

CRITICAL SOCIAL WORK STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Prospects and Challenges

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CULTURAL TRAUMA IN SOUTH AFRICAN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Implications for social work training and practice

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ABSTRACT

Despite South Africa's shift into a democratic dispensation in 1994, historical and ongoing structural inequalities continue to disproportionately locate large numbers of citizens in marginalised communities where they are socially and economically vulnerable. Families and individuals often struggle for survival against great odds, exposing them to recurring traumatisation. It is especially in these marginalised communities where social work services are located. This chapter interrogates social work practices in South African marginalised communities, arguing that social workers may feel disempowered as they struggle to interrupt the cycle of traumatisation and re-traumatisation within the context of a shared-trauma reality. Marginalised communities can be understood against a history of colonialism and apartheid that brought about huge social disruptions. These disruptions often carry a cross-generational collective trauma that remains present across time and space and the pain becomes visible through people's entrapment in social dysfunctions, like alcoholism, drug abuses, family and community violence and institutional disruptions. A trauma-informed social work practice can support the profession to effectively position itself in the field of cultural healing. The author argues for a trauma-informed training and practice with a focus on cultural trauma to be foregrounded as a strategy towards decolonisation of the profession. Through narrative engagements with a small number of social workers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole the researcher sought a deeper understanding of social workers' experiences of working in marginalised communities and their views of how their training prepared them to understand and work with historically marginalised communities.

KEYWORDS

cultural trauma, cross-generational trauma transmission, post-colonial, trauma-informed social work

INTRODUCTION

Apartheid left a legacy of a society rooted in inequality and dispossession (Clarke & Bassett, 2016). Despite the high hopes that prevailed during and after the shift to a democratic dispensation in 1994, community-based struggles are ongoing and are usually framed around socio-economic transformation, rights and redress. Gibson (2011) indicates that South Africa made significant strides since 1994, with crude racial laws being abolished and a wide range of human rights being guaranteed in the Constitution. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), with all its shortcomings made public the horrific deeds committed under apartheid and in doing so ensured that the murders, tortures, beatings and forced removals become part of the countries' historical records. However, exclusive colonial apartheid spaces have increased (Fanon, 1963) and despite achieving constitutional democracy, the traumatic footprint of the past remains with racial classification not demolished and deep levels of poverty, inequality and violence persisting (Clarke & Bassett, 2016). The siege mentality of apartheid has merely been reframed (Gibson, 2011) with gated communities, private security and rapid-response patrols still managing to effectively separate the different socio-economic classes in society.

South Africa embraced a transitional justice that focused primarily on violations of civil and political rights while not speaking to the debilitating effects of socio-economic disempowerment associated with past structural injustices (Jaichand, 2017). This had huge consequences for marginalised communities where transition into a democratic dispensation has not made a significant difference to their material needs with poverty and unemployment prevailing at disturbing levels. In 2015, about 30.4 million (55.5%) people lived in poverty, only a slight decrease from the country's 2006 statistics of 31.6 million or 66.6% of the population (StatsSA, 2017). In 2019, this figure seems to remain the same with 55.5% of people living in poverty and 25.2% of people living below the food poverty line (BusinessTech, 2019).

Omotor (2009); Khan, Ahmed, Nawaz and Zaman (2015); Bhorat, Lilenstein, Monnakgotla, Thornton and Van der Zee (2017) in their research indicate that unemployment and inequality seems to be a determinant of crime and insecurity. More affluent communities respond to this through an increase in their security, resulting in a decrease in their experience of crime, especially property crime. Poorer communities are not so lucky and are often left under-resourced in favour of the security measures in more affluent ones, with devastating effects (Bhorat et.al, 2017; Tyabazayo, 2014). As a result, citizens in poorer communities have a higher experience of ongoing crime and violence. Many of our poorer communities are a stark reminder of apartheid architecture (Sain, 2017), where residents find themselves locked in a socio-economic trap and unable to create conditions that limit their traumatised

and re-traumatisation. Social issues like unemployment, poverty, crime, substance abuse, school drop-outs and gender-based violence are regular features for the people living there. Under these conditions, people live in constant fear of being victims of crime and lack trust in the police, while young children grow up thinking that their environment devoured by gang warfare and street violence is normal (Sain, 2017).

