourses that child migration is linked to refugee movement only; it showed that there are various categories of migrant children in South Africa. The focus of this chapter was on South Africa and the attempt at a holistic response to migrant children generally. The reason for this is largely because within Southern Africa, South Africa is considered to be a popular destination as an economic hub, and also because of the country's human rights approach, which could provide appropriate and timely interventions to migrants. The chapter recommended that intervention strategies should be diverse, should consider differing needs and should be grounded on an eco-structural competency and rights-based approach.

Indigenising forensic social work in South Africa

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■ Introduction

Child sexual abuse has become a predominant social illness in South Africa and across the globe. Children are sexually abused by their significant others and some are not known to them and such cases are not constantly reported or even disclosed to their caregivers (Rapholo 2014). A variety of disciplines including social work are involved to address child sexual abuse allegations.

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In South Africa, there are also various legal frameworks such as the *Children's Act* (No. 38 of 2005) as amended and *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act* (No. 32 of 2007) which are informed by the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act* (No. 108 of 1996) to deal with this social illness. In spite of all these initiatives in South Africa, there is still a challenge faced by role-players in the facilitation of the disclosure of child sexual abuse among children. Forensic social work has been adopted recently from the US to facilitate the disclosure of child sexual abuse in South Africa. Around the 1970s, it is reported that forensic social work was first introduced in the US (Faller 2014:34) to address the extent and seriousness of sexual abuse against children. Considering that the environmental systems and the African way of dealing with social illnesses in South Africa differ with those in the US, the researcher has developed a framework to discuss the dynamics of how to indigenise forensic social work practice in a South African context. The ecosystems theory and Afrocentric theory will be used as the lenses to zoom into the nature of disclosing child sexual abuse in South Africa.

■ Forensic social work in South Africa

Forensic social work as a field of specialisation in social work was first taught and practised in the US in the 1970s. That was necessitated by a research which was conducted by David Finkelhor who is regarded as the pioneer researcher in the field of child sexual abuse (Faller 2014; Truter 2010). South Africa is recently practising forensic social work as well, even though it is not yet officially recognised by the SACSSP as a field of specialisation. There are currently no guidelines which are in a South African context to inform the practice of forensic social work in South Africa. To this point, one can take note that a lot of scientific research in the field of forensic social work is a need in South Africa to contribute to the body of knowledge and to influence the establishment of policies and guidelines on

child protection. The main purpose of the forensic social work is to gather facts regarding the allegations of child sexual abuse that are being investigated (Saywitz & Comparo 2009:114; Smith 2014:10). Forensic social workers assist the court of law with forensic evidence on the possibilities of child sexual abuse for the conviction of perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

In South Africa, training in the field of forensic social work has been initiated in the form of master's degree at the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. Truter (2010) reported that few social workers had enrolled for this master's course. This writer also observed during his master's studies in the field of forensic social work that the North-West University admits a limited number of social workers per year to enrol in the course, and this tells us that, in South Africa, there are few or limited experts in the field of forensic social work. This writer also observed that more females enrol into the course than males. Fallor (2007) notes that interviewers in the US are primarily females and white people and are from the middle class. This writer has observed from his practical experience that, in South Africa, forensic social workers in the government sector, SAPS in particular, are comprised of more females and black people than other racial groups. The possible reason on gender is that social work is traditionally viewed as a female-dominated profession. Earle (2008) supports this in that social workers are largely female and that the South African welfare service is a female-dominated service sector. As the issue of child sexual abuse happens without boundaries in terms of culture and classes (Truter 2010), forensic social work practice therefore needs to be indigenised to fit the context in which South African children find themselves in.

Smith (2014) argues that most professionals other than forensic social workers in South Africa claim to conduct forensic assessments on allegations of child sexual abuse without proper qualifications in this field. This writer has also observed what Smith has established and is of the opinion that this causes a dilemma, because if professionals who conduct forensic

interviews are not equipped to perform such interviews do so, they will ultimately get insufficient or inadequate evidence to prosecute perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Smith (2014) further denotes that there is a belief among the public and professionals such as social workers, attorneys and psychologists that all social workers are qualified to conduct forensic assessments. Richter, Dawes and Higson-Smith (2007) incredibly report that in South Africa, approximately a quarter of children have been or will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old. To this point, it can be seen that South Africa has a high incidence of sexual abuse against children. Therefore, untrained and unskilled forensic social workers will not do justice towards an indigenisation of forensic assessments on sexually abused children.