As people, we are value processors (Kira, 2001) with a sense of self. Our prelusive self or value processing system serves to control the unconscious appraisal of traumatic events with the purpose to activate or inhibit our emotional and cognitive processing (Kira, 2001). In a context of high levels of societal traumatisation, people, especially young people, risk having their self-system significantly disrupted.

Martinez and Kawan (2018) indicate that social workers often work with people who, in addition to daily traumatic events, may have complex histories of abuse and violence alongside their bio-psycho-social spiritual needs. Individual trauma histories in this context are encapsulated within a larger trauma narrative. Over time, this narrative may accumulate into a multigenerational-shared account of events that have harmful effects on functioning and quality of life. People with individual histories of trauma may be more likely to experience negative behavioral health outcomes, as well as decreases in daily functioning and quality of life. Compounding individual trauma is cultural trauma, referred to as the cumulative psychological and emotional wounding across generations (Martinez & Kawan, 2018).

Tamburro (2013) highlights this risk, further suggesting that a social work education and practice that is not rooted in the realities of its context and that is largely Eurocentric continues to marginalise indigenous people's knowledge and culture. One can thus argue that as a disciplinary fault line, it will not give sufficient recognition to the historical context that underpins the present-day social issues in marginalised communities and neither does it provide spaces for people to co-construct solutions to these issues. Without a lens that can engage with the historical roots of trauma within marginalised communities, social workers may find themselves, as Rossiter (2005) indicates, in an ambivalent space where they feel personally responsible for the failures of the discipline to enact real authentic change. Tamburro (2013) argues that to view social work curriculum from a post-colonial lens can be a much more productive space to work in.

While the policy framework for social welfare in South Africa shifted from a predominantly statutory focus to post-apartheid policies with a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention work, research done by Hope and Van Wyk (2018) shows that there continues to be a strong focus on statutory work with limited developmental intervention when families experience trauma. In this context, social workers are at risk of operating in ways that are not only ineffective, but are also a

form of misrecognition of the very people they are supposed to provide services to, if they don't understand the social and historical construct within which certain social problems occur. It is with this view in mind that the author locates the argument for a trauma-informed social work practice situated in its historical roots. The collective memory of traumatic events is a dynamic social psychological process, linked to the construction of meaning that creates a sense of self-continuity, that connects people with a sense of self, others and the environment (Hirschberger, 2018). Over time, collective trauma plays a role in group identity and provides a lens through which they view their social environment.

For Visser (2015), a key failure of dominant trauma theory is its depoliticising and dehistoricising tendencies that does not consider the devastating impact of atrocities, genocide and war. Trauma theory that remains stuck in a Eurocentric event-based framework fails to account for the sustained and long processes of the trauma of colonialism and as a result is unable to connect with the experiences of large groups in the post-colonial aftermath. Priya (2015), working from a social constructionist approach, is of the opinion that to link people's historical experiences of trauma with their own meaning-making processes provides a culturally contextualised understanding of people's suffering and healing.

The author reports on a qualitative study conducted among a small sample of social workers in the Nelson Mandela Bay area. Cultural trauma is used as a theoretical lens to begin a process of understanding the experiences of social workers and to argue for a trauma-informed social work training with a specific focus on cultural trauma that encapsulates the history of the country in understanding current-day issues. The author furthermore argues that given the contextuality that cultural trauma suggests, it can potentially contribute to a decolonial social work text.

CULTURAL TRAUMA AS THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

Alexander (2001:1) defines cultural trauma as “a collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounds the identity-formation of people”. Through this cultural process the collective traumatic effect of history on social groups arises from a collective meaning that the events come to have. Eyerman (2001) sees cultural trauma as rooted in an event or series of events outside the direct experiences thereof, with a temporal distance between the event and the experience of it. It is within this spatial distance that traditional trauma theory is unable to give expression to people's experiences. A sense of historical misrecognition is usually located in the experience of cultural trauma (Alexander, 2001, 2004; Baxter, 2011; Nicholas & McIntosh, 2002; Stamm, Stamm, Hudnall & Higson, 2003; Visser, 2011, 2014), and this provides an important link between the historical event(s) and the experience of them. Hopkins,

Botterill, Songhera and Arshad (2017) regard this misrecognition as going beyond a process of being devalued by others. For them, it is the very act of being denied the status of full partnership in social interactions. For Fraser (2007), this misrecognition is a form of injustice that has denied people any form of social standing.

The transmission of trauma from one generation to another takes place when there is not sufficient processing of the original trauma. Menzies (2010) indicates that this transmission of trauma is behavioural where destructive behavioural patterns are normalised by younger generations who observe the overt and covert expression of these. The inability of a country to disrupt the cycle of trauma in families and communities has dire consequences for generations to come. Coyle (2014) suggests that multiple generations of families can transmit the damage of trauma through years. People are especially at risk of trauma and an inability to work through it when they come from a family where there were traumatic experiences for their parents and generations before. Where trauma has been untreated, parents can transmit the untreated trauma to the child through the attachment bond and through the messaging about self and the world, safety and danger. This generational family trauma transmission (Kira, 2001) can play out in parental neglect and in the internal resources children gain or do not gain because of their parents' inability to provide them with it. These resources refer to a healthy view of the self, the ability to trust oneself and one's perception of reality and the ability to connect with other people and receive support, to trust that other people can act in your best interest. Coyle (2014) is of the impression that without these resources, interactions with stressful events are potentially overwhelming to the psyche. Each one of these interactions affects not only the individual, but the next generation as well.

CULTURAL TRAUMA IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Apartheid left a significant legacy for South Africans to grapple with. Wyngaard (2019) speaks of a sense of historical misrecognition as he reflects on the stories of people displaced by apartheid South Africa. He recognises acts of humiliation that caused harm to the identity of many South Africans. The Group Areas Act (1950), as well as the Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act (1952) are examples of legislation that severely disrupted people's lives. Black families were torn apart as working Black men lived in hostels in big cities while their families remained in former homelands and were not allowed to live with them. For Mazibuko (2000), this characteristic of migrancy is particular to African countries as it enforced parental absenteeism, putting significant strain on the family system. These allowed for conditions fitting what Kira (2001) calls 'cross-generational', where the historical disruption within a collective setting plays into cross-generation transmission in families.

The Group Areas Act (1950) as part of the apartheid government's spatial planning did not only disrupt communal groups, but had an impact on families as many parents had to travel long distances every day at high cost, limiting the discretionary income available to the family and influencing the way in which families could spend time together. Relocation of large groups of people, as happened during the colonialism and apartheid eras, needs certain conditions for the transition to be positive. Displaced Europeans during the 17th and 18th centuries could use financial and political power (Weeder, 2006) to create a sense of place in South Africa, ensuring a successful colonial project as they developed habits and customs through repeated events (Cross, 2001). This happened at the expense of slaves and indigenous people of the same era who had their spaces disrupted. Without the political and economic power, it was much more difficult to develop a sense of place, rather, these were traumatic events for them. Marginalisation of this magnitude results in large groups being squeezed out of the mainstream social and political life and silenced by history (Eze, 2008). They become known to the world through the voices of others and have little power to engage on their own terms. For Adonis (2018), the magnitude of these historical disruptions derail populations from their natural, projected historical course resulting in a legacy of physical, social and economic disparities that persist across generations.

Nicholas and McIntosh (2002) remind us that the wounds left by historical events, such as forced removals, become visible through social dysfunctions like alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence and crime, challenges that social workers regularly encounter in their work. These are signs of a deeply disrupted social identity. Mohatt, Thompson, Thai and Tebes (2014) note, through their research among the Canadian First Nations People, a relationship between family histories of forced removals from families of origin, and behavioural health challenges in later generations such as sexual violence, involvement in the child welfare system and drug abuse among other issues. Historical disruptions like forced removals had deep social, economic and cultural consequences. South Africa is among 20 countries worldwide with the highest consumption of substances (Mbandlwa & Dorasamy, 2020), with an increase in poverty, unemployment and homelessness mostly among Black South Africans (Turton & Van Breda, 2019). About 42.2% of South African children had experienced some form of maltreatment, be that sexual, physical, emotional or neglect, while 82% had experienced some form of victimisation (whether criminal victimisation or exposure to family or community violence) in their life (Artz, Burton, Ward, Leoschut, Phyfer, Lloyd, Kassanje & Mottee, 2016). As Nicholas & McIntosh (2002) say, these may be wounds of our collective cultural trauma that manifest in various forms. Many victims do not report instances of maltreatment, and for those who do, their experiences of the social, police, criminal justice and health services are not always positive.