The SAPS has currently restructured the investigative services to include forensic social work as an independent, professional and dedicated service arm which focuses on the interface between the social functioning and the legal system of the child victim of sexual abuse by means of assessments, court reports and expert witness functions (Forensic Social Work Standard Operating Procedure 2016; Monosi 2017). According to Richter, Dawes and Higson-Smith in Smith (2014:9), SAPS plays an important role in the collection of important and adequate evidence. Jonkers (2012) and Monosi (2017) denote that forensic social workers play a vital role in SAPS in the field of child sexual abuse investigations. SAPS is the major employer for professionals who graduate their master's degrees in forensic investigations with allegations of child sexual abuse, and it is the most important role player in promoting the interests of forensic practice in South Africa (Monosi 2017:1).

■ Theoretical frameworks underpinning an indigenisation of forensic social work in South Africa

The following theories are discussed in this chapter to give light on how forensic social work should be indigenised in South Africa,

namely Afrocentric theory, Ecosystems theory, Macrosystem, Exosystem, Microsystem and Mesosystem.

■ Afrocentric theory

Ideas of Afrocentricity derived back in the 1800, even though the theories that developed in the intellectual circles did not emerge until 1960s, and the primary theory of Afrocentrism was found by Mofe Kete Asante in the 1970s (Dwain 2007; Henry 2017; Mami 2013). Asante, as the principal theorist, founder and authority of the theory's initial aspiration, came when he travelled in Africa and realised that it is crazy that a black man be given a European name (Asante 2003; Dwain 2007). He admits the conclusion that the primary social crisis for black Americans is one of culture. According to Dwain (2007:170), such crisis is based on the idea that Eurocentric misrepresentation of African history psychologically dislocates black Americans. This is the realisation that it is crazy for a black man to be given a European name (Asante 2003). From there, many scholars from different disciplines such as education, history and anthropology started to have a debate and criticised this theory in the 1980s. According to Dwain (2007), these debates prompted Asante to further develop and defend this new theory. Afrocentric theory then became a framework to articulate an alternate voice for understanding African culture. Now, Afrocentricity has emerged as a theoretical perspective for social work practice (Daniels 2001; Dwain 2007). Daniels (2001:302) denotes that the Afrocentric theory in social work acknowledges African culture and expressions of values, beliefs, institutions and behaviours.

Asante (2003:30) argues that Afrocentricity is a paradigm based on the idea that African people should re-assert a sense of agency in order to achieve sanity. Afrocentric theory, as a theoretical and philosophical perspective, provides a pathway towards indigenising forensic social work in the context of South Africa. Afrocentrism refers to place African ideas at the centre of any analysis involving African culture and behaviour (Makhubele 2008).

Asante (1998:6) argues that: 'Afrocentricity beliefs in centralising Africans in the postmodern era: It is our history, our mythology, our creative idea, and our ethos exemplifying our collective will' (Iheduru 2016). Furthermore, Adeleke (1998:508) concludes that 'Afrocentricity developed as a response to the intellectual challenges and perceived threat of a mainstream historiography that was deemed Eurocentric' (Iheduru 2016). In the same vein, Daniels (2001) and Asante (1998) further describe Afrocentrism as a worldview through which people should interpret events and define reality. Makhubele (2008) posits that Afrocentrism is about affirming tradition and validating or promoting people's cultural worldview in their environment.

When assessing children who are allegedly sexually abused, forensic social workers should have an intensive understanding of African cultures that might influence the disclosure of possible sexual abuse. The main goal of Afrocentricity according to Makhubele (2008) is to elucidate historical fallacies about African people and their cultural values, traditions, practices and customs and to reconstruct a historiography that precisely embodies and acknowledges African contributions to human growth and development. During the assessment of sexually abused children, professionals must note that the African culture and expression of African values, beliefs, traditions and behaviours may have an influence. This writer is of the opinion that when investigating allegations of child sexual abuse, forensic social workers should look at information from the child from 'a black perspective' as opposed to a 'white perspective'. Asante (2007:n.p.) and Jackson (2012) contend that Afrocentrism enables researchers to view African identity from the perspective of African people. It is centred, located, oriented and grounded in African values, beliefs and practices. Concepts and theoretical terminology rooted in a Western frame of reference are inappropriate when conducting studies with people of other cultures in countries that have a history of subjection from the West (Kee 2004; Ling 2004). The Western researchers use standard concepts that may have little relevance to the experience of people from other cultures as it reflects their Eurocentric values (Kee 2004).

Even though Afrocentric theory appears to be useful during social work practice, especially with sexually abused children, the writer is of the view that it has both strong and weak points. On the strong point, for example, by using this theory as a lens to zoom into the nature of child sexual abuse, forensic social workers will obtain much intensive information on the culture of the child in relation to the allegation of sexual abuse. This is in line with Dwain (2007) who asserts that for social workers to be competent practitioners with the Afrocentric client, they should require insight into the culture of the client they are working with.

The weak point of this theory during forensic assessments of alleged sexually abused children is that, sometimes, forensic social workers can miss a lot of information as some African children are living in Westernised communities. It is therefore advisable that forensic social workers be as flexible as possible and assess the culture of the child and the situation in which they are at during pre-forensic assessment stage.