Social workers work in context of overwhelming needs and statutory requirements, making it difficult for them to engage comprehensively with preventative work (McLea & Mayers, 2017). Hoosain (2013) is of the impression that if social workers in the South African context do not engage sufficiently with the cross-generational transmission of trauma it will limit their ability to disrupt the cycle of traumatising for individuals, families and communities. McLea and Mayers (2017) illustrate how valuable it can be when social work intervention does focus on contextual traumatising in resource-poor communities. Reporting on the Grief and Trauma Project in communities around Cape Town, women who participated in the project reported significant changes in their processing of trauma and management of future life events.

The need for a post-colonial lens in trauma work in South Africa

The university curriculum plays a key role in preparing professionals for the context in which they will be working. Mbembe (2015) argues that there is a need to decolonise knowledge in the higher education sector as he urges us to question curriculums that are designed to meet the needs of colonialism and apartheid many years into a democratic dispensation. He argues that while many of our institutions continue to teach obsolete forms of knowledge with obsolete pedagogies, the risk of this going unchallenged is huge. As we allow what Mbembe calls the 'Eurocentric canon' to dictate whose knowledge has value and whose knowledge is located outside the realm of legitimacy, we play into the notion of a knowledge subject that is confined in itself, yet looks at the world outside and supposedly creates objective knowledge about the objects being observed. By doing this, we alienate the students in our university and, in this context, our social work students as carriers of legitimate knowledge through their subjective experiences within a historical and political context (Foucault, 1972). When we fail to disrupt these Eurocentric principles upon which our curriculum is built, we allow social work students to emerge as professionals with a pedagogical framework that alienates the community members as knowers of their own historical and political context. Harms Smith (2013, 2019) reminds us that when we interrogate social work's ideological origins, we will become aware of its British ideological origins of charity and deeply patriarchal tendencies and later, as an independent discipline, its political ideologies of white supremacy. It is thus important to acknowledge that the social work knowledge base came from a deeply conservative ideological base (Mathebane & Sekudu, 2018), creating disciplinary fault-lines along which discriminatory practices can continue.

Tamburro (2013) argues that a post-colonial lens can help social workers to engage with service users in less oppressive ways. A post-colonial lens foregrounds people's histories and recognises how it translates into current social issues, a central focus

of this chapter. A post-colonial lens provides terms, concepts and perspectives to explain the experiences that people have in common like poverty, inadequate health care and unsafe living spaces. Trauma theory is one of the areas in social work that provides us with an opportunity to work towards a decolonisation of our curriculum. Harms Smith (2019) rightfully argues that the process of decoloniality of social work is an ongoing process that requires interrogation, experimentation and contestation, so the author can at best try to contribute to the ongoing debate. Andermahr (2016) argues that traditional trauma theory continues to adhere to the event-based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event outside ordinary experiences. This does not address the traumatic experiences of historically marginalised groups, while a socially constructed understanding of human experiences in their socio-cultural and historical contexts can do so (Priya, 2015). Craps and Buelens (2008) are of the impression that for trauma studies to redeem itself, the social and historic relations must be taken into account and the traumatic histories of marginalised groups should be situated against the histories of socially dominant groups.

METHODOLOGY

The research that underpins the data collection for this chapter is qualitative in nature and operates within an interpretive paradigm as it concerned itself with understanding the world from a subjective point of view (Gray, 2009). This approach was appropriate for because the author wanted to elicit participants' accounts of meaning, experiences or perceptions (Fouche & Delpont, 2011). Qualitative research aims to describe an issue under study, using a small sample to explore experiences, perceptions and feelings (Kumar, 2011). The study uses an explorative and descriptive design as it sets out to examine a little-understood issue or phenomenon, develop preliminary ideas about it and move towards refining ongoing research questions (Neuman, 2011).

The chapter aims to explore the occurrence of cultural and intergenerational trauma in local South African communities from the viewpoints of social workers, as well as describe their views on how their undergraduate training prepared them to deal with the phenomena. The author conducted intensive interviews with six community-based social workers from the Nelson Mandela Metropole who were recruited via purposive sampling. This is a technique based on the judgement of the researcher concerning the participants who have the most relevant attributes and are representatives of the population (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). Using a non-profit organisation located in the metropole as gatekeeper, the most important criteria according to which participants were selected was that they graduated within the last 10 years and that they were actively working in the community at the time. Semi-structured interviews were utilised, providing understanding of the phenomena from the participant's point of view and uncovering their lived experiences.

A thematic analysis was conducted (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1999), by searching for and engaging with data as it relates to the central questions of the research (Bowen, 2009). Five themes are discussed under the data-analysis section. Ethics clearance for the study was received from Nelson Mandela University Ethics Committee and the following ethical considerations (see Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021) were applied: confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, voluntary participation and doing no harm. Participants were interviewed in spaces suggested by them and in ways that would protect confidentiality of the process. Because of the qualitative nature of the interactions, anonymity could not be guaranteed. However, participants were assured that data would be presented using pseudonyms to protect their identities. No interviews were conducted before participants were fully informed and signed an informed consent. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to. None of the participants chose to withdraw their participation.

FINDINGS

The table below provides the biographical data of the participants to this study. While the ages of the participants vary significantly, all of them have less than 10 years of practice experience as social workers. Because the researcher wanted to understand their views on how social work training prepared them for working in communities with high levels of trauma, the relatively short period since they completed their studies was a requirement for selection. Age and gender were not a signifier for selection.

Table 14.1 Biographical details of participants

	Gender	Age	Years of social work experience
Participant 1 (P1)	Female	51	10 months (with significant experience of working in communities before qualifying as social worker).
Participant 2 (P2)	Female	46	5 years
Participant 3 (P3)	Female	38	5 years
Participant 4 (P4)	Female	32	7 years
Participant 5 (P5)	Female	31	2 years
Participant 6 (P6)	Female	39	6 years

Five of the themes that emerged during this research are discussed below. These were

1. The impact of our apartheid history on current-day social issues,
2. the presentation of social issues and collective cross-generational transmission of trauma in communities,

3. community trauma and social work well-being,
4. the presentation of cultural trauma across generations, and
5. relevance of social work training in equipping social workers dealing with these as contextual challenges.

The impact of our apartheid history on present day social issues

This study highlighted two of the apartheid legacies that continue to influence communities negatively: apartheid spatial planning (see Khosa, 2018; Sain, 2017) and a damaged collective self-esteem. Wyngaard (2019) calls these acts of humiliation that caused harm to the identity of groups of people. Forced removals did not just dictate a geographical relocation for people. It confined families, accustomed to more living space, to small two-roomed homes often with shared ablutions between families. These enforced social conditions created more than just physical discomfort – they potentially shaped people's view of the world they live in as the relocations also altered their economic, social and educational interface. Participant five explains it as follows:

The small houses that was built often has to accommodate three generations of a family as some of the adults had no job. As a result, young children are again exposed to over-crowdedness and there seems to be little change. They are exposed to drugs and kids feel there are not end to it ... kids feel maybe I must finish matric or maybe I don't have to. (P5)

This participant thus alludes to living conditions that negatively influence young people's views of their own life trajectory. It also alludes to a multigenerational transmission of structural violence (Kira, 2001) created by severe social disparity.

Adonis (2018) suggests that historical disruptions of these magnitudes have long-term negative impacts and can thus explain why a collective low self-esteem continues to be present for people affected by it:

... we have this innate sense of inferiority, not being good enough. (P2)

We did not have a voice; our worth was determined by someone else ... if we received labels, we went with it. (P1)

Apartheid racism has been internalised by many South Africans, contributing to a low self-esteem and a sense of insecure social status (Bruce, 2006) and social work interventions that do not address this historically determined sense of the self could result in what Rossiter (2005) calls a 'failure of the discipline' to bring about real change. The views expressed by participant three supports this as she fears that this low self-esteem negatively influences how people view their future:

People normalised this life of poverty. They don't think they are entitled to the help out there. (P3)

This view resonates with that of Sain (2017), who raised the concern about young people normalising environments filled with everyday violence. These views shared by participants allude to culturally traumatic events that took place over a period of time and that seriously harmed people's views of themselves and their future prospects (Alexander, 2001, 2004; Stamm et al., 2003; Visser, 2011, 2014).