As one of the theoretical frameworks, Afrocentrism could help forensic social workers to acquire a working understanding of the uniqueness and special qualities of different children in South Africa with special reference to cultural values, traditions, practices and customs in a particular environment (Daniels 2001). The disclosure of child sexual abuse is a concern during forensic assessments. Children at times do not disclose because of their cultural environments. Through the use of Afrocentric theory, the forensic interviewing techniques can be contextualised to cultures of diverse children in South Africa and can help forensic social workers working with sexually abused children to obtain as much accurate information on the allegation of abuse as possible.

■ Ecosystems theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a Russian American psychologist, found the ecosystems theory in 1979. A system is a combination of elements with mutual reciprocity and identifiable boundaries

that form a complex or unitary whole. Bronfenbrenner's idea was that for one to understand a particular situation, it is necessary to perceive the interaction between various systems at different levels (Visser & Moleko 2012). Payne (2005) notes that systems' perspectives are paramount to social work practice because they emphasise the social focus of the profession. Social work is concerned with people's social connections and relationships. To this point, ecosystems theory is commonly used in social work today (Weyers 2011) to study the relationship that clients have with the systems around them.

In this chapter, this theory is used to indigenise forensic social work in a South African context. The ecosystems theory looks at the interrelatedness of the people and their environment (Derksen 2010; Weyers 2011). It explains the nature of social problems as a lack of an adaptive fit between the two. This theory is therefore relevant to explain the relationship between South African children and the environmental systems with which they interact. It is imperative during the assessment of sexually abused children that practitioners understand child development by focussing on the child's immediate settings and wider societal influences on how they develop (Smith, Cowie & Blades 2003; Spies 2006). For example, in Northern Sotho culture, children are sometimes taught by caregivers to adhere to family and societal rules, norms and standards, therefore forcing them (unintentionally) to keep sexual abuse a secret (Rapholo 2014:27). As a result, the effectiveness of forensic interviewing with these children may be hampered.

The ecosystems theory provides a conceptual lens through which human behaviour and social structures could be viewed and analysed concurrently. It is made up of ecological theory and systems theories, which are known as person-in-environment approaches (Weyers 2011). The science of human ecology emphasises the relationship, reciprocity and adaptations among organisms (individuals, couples, families, groups, organisations and communities) and between these organisms

and their bio-psycho-sociocultural-economic-political-physical environments. The latter, according to Weyers, brings an ordering of the complex and multiple variables found within human ecological systems. There is a relationship and reciprocal and adaptive transactions among systems and between these systems and their environments. Social work values person-in-environment, because it focuses on individuals, their environment and the transactions or relationships between the two.

The ecosystems theory gives the guiding framework for understanding practices (Franklin & Jordan 1999). The ecosystems theory asserts that the systems are always subsystems of the larger systems in an environment, but can be divided into smaller subsystem units at the same time. The writer is of the view that these subsystems influence each other behaviourally. Ecosystems theorists believe that when assessing sexually abused children, practitioners should pay attention to the family and the environmental systems in which such children interact with. For example, to view sexually abused children and their reluctance to disclose abuse in isolation from their family and environment is the same as ignoring the influence of the home in which they learn to perceive how they fit into the world, as well as the influences others have on their behaviour. Therefore, any risk behaviour an individual may manifest or display threatens the balance of the family of origin where roles and perceptions are nurtured.

In support of the above, Garbarino (2017) states the different levels in the ecological system when considering child sexual abuse, such as the family, home, ethnic culture and social systems like the neighbourhood and school. Fontes and Plummer (2010) posit that cultural norms affect the likelihood that child sexual abuse will be discovered by an adult or disclosed by a child. These authors further state that cultural norms also affect whether abused children's families will report child sexual abuse to authorities. Culture to a large extent sets rules which individuals inherit as members of a particular society, and as such it influences

how they experience and interpret their historically constituted world (Guma & Henda 2007). Therefore, forensic social workers should be conscious of the role that culture plays in the families' lives (Pence 2011) when conducting forensic assessments with sexually abused children. Both Gogela (2013) and Rapholo (2014) made a conclusion from their studies that culture plays a significant role on families 'reluctance to disclose child sexual abuse'. Rapholo (2014) has established that most Northern Sotho families secretly resolve the matter of child sexual abuse within the family, especially if it is intra-familial sexual abuse.

Although not specifically designed as such, ecosystems theory (Colton, Sanders & Williams 2001; Cottrell & Monk 2004; Spies 2006) offers a valuable perspective from which to understand the multiple factors involved in the assessment of child sexual abuse allegations during forensic social work interviews. When used to conceptualise the disclosure of child sexual abuse in the South African communities and families, this theory outlines the reciprocal interaction between the four primary levels of influence: the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem and mesosystem.