Social issues and collective cross-generational trauma transmission in communities

In a context where the country's transitional justice failed to address its social, economic and cultural parameters sufficiently (Jaichand, 2017), conditions were created for social issues to prevail and even worsen in marginalised communities. Participants identified a number of social issues prevalent in the communities with whom they engage. Substance abuse among adults and young people seems to be one of the major social issues in these communities. These have historical roots, as Williams (2016) indicates that the Dop system, used as partial remuneration for workers in the wine-producing regions, significantly contributed to problematic drinking patterns in many of our communities. There are also many environmental factors, located in the social, cultural, environmental, economic and physical spheres that interact with substance abuse (Spooner & Hetherington, 2004) with South Africa being among the top 20 countries for alcohol consumption (Mbandlwa & Dorasamy, 2020):

Most of the problems are driven by alcohol and drug abuse ... usually the perpetrator was under the influence or the mom was drunk. (P4)

As suggested by Spooner and Hetherington (2004), substance abuse is often also a symptom of larger personal or societal issues as indicated by one participant:

It is often not about the abuse itself, it is often something at home or in the environment. (P1)

Environmental features, according to participant three, contribute to an escalation of substance abuse:

... because there are no recreational facilities but a tavern around every corner. (P3)

The living conditions described by participant three also reflect what Mokgoro (2019) says speaks to current-day poor service delivery and inefficient use of resources that negatively affect the standard of living of people who are entitled to quality basic and life-improving services. For him, fraudulent and corruption practices by public servants have the ability to weaken the same social and economic foundations on which growth is dependent.

Critical Social Work Studies in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges

School dropouts, an unfortunate phenomena in South Africa, contribute to fragile family formations. Weigbright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner and Smith (2017) indicate that in South Africa, 60% of people entering school will drop out before Grade 12 and young people who have dropped out tend to engage in risk-taking behaviour. Risky sexual behaviour contributes to unplanned teenage pregnancies and Stoner et.al (2019) indicate that two thirds of teenage pregnancies are reported to be unplanned and unwanted. School dropouts have been reported by participants of this study to be high in the communities they work. Both these phenomena limit the future prospects of young people and keep them trapped in a cycle of poverty. Teenage parents have a lower probability of graduating from high school and as a result find it more difficult to escape poverty (see Fletcher & Wolfe, 2012; Stoner et.al. 2019). Teenage parents' readiness to provide a stable family life for their children is compromised by their own developmental stage and can increase the phenomena of absent fathers:

There is a high number of absent fathers with young parents often not emotionally matured to provide structure for the child. (P5)

Participants also identify levels of family instability that tie in with a lack of skills to deal with their challenges:

The family often lack the skills to solve problems, like communication skills between the mother and child, I often have to explain to parents how to deal with the child's developmental stage. (P1)

Families are part of a larger community system and instability in these close-knit units has an impact on the level of social cohesion in communities (see Lamb, 2019):

... communities are falling apart because families are falling apart. It is either an absent mother or an absent father and even when the parents are present, they are not really 'present' as they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs and children do whatever they like, often resulting in teenage pregnancies ... (P2)

Parents' availability to their children can be limited by situations where people must face severe poverty, inadequate housing, job insecurity, threats of violence (Kira, 2001) and the collective cross-generational transmission of trauma is evident as structural deprivation continues to have a negative impact on parents and children and thus entire communities. These conditions contribute to low levels of social cohesion where the risk of child sexual abuse and gangsterism increases (Lamb, 2019):

We never had a shortage of young kids who was traumatised by rape and sexual abuse. (P6)

Young people being traumatised by witnessing violence in their environment are also at risk of perpetrating violent acts (Murray, Nguyen & Cohen, 2014). Participant three alludes to this when stating:

I found 4 boys molesting a 10 year old child while working in schools. (P3)

These experiences shared by these participants allude to what Adonis (2018) refers to as groups of people who had their projected historical course disrupted with very negative socio-economic outcomes across generations. Poverty, unemployment and inauspicious socio-economic living conditions resulting from years of political and economic exploitation put many young people at risk of gangsterism and keep communities trapped in a fearful grip (see Dolley, 2018; MacMaster, 2010). Participant six expressed her shock in the amount of gangsterism in Gqeberha while participant two felt that family instability put young people at risk of joining gangs:

... parents have less influence on their children and gangs are the brotherhood that provides them with a sense of identity. (P2)

Kira (2001) warns that the direct and indirect cross-generational consequences of structural violence are destructive and persistent, transmitting trauma across generations.

The presentation of cultural trauma across generations

Despite the multi-generational impact of cultural trauma (see Mohatt et al., 2014), the mental health fraternity according to Adonis (2016) took a while before it understood the debilitating effect of it on people's health and well-being. Adonis (2016) says that South Africa's history created the conditions for the transgenerational transmission of trauma, thus setting the scene for much scholarly engagement on the topic. Cultural trauma refers to suffering shared by a group and multiple generations long after the direct traumatic infliction (Mohatt et.al, 2014).

Participants in this study referred to trauma that has both historical and cross-generational elements. The forced relocation of whole communities based on their status as oppressed groups (Coyle, 2014) had large-scale ramifications. Families had to adapt to spatial arrangements that were not designed to address their needs. Apartheid spatial planning also placed poor communities away from economic, social and educational opportunities (Khosa, 2018). Participant one reflected on the impact of these forced removals on her own family, reminding us that social workers also carry these wounds based on their own experiences:

I listened to my mom about how they were forcefully removed from areas where they had bigger houses to these smaller spaces with two rooms for a whole family with an outside bathroom to share with another household. I grew up like that where in one room you can hear everything that happens in the other room, meaning parents do not have influence on what their children hear or not. (P1)

Participants also witness the cross-generational transmission of trauma as indicated by participant two:

When I speak to a client and I get the history, I see the same pattern of what happened in the mothers unfolding in the 16-year-old girl's life. (P2)

It also influences how people deal with issues in their families. Adonis (2016:3) refers to this as “conspiracies of silence” that fuel the transgenerational transmission of trauma. Participant four reflected on this:

... you often find when you work with a child that was raped, the mother went through a similar experience and when the perpetrator was someone popular in the community the mother advice the child that nothing will be done about it and it is best just to deal with it in the family. (P4)

Long term exposure to criminal activities and gangsterism can have a normalising effect (see Dolley, 2018; Lamb, 2019; MacMaster, 2010 & Murray et al., 2014). Participant four alludes to this:

When people live off crime, ... the father is a criminal and the child do the same, they normalise it. (P4)

When the normalisation of behaviours is internalised, it creates a vicious cycle of criminal entrapment. Participant five alludes to this:

Kids fall into the trap very easily ... I observed young people at the age of 10 having a boyfriend and by the time they get to high school, smoking, drinking and multiple sexual partners are normalised. (P5)

Community trauma and social worker well-being

The high prevalence of social problems in South African communities puts social workers at risk of secondary trauma (Kheswa, 2019; Masson & Moodley, 2018). Participant six alluded to this when stating:

Two to three times a month we are unable to go into the schools due to gangsterism. Social workers will come back telling you that they had to seek refuge due to gang activities in the community. (P6)

Social workers' interventions can be regarded as a threat and in an environment where violence has been normalised, they can be at risk while performing their duties. This was the experience for one of the participants reflecting on her experiences:

... what do you do when a mother threatens you by saying – if you knock on my door again I will shoot you ... I don't think the university realises the context that we work in. (P5)

Secondary trauma in social workers is not receiving the attention it should, though it can seriously affect their personal and professional well-being and inevitably compromise service delivery (see Hesse, 2002 & Kheswa, 2019).

Participants also reflected on their ability to effectively respond to the trauma experienced by community members and the role of supervision to support their well-being:

Knowing what to do when people are traumatised, it is difficult and if you do not get the right supervision, you yourself are often traumatised and then tomorrow you must be off going to see another person ... you also have to debrief. (P4)

Kira (2001) suggests that support for workers in volatile situations can significantly reduce their symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In the absence of effective supervisory support, social workers then often employ strategies to protect themselves as indicated by participant six:

... I chose empathy, but even I had to distance myself in my work. (P6)

A trauma-informed social work practice can go far in equipping social workers with the necessary skills and support their own well-being. Levenson (2017) suggests that social workers who are well equipped to work with trauma can rely on their knowledge about trauma to respond to clients in ways that convey respect and compassion, and can honour self-determination, and enable the rebuilding of healthy interpersonal skills and coping strategies. Understanding trauma within its historical context also allows the social worker to link the country's history, ongoing socio-economic and political violations and people's experience of trauma. Participants in this study highlight the danger to personal and professional well-being if they are not sufficiently equipped for the context in which they work.