□ **Macrosystem**

Colton et al. (2001) and Spies (2006) defined the macrosystem (larger layer) as the consistencies in the form of the lower order (micro-, meso- and exosystems) that exist at the level of the subculture or culture as a whole, along with the belief systems or ideology underlying such inconsistencies. It includes the organisations and social institutions in the society or subculture in which an individual function. Spies (2006; Colton et al. 2001) states that at the level of the macrosystem, children internalise values in relation to gender, disability, race, sexual orientation and so forth. It further includes broad cultural values and belief systems that condone, influence and legitimise sexual abuse against children (Cottrell & Monk 2004).

The definition of child sexual abuse varies among the various cultures in South Africa. For example, from this writer's experience of working with sexually abused children, certain cultures see certain sexual acts with children as the norm and not as sexual abuse. Ngubane (2010) contends that the notion of child sexual abuse depends sometimes on what a specific ethnic group validates as sexual abuse. It is a traditional expectation from children in the African culture that they should adhere to the cultural beliefs and norms of the society. What hampers these beliefs, according to Shumba and Moorad (2000), is that even though the *Children's Act* expands on existing human rights and norms and focuses exclusively on children and their rights, some cultures still view this act as a radical idea that violates the African culture and tradition. According to Maliba-Ramagoshi et al. (2007:445), in the Setswana culture child sexual abuse 'often results from the belief of "ownership of the other"'. Children are generally regarded by parents and society as their property in the same way that many men believe they own women. Chabeletsane (2015:04) states that this, in the Setswana culture, is reflected in the saying *Logong lo ojwa lo sa le metsi* [which justifies the disciplining of children through physical punishment or deprivation]. Chabeletsane further states that the knowledge is that children will not fight back or defend themselves. Therefore, these acts deprive children who are being physically or sexually abused or whose rights are being denied by their parents (or guardians or relatives), not to seek assistance from even the courts or *Lekgotla* [traditional court]. Such situations leave children powerless and not knowing where to run for help. The writer is of the view that such cultural practices render children unheard and unassisted.

Collins, Jordan and Coleman (2010) point out that at this level, social values create social blueprints. Macrosystem values trickle down through the various layers of the ecosystem to shape attitudes and behaviours (Collins et al. 2010). It is imperative that

professionals look at what risk factors are at play during the facilitation of the disclosure of child sexual abuse with children in the South African context. Recognising risk factors will put social workers in a position to remove them. The concept 'risk' refers to how one is likely to experience a probable adverse event (Collins et al. 2010:146). A variety of factors contribute to the risk of a problem developing (see the example provided above in terms of culture). When assessing sexually abused children, the forensic assessor should take into account the level and cultural context of the child and make use of the possible techniques that will better suit the background of the child. The developmental assessment of a child should therefore incorporate factors of the macrosystem, as they have a significant impact on the child and his or her situation.

□ Exosystem

The exosystem refers to social structures that influence individual and family functioning to create an environment in which the potential for violence is exacerbated (Cottrell & Monk 2004). Spies (2006) refers to the exosystem (outside system) as one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect or are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person. It refers to settings in which the individual does not participate directly, but which affect him or her. Collins et al. (2010) argue that family does not directly participate in the exosystem, but its effects ripple out to the family and its members. Many of these effects trickle down through social institutions in which families participate, such as schools and churches, just to mention a few. This simply means that even though the family is the primary source of socialisation, other institutions that have partnership with children also have an impact on their upbringing. It is therefore crucial during forensic interviews that interviewers be aware of the role that culture plays in families (Pence 2011).

□ **Microsystem**

The microsystem refers to the interactive patterns in a family that contribute to violence, and these may include unequal power dynamics, negative communication styles and limited conflict-resolution skills (Cottrell & Monk 2004). Spies (2006) argues that the microsystem (small system) involves the patterns of individuals, roles and interpersonal reactions experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics. The examples of this are home (with parents and siblings), school (with teachers and peers) and the workplace (with colleagues). It is important that forensic assessors understand that there are microsystems for each child and that they have an understanding of systems that increase as the child grows older. In the microsystem, the first layer of relationship is within the family (Collins et al. 2010). These authors argue that this set of relationships is small and starts with the primary caretaker, usually the mother. As the child grows, the relationship expands to embrace the father, siblings and extended kin when available. The social riches of a child is measured by enduring reciprocal, multifaceted relationships that emphasise playing, working and loving (Garbarino 1992). As the child grows, his or her skills also grow to envelope peers and family friends.

It is imperative that professionals build a good relationship with children during forensic assessments, while the disclosure of child sexual abuse is a process. Victims of sexual abuse are not always willing to share their secret with anyone until they gain trust of that person. Children usually disclose to their mothers. However, according to Ferrara (2002) and the WHO (1999), mothers are sometimes also victims of the same sexually abusive behaviour by the same perpetrator. If caregivers of children can be provided with support in terms of the disclosure of child sexual abuse, the issue of sexual violence against women and children can be minimised.

De Voe and Faller (2002) mention that many children find it difficult to talk about their experiences of being sexually abused;

therefore, the caregiver's reactions or anticipations are likely to affect the willingness to disclose abuse. According to Spies (2006), caregivers of children play a very fundamental role, not only in recognising the sexual abuse of the child but also in supporting these children 'to speak out against the person who sexually abused them'. This writer has learnt from his practical experience that most children talk freely to professionals who have gained the support of the caregivers, especially on embarrassing issues like sexual abuse. Ntlatleng (2011) shares this view by pointing out that the caregiver's role during the disclosure process is to support the sexually abused child. The caregiver has to handle the child very carefully. Getz (2013) emphasises that the sexually abused child reveals more information about sexual abuse in the disclosing process when a caregiver is involved. Gogela (2013:24) recommends that parents should at all times support their sexually abused children. Crosson-Tower (2005) contends that sometimes parents of sexually abused children do not disclose sexual abuse because of the high degree of emotional pressure as a result of what happened to their children. The way the child is treated after disclosure of the sexual abuse has a great impact on the level of stigma and on how the child feels (Goodyear-Brown 2012). Parental response and support is therefore vital in the recovery of the child from sexual abuse. Pollio, Deblinger and Runyong (2011) state that children are able to overcome the consequences of sexual abuse if they can be protected and supported, especially by their parents.

□ **Mesosystem**

Cottrell and Monk (2004) state that the mesosystem involves the ontogenetic factors. The ontogenetic factors include the individual characteristics and experiences that an abusive individual brings to the relationship, and these factors are influenced by or nested in the other three levels. Examples of ontogenetic factors include communication skills, emotional and mental health, attachment or intimacy style, and various

learnt behaviours. Among these, the most powerful influencing factor involves the connection between early childhood victimisation and the use of violence by that individual against others later in life. Collins et al. (2010) and Spies (2006) refer to these factors as the mesosystem (small system). These authors argue that the mesosystem involves the relationship between microsystems, such as the family and the school. Garbarino (1992) states that richness of the child's mesosystem is measured by the number and quality of connections. Strong relationships are those in which important people work together for the child's best interest as a friendly and caring environment for the child. If these systems are strong, the child is more likely to develop skills and abilities to navigate through different systems. Contrary to the above systems, children alternatively may disclose sexual abuse to friends, peers or a teacher if they have found them to be trustworthy.

When these four primary levels of influence are applied, a comprehensive and flexible template emerges from which we can understand the individual, interpersonal and societal dynamics involved in the disclosure of child sexual abuse. Based on the available research and on the writer's clinical experience, an ecological approach would predict that in a case where a child is reluctant to disclose sexual abuse, the potential influencing factors could include, namely, (1) what their culture validates as sexual abuse (macrosystem), (2) the role played by culture in families, for instance, how the family addresses child sexual abuse, especially if it is an incest (exosystem), (3) negative or ineffective parenting styles, parental conflict and the minimisation of family problems and who the child is close to within the family (microsystem) and (4) factors such as low parental attachment and the relationship that the child has with systems outside the family, such as friends and teachers (ontogeny).

The ecosystems theory, in a nutshell, emphasises the importance of cultural values and belief systems on the disclosure of child sexual abuse, which to date has been inadequately addressed in the literature. Therefore, this theory is relevant

when assessing children who are allegedly been sexually abused. For example, as stated above, cultural practices and beliefs in South Africa and Africa as a whole play a role in children's reluctance to disclose abuse. Therefore, forensic social workers should have an adequate knowledge of the culture of the children whom they assess. Primarily, children should be interviewed by a forensic social worker who comes from the same culture as them.

■ **The dynamics of indigenising forensic social work in South Africa**

This section is about the dynamics of indigenising forensic social work in South Africa which includes the level of communication among children in disclosing child sexual abuse, language diversity among children and interviewers. Fontes and Plummer (2010) aver that cultural and language barriers have serious problems when working with children from different cultures. Fontes and Fishelsman (2016) denote that forensic interviewers should meet children where they are in terms of their developmental level, readiness to disclose, language and culture. The field of forensic social work lacks research in a South African context which will accommodate children's diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

■ **The level of communication among children in disclosing sexual abuse**

According to Fontes and Plummer (2010:491), the disclosure of child sexual abuse is complicated, often delayed, and has implications for long-term recovery from the effects of abuse. Child sexual abuse is a global issue and is almost uniformly hidden in secrecy and silence. Fontes and Plummer denote that the process and aftermaths of disclosures of child sexual abuse vary greatly by culture as well as the child's gender, age and other variables. For the purpose of this chapter, the focus is on the

relationship between age of the child and sociocultural practices, which influences forensic assessments in South Africa.