Relevance of social work training in equipping social workers to deal with local challenges

While participants in this study could identify positive components of their training, there was a general perception that it lacked a historical link that could contextualise the well-being profile of citizens. Participants thought that the curriculum was often removed from the local context. Their experiences mirror the concerns raised by Mbembe (2015) when he speaks to the risks of teaching obsolete forms of knowledge that alienate the student as a knowledge carrier. Harms Smith (2014) is clear about the purpose of history in the curriculum. She argues for a focus on history that speaks to the interconnection of wider forces that shape people's lives, institutions and disciplines. For her, specific events in history are better understood when they are viewed as related to socio-political, economic contexts and circumstances around peoples' livelihoods. Her argument interlinks with those made by Adonis (2016), Mohat et.al (2014) and Nicholas and McIntosh (2002), that the historical events that disrupted people's lives reflects in the socio-economic realities of their lives

across generations. History should thus be purposefully located in the social work curriculum. Participants expressed concerns that curriculum content is often distant from the local context, as expressed by participant five:

I did not like being taught about work from other countries ... all these books have a Eurocentric stance. (P5)

Participant two indicated the risk of such a de-contextual social work training:

If you talk to me about the things that happened here, I sit up and listen. It will allow us to draw parallels between our past and our present. (P2)

Lekganyane (2018) is of the opinion that social work education and practice continues to destabilise indigenous knowledge and customs and when this happens, the classroom can be an alienating experience. History should also be inclusive of all citizens as the very act of excluding oppressed groups from the biography of a nation (Eze, 2008) is an act of misrecognition. Participant six reflects on her experiences in this regard:

I was taught a history of social work that traumatized the living daylight out of me. I was taught about some Dutch Reform Church history that does not help any black person I am working with. (P6)

The act of misrecognition is evident in her ongoing reflection:

... so they talk about this lady who went in the Anglo Boer War to bargain for the concentration camps, but they don't talk about the concentration camps of the farm workers of the families ... (P6)

She also refers to a social work history that wrote marginalised groups out of history (Eze, 2008):

Anyone who wants to know about the first black social worker must be politically inclined. (P6)

Taking this a step further, participant one proposed a strategy for the inclusion of communities' histories in the social work curriculum:

While we are living and working in a very diverse country, if a student is located in a community, say the Northern areas, let them study the Northern areas, the history thereof and then they can say they know where people are coming from, (P1)

She also sees this as a strategy to recognise communities as experts of their own lives:

... information about their history can be shared from the bottom-up. (P1)

Participant four clearly took a significant step to overcoming the professional divide between herself and the community:

... I decided to move to the location amongst the people. I don't want to go into the community as an expert. (P4)

She basically resists, through her actions, the idea of being an external carrier of knowledge (Mbembe, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social workers are valuable sources of knowledge who can inform the transformation of the social work curriculum. Their lived experiences allow them to share views on the extent to which the social work curriculum helps them to intervene authentically with people in a specific context. Five themes were focused on in this chapter that emerged from the research in order to understand the presentation of cultural trauma as a legacy of apartheid. The author also engaged with the ongoing presentation of cultural trauma in the post-apartheid era where social, economic and cultural misrecognitions continue and present themselves in behavioural terms. From the experiences shared by these social workers, it is evident that as a nation we have been unable to disrupt the cycle of re-traumatisation and we are not moving forward in our developmental trajectory. Participants witness the cross-generational transmission of trauma throughout their work and their experiences seem to correlate with other research in this regard (see Adonis, 2016; Hinsberger et al., 2016; Hoosain, 2013 & Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009).

This forces us as social work educators to look at the futility of educational practices that are far removed from the people for whom they are intended. It does seem that social work training as experienced by participants in this study does not fully prepare them for the world of work. It is thus important that, as part of a decolonial project, social work theory needs to be contextualised and must incorporate an understanding of the country's history that connects social forces and how these influence people's lives. As a social work fraternity, located within a society struggling to overcome its troubled past, a trauma-informed practice with an understanding of cultural trauma and the cross-generational manifestations embedded in it can prepare social workers to play a meaningful part in cultural healing.

Work integrated learning (WIL) provides an ideal platform for students to understand the historical context of communities. Narrative engagements with community members about their experiences of historical disruptions and current-day social issues within their communities can be woven into community assessment strategies. This potentially has various advantages. It recognises community members as experts of their own lives. It also provides opportunities for narrative healing practices (Denborough, 2008) and it assists social work students to locate community social issues within their historical context, minimising the risk of pathological labelling. A trauma-informed practice furthermore helps social work students, academics and practitioners to interrogate their shared trauma experiences that mirror that of the communities they work in (see Dekel & Baum, 2010; Tosene, McTighe & Bouwens, 2015).

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