In some cultures in South Africa, it is believed that children should not discuss issues relating to sexual activities with older people. This hampers the effectiveness of forensic assessments and children fail to disclose sexual abuse, more especially adolescents. Spies (2012) supports these findings in that the child's cultural background has an impact on his or her ability to relate possible sexual abuse. Spies maintains that respect for elders in some cultures may influence a child not to tell about alleged sexual abuse. Rapholo (2014) has also established from his study with caregivers of children at Polokwane surrounding areas in the Capricorn district of the Limpopo Province that in certain cultures, the adult world predominates. Children are not allowed to talk about sex with the elders. This, as a result, influences the disclosure rate during forensic social work assessments with children who are allegedly sexually abused. Fontes and Plummer (2010) state from their clinical observations in the US that cultural values and families' position within society impact the likelihood of disclosure and also impact the steps professionals need to take to support disclosures. This writer concurs with the above sentiment in that in South Africa, children are advised to keep sexual abuse as a secret matter to be dealt with in the family for the reputation and dignity of the family's sake. The decision to either disclose or report child sexual abuse is not an individual or solitary decision, but it is rather made within the social context. Fontes and Plummer (2010) maintain that children and their families are influenced by the awareness that others both within and beyond their culture and social networks are watching, judging, encouraging and demanding certain responses.

Culture has rules and guidelines which its members inherit, and as such it influences how members of a particular culture experience and interpret their historically constituted world (Guma & Henda 2007). Forensic social workers should therefore

be conscious of the role played by culture when assessing children who are alleged to be sexually abused (Pence 2011). Both Gogela (2013) in the Eastern Cape and Rapholo (2014) in the Capricorn district of the Limpopo Province established from their studies that culture plays a role in children and their families' reluctance to disclose child sexual abuse. Most Northern Sotho families according to Rapholo (2014) resolve the matter of child sexual abuse within the family, especially if an abuse was committed by a member of the family. Goodman-Brown et al. (2003) support these findings in that the family is least likely to disclose when the sexual abuse is within the family. In support of the above previous research findings, some forensic social workers from this writer's doctoral research asserted that boundaries of culture among families have an impact in the non-disclosure of child sexual abuse. Some forensic social workers have indicated that from their experience of assessing South African children who have been sexually abused, the issue of child sexual abuse is very sensitive, and it is addressed within the family, especially if it is intra-familial. These support the study conducted by Rapholo (2014) in Capricorn District of Limpopo who established that in the Northern Sotho cultures, the disclosure of child sexual abuse is usually resolved by families affected rather than the incident being reported to the legal officials, especially if it is inter-familial abuse. This is to avoid conflict between families. From Attah's (2016) ecosystemic point of view, children become vulnerable to sexual abuse based on community risk and protective dynamics that form an integral part of the victim and offender's course of development, social circumstances and physical surroundings.

Forensic social workers therefore should establish the cultural background of the child during forensic assessments, and ideally, a child should be interviewed by a forensic social worker who understands his or her culture. The forensic social worker should have a sound knowledge of the cultural values in South Africa which impact the disclosure of child sexual abuse. Fontes and Plummer (2010) denote that there are certain cultural values

such as shame, virginity, respect, honour, patriarchy, taboos and modesty, to mention a few, which silence the disclosure of child sexual abuse. Attah (2016) states that knowledge of these cultural contexts may potentially provide a framework within which it may be more possible to help predict, describe and control child sexual abuse.

■ **The process of indigenising forensic social work practice in South Africa**

To indigenise forensic social work in a South African context, the following should be taken into account: planning for the interview, during the interview, and after the interview.

□ **Planning for the interview**

- The forensic social worker should ensure that the interview setting is welcoming and comfortable for people from different cultures. For example, the interviewer should pay special attention to the language of written materials, the magazines in the waiting rooms and artwork on the walls (Fontes & Plummer 2010).
- The forensic social worker should ensure that all professionals involved embrace cultural competency practices so that they can adapt to the cultural background of the child throughout the intervention process.
- The forensic social worker should assess the types of communities to refer to in relation to the family of the child concerned. For example, each family may have cultural connections or multiple communities, including social and religious networks that shape their cultural values and practices (Fontes & Plummer 2010).
- The forensic social worker should establish how the communities may influence the child and/or the family. This may depend on aspects of acculturation, including how long the family has lived in this community and/or country concerned or how much time they spend with members of their own ethnic community only. It is common to find

acculturation differences within a single family (Fontes & Plummer 2010).

- The forensic social worker should establish the child's gender in relation to cultural factors in his or her family. As males and females face distinctive issues that may influence disclosure, the forensic social worker should examine these possible barriers prior to interview.
- The forensic social worker should establish the barriers to disclosure in the cultural situation that the child comes from.
- The forensic social worker should establish the language competency of the child. Children should be interviewed in their preferred language, especially their mother language. Ideally, an interviewer who is fluent in the child's language would conduct the interview. The second and less-preferred option is for a trained interviewer to enlist the help of a professional interpreter (Fontes & Plummer 2010; Truter 2010).
- The forensic social worker should establish the pros and cons of ethnic matching between the interviewer and the child. In some cases, a child will feel more comfortable with a person who is of the same race or ethnic group. In contrast, Fontes and Plummer (2010) denote that for some children it can be difficult to disclose possible sexual abuse to people who are from the same ethnic, community, tribe or clan as theirs as this would remind the child of the abuser.
- The interviewer should be aware of his or her professional ethical mandates. According to Bell (2014), the ethical mandates in social work specifies standards of professional conduct and practice requiring social service users to protect the rights and promote the interests of service users, and be accountable for the quality of their work. The interviewers must not abuse, neglect or harm children during the forensic interviews.

□ During the interview

- The interviewer properly orientates the child to the interview. Fontes and Plummer (2010) note that specific information about the process and expectations of the interview will help the child feel comfortable.

- The interviewer should gently challenge habitual taboos. For example, interviewers may need to directly challenge assumptions that children will be silent with authorities, by saying something like, 'In many situations, adults don't want children to speak a lot. Here, I really need to hear what you have to say'. The main idea about forensic assessments or interviews is to gain information about what happened to children. Most children in South African communities are socialised not to talk to people above their age about sex-related issue as that would be a sign of disrespect. To this point, the forensic interviews become compromised and children end-up withholding the information which would be helpful during forensic assessments.
- The interviewer should ask questions which will include diverse South African family structures.

□ After the interview

- The forensic social worker should ensure that the child has been advocated for and is linked to the relevant sources of support after the interview. Fontes and Plummer (2010) assert that the child should be helped to identify a personal support system, both within and outside of the family, as the child may have feelings or recollections that emerge after the interview is completed or may be facing intense pressure to recant.
- The forensic social worker should establish the cultural values and strengths in case the agency should have an opportunity to continue working with the concerned child and establish how non-abusive relatives can be engaged in accepting, protecting and rebuilding a relationship with their victimised child (Fontes & Plummer 2010).

■ Language diversity among children and interviewers

A language barrier is a very serious problem during forensic social work practice (Fontes & Fishelsman 2016; Truter 2010). Sexual abuse against children happens in all cultures and

South Africa has a limited number of forensic social workers wherein most of them cannot speak the language of the child to be assessed. In South Africa, 11 official languages are spoken, which are English, Afrikaans, Zulu (*IsiZulu*), Xhosa (*IsiXhosa*), Ndebele (*IsiNdebele*), Northern Sotho (*Sesotho sa Leboa*), Sotho (*Sesotho*), Tswana (*Setswana*), Tsonga (*Xitsonga*), Venda (*Tshivenda*) and Swati (*Siswati*). Spies (2012) suggests that ideally every child should be interviewed in his or her home language by someone from his or her culture. Fontes and Fishelsman (2016) established the significance of interviewing children in their mother language during forensic interviews. The most common language in the US where forensic social work originated from is English. The approach and techniques used during forensic interviews are from the Eurocentric perspective. This requires forensic social workers to be vigilant when conducting forensic interviews with South African children as they may not fit into what is being practised in the US. For example, multilingual children who are fluent in English might be more comfortable in speaking their first language when discussing sensitive and potentially traumatic issues related to child sexual abuse (Fontes & Fishelsman 2016). To add to this, Walker (1999) argues that children who speak English as a second language are at risk during forensic interviews in that translating what they have heard in a second language is more difficult not only to them but also for anyone. For example, in a study conducted by Fontes and Fishelsman (2016) in the US, it was established that bilingual children had difficulties in conveying information about specific body parts and sexual acts. Therefore, this shows the importance of coming to the level of the child during forensic interviews in terms of the language which they speak. This writer has observed from interviewing children that when they are being interviewed in their non-preferred language, their expression lacks specificity.

To make forensic social work indigenous in South Africa, forensic social workers should establish the first language of the

child and if possible interview the child using their home language or referring the case to a colleague who speaks the language of the child. As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, the main goal of forensic interviews is to gather intensive information from children about allegations of sexual abuse. If this is not being paid attention to, the information which children relate during forensic interviews about sexual abuse allegations might be compromised.

Other studies such as the one conducted by Truter (2010) in South Africa developed the recommendations for the need of the interpreter or bilingual interviewers to indigenise forensic social work. Unfortunately, the reality is that such trained and multilingual interviewers from different cultures are not available in many communities. The child's cultural background and its impact on the child's ability to relate possible sexual abuse needs to be assessed. For example, in certain cultures, the value of respect is of paramount importance, and children are informed not to talk with people above their age about sexual activities (Fouche 2007; Rapholo 2014). In most instances, the problem is when assessing black children during forensic social work investigations. For example, the writer has observed that a black child who has never seen or spoken to a white interviewer usually reacts in fear during the assessment. According to Spies (2012), it is important that the translator be present when the child arrives and that a known, trusted adult accompany the child to relieve anxiety. The issue of diversity during forensic assessments should receive attention. Failure to do so may disadvantage the interviewer to get as much accurate information from the child as possible. When such children are referred for assessment interviews, the professionals should establish the need for a translator by simply asking the language the child uses at home. Even if the child studies English at school, it is still necessary to get a translator as the child might talk about things that he or she can only describe in his or her home language, for example, body parts, sexual activities or any other contextual information.

This writer is however in a slight contradiction to the use of translators during forensic interviews. To contradict the use of translators, the researcher has observed from his practical experience of working with children that the presence of a third person (be it an interpreter) in the interview room as being distracting at times for both the interviewer and the child, and as interfering with the normal flow of conversation. This may cause either the interviewer or the child to feel awkward or uncomfortable having to communicate through a third person and the disclosure of possible sexual abuse might be compromised. However, one should take note that forensic social work is a scarce skill in South Africa. There are not many trained forensic social workers; therefore, it is difficult to find forensic social workers who speak the same language as the child. This writer recommends that forensic social work in South Africa should be given top priority as it is a very good strategy on the protection of children who are alleged to be sexually abused and the conviction of perpetrators of child sexual abuse. The SACSSP should recognise this helpful field of specialisation in social work and the institutions of higher learning should develop short accredited courses to train enough social workers who can be placed to their regions of origin so as to deal with the issues of language diversity during forensic interviews. Meanwhile, it is still a challenge; the use of interpreters is the only strategy.

During the interview, the professional must prepare the translator prior to the interview. According to Spies (2012:214), the following should be ensured:

- the purpose of the interview and logistics, such as aids, to be used
- the translator should know that he or she should not change the question and sentence structure
- the use of developmentally appropriate language
- everything should be interpreted and the interviewer will determine the relevance

- caution against touching and gesturing
- *the physical space*: the interviewer faces the child and the translator sits slightly behind and to the side of the interviewer.

The child should be prepared regarding the role of the translator and reasons for the presence. It is the opinion of this writer that such translators should be trained on the developmental issues regarding interviewing children and the dynamics of child sexual abuse.

■ Conclusion

Child sexual abuse in South Africa and across the globe is high, and this calls for various professions in the field of child protection services to collaborate their efforts for the best interests of children. Forensic social workers lately are also part of role-players to provide a forensic evidence into the allegations of child sexual abuse. There is a serious need of scientific research in this new field in South Africa which will help in the establishment of guidelines and policies that will be used in the South African context and meet children where they are. The issue of language and culture during forensic assessments is a great concern which might compromise the evidence which the child has to provide for court judgement. To this point, training in the field of forensic social work in South Africa is a demand for the protection of children and conviction and prosecution of perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

■ Summary: Chapter 13

Child sexual abuse is a serious social and health issue that affects people worldwide. A variety of professionals are trying to address this problem. It has numerous consequences, such as psychological, physical, social and emotional effects. Forensic social work has therefore been introduced in South Africa recently to facilitate the disclosure of child sexual abuse. This chapter aimed to discuss the dynamics on how to indigenise

forensic social work in a South African perspective, which include the level of communication among children in disclosing sexual abuse and language diversity among children and forensic interviewers. This chapter was guided by Afrocentric and ecosystems theories that are in consonance with indigenisation. An extensive literature review was conducted, focussing on the above-mentioned dynamics for indigenising forensic social work in South Africa.

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Social work, with its chequered history replete with admonitions of its lack of scientific rigour, continues to occupy its academic space, criticism(s) notwithstanding. The source of this tirade is attributed to lack of or underutilisation of theory in its outlook. Admittedly, social work relies more on social science theories, with its clinical orientation largely informed by theories from psychology. Therefore, a book that purports aligning theory, research and practice is very welcome. Some chapters in the book are ground-breaking. The Afrocentric perspective on social work practice contributes to the current discourse on decolonisation of social work teaching and practice.

**Prof. Dr Sello Sithole, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo, South Africa**

This book addresses what South African students in higher education have been advocating for – a decolonised curriculum. Very few black South African scholars have attempted to write a book on these matters. It intends to come up with practical solutions to the problem we are facing in higher education. African ethics and Afrocentric world view filter throughout this book. Reflections are brought forth as to how to decolonise social work curriculum either through research or through practicum. The book suggests a way of communicating between the university and the social work agency so as to solve disparity in teaching and the workplace. It is a must-read and it addresses the shortage of decolonised books. South African universities can use this book as a springboard to decolonise curricula, as well as case studies in teaching and learning.

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