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THE CROSS-CULTURAL RAVINE: WHY THE BRIDGE IS NECESSARY, AND HOW TO GO ABOUT BUILDING IT

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INTRODUCTION

South African society may be seen as constituted of a diversity of cultures, and in that sense South Africa could be characterised as being "multicultural", but it is not, however, a practitioner of multiculturalism - at least not in the theoretical sense of the term which encompasses the formulation of official policy and associated practices that are exclusively directed at making cultural diversity formally "constitutive of the nation" (McAllister 1996). We therefore have, in the phrase coined by McAllister, a *denominational multiculturalism* - one that can only exist when the boundaries between the various societal groupings, whether they be along the lines of culture, race or religion, are not "formalised and institutionalised" by an officially ratified policy.

The social reality of South African cultural diversity is one in which boundaries between the diverse identities are idealised, instead, as continuities - by our prescribed *rainbow nation consciousness*; distinctiveness becomes superimposed over separateness. Bekker states that the South African government finds itself in a position similar to many others across the globe in which sub-national groups fervently make claims for "recognition and for equity", thereby demanding their group identity be individualised from those of all others within the nation. It is from this acknowledgement of the distinctiveness of different cultural identities that South Africa is deemed a culturally diverse society, and from the way the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa paraphrases national consensus - "[w]e, the people of South Africa, ... believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, **united in our diversity**", it is evident that our cultural diversity is not denied nor challenged.

Cultural exclusivity and ethnic homogeneity can no longer be considered feasible or practically possible, other than in cases of long-lost tribes functioning self-sufficiently and unbeknownst to outsiders, somewhere in the Amazon, for example. But this is not the case in contemporary societies. Increased globalisation and technological advancement affect even the most underdeveloped of developing countries, while mass communication permeates the globe. No longer do societies exist in unfettered isolation due to the vast distances between them - very few people remain unreachable, but with this unbridled accessibility now available to everyone, simultaneously making everyone accessible and available to each other, there are no longer boundaries preventing *cross-cultural pollination*, metaphorically speaking. The point is that the modern world itself is one of diversity - no longer do all inhabitants of one country share the same culture, let alone the same nationality. International migration has resulted in countries becoming proverbial ethnic melting-pots, with internal intercultural transfer between societal groupings no longer being a noteworthy phenomenon - it is simply a way of life.

This increase in intercultural exposure between peoples of different cultures, however, is not an isolated phenomenon - particularly not in South Africa with its history of racial segregation, isolation and subjugation. There are many implications of our *relatively* new state of democratic cultural coexistence, a state of being that is not disputed by the authors but welcomed as a true

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reflection of contemporary societies; yet, the implications to our cross-cultural communication and interaction cannot be ignored - a statement which carries even more fervour when one takes into consideration the practice of Social Work within this culturally heterogeneous context as found in South Africa, or more specifically then - the practice of cross-cultural social work.

Green (in Legault 1996:51) defines cross-cultural social work as the "utilization of ethnographic information in the planning, delivery and evaluation of social services for minority and ethnic group clients, ethnographic information meaning an alertness to those cultural features of the client's background which influence the outcomes of a social service encounter". Here the key concept is that of *cultural awareness*, which Green defines as a "kind of outlook on the world, one which includes useful intervention skills with culturally distinctive clients, but which is not limited to that". And yet, "cross-cultural practice has not been institutionalised in most schools to the extent necessary for professionals to serve minority clients adequately" (Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler 1996:37). According to these authors, more attention has been paid to the understanding of the cultures of minority groups in social work education, while less attention has been centred on developing a body knowledge and skills which would be deemed relevant to practice with diverse cultural groups. Not only does multicultural social work face the demands typically associated with generalist practice, but it also confronts its own set of unique challenges (Durst 1994:30), and it is therefore imperative that a cultural competence approach to social work practice and training be adopted (Manoleas 1993:44). In addressing this charge to improve the cultural competence of the social worker practising from a multicultural social work perspective, the authors will argue for the incorporation of cultural competence-enhancement within the supervision relationship which is inherent to modern-day social work practice. The argument will be made for promoting a more optimal use of the supervision component of social work practice as a means of facilitating the development of intercultural communication skills and cross-cultural competence. This is suggested due to the manner in which supervision, and particularly the supervisor-supervisee relationship, is both a linkage between the practice education experiences of student social workers and their ongoing process of knowledge and skill development, and also a means by which contact with a potential mentor may benefit the student in terms of adopting appropriate values on which multicultural service should be based.

Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler state that culturally competent practice includes "an ability to provide services, including assessment and interventions, for problems experienced by culturally diverse persons". Manoleas quotes Terry Cross *et al.* from their monograph entitled "Toward a Culturally Competent System of Care" as stating that cultural competence embraces "the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs" (Manoleas 1993:46). It is within this context of diversity and culturally unique needs that the present nature and scope of social work practice in the South African environment need be acknowledged. Student social workers do not require specific attempts to expose them to situations of intercultural exchange - the distribution of problems, needs and stressors occurs universally within our society, resulting in students being exposed to all racial groups within the course of their practice education. Multicultural experiences thus already predominate practice; it is, however, the enhancement of multicultural competence that is required in order to enable student service providers to improve their involvement with clients in matters of cultural diversity even further. It has been suggested that becoming culturally competent is a developmental process (Manoleas 1993:46), and as such generalist practitioners must be educationally prepared to serve multicultural populations (Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler 1996:37). It is therefore the intent of this article to elaborate on the manner in which supervision of undergraduate social work students may be explicitly

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utilised for developing cultural competence, thus preparing students educationally for multicultural practice.

This article will, therefore, focus on the topic of cross-cultural competence as essential element to social work theory and practice. Firstly, a brief historical overview of multicultural awareness and its progression from inception to the present-day context will be provided as a means of sketching the background to this discussion. Thereafter, attention will be directed at conceptually clarifying the foundations to this discussion, namely: culture, "multicultural" and cross-cultural competence. This will in turn be followed by a discussion of the dimensions along which cultures have been found to differ - particularly in terms of values and beliefs held firm by differing cultural orientations. The discourse will then focus on the call for the incorporation of efforts at enhancing the multicultural competence of practitioners in social work training in terms of an overarching goal for such structured training as well as a few principles involved, but with special emphasis placed on the use of supervision as a tool for achieving this. For this purpose, a tricomponential model will be suggested in which value, knowledge, and skill elements will be identified as being relevant to cross-cultural competence, and the role of both supervisor and supervisee will be indicated in the application of these elements. The relevance and necessity of this cross-cultural effectiveness will be indicated by means of identifying the more global ramifications that it may bear for societal transformation. Finally, the discussion will conclude with a brief overview of certain threats to cross-cultural competence which need to be considered when discussing the issue of multicultural social work, so as not to create the impression of such competence being infallible and the social worker effectively practising it as being immune to the natural occurrence of practice mistakes.

But first, any such discussion should begin with an overview of the historical progression of the primary issue to which this discourse relates.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

The concept of cultural sensitivity, whether it is actively practised or enforced by members of the helping professions such as social work, psychology or occupation therapy etc. or not, is no longer a foreign notion deemed to be on the fringes of present-day theorising. It has grown in importance and is no longer questioned in terms of necessity or validity, but studied in terms of how it is to be achieved within these professions.

Asamoah (1996:1) states that early work in the field of implementing professional cultural awareness came from diversified fields such as anthropology, social and cross-cultural psychology, linguistics and communications, and she states that various researchers in these fields "blazed the trail by demonstrating the significance of culture as a variable in behavioural processes and interpersonal encounters, a significance that was either largely ignored or underestimated in many of the helping professions" (1996:1). It was believed that this increasing importance "challenged our tendencies towards ethnocentrism in theory development and in practice" (Asamoah 1996:1) and that helping professions were "urged ... to develop more culturally relevant approaches to both research and counselling".

In particular, two such approaches grew in their prominence and were viewed as being essential to developing increased competence in matters of multicultural practice such as understanding and counselling strategies (Asamoah 1996:1). These approaches included the studying of specific cultures, which was known as "emic", and the identification of transcultural principles pertaining to the helping situations across cultures, formally labelled "etic".

According to Asamoah, Social Work was first challenged into new directions by the contributions of cultural and behavioural theorists. It was, for instance, only during the 1980s

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that published works began appearing which drew attention to the importance of culture in "understanding client need, help-seeking behaviour and intervention strategies" (Asamoah, 1996:1). There was thus a gradual move away from the "one-size-fits-all" approach to cultural matters and a shift occurred in the direction of more appropriate service provision as new works investigated the influence of culture on client behaviours and which enhanced understanding of individual populations (Asamoah 1996:2).

Asamoah (1996:2) argues that "being sensitive to the needs of the local community and the subtle ... ethnic differences within them is critical and has important implications for training, policy and practice". According to Tshabalala, "In societies where oppression and racial discrimination have been the order of human relations", the realisation that the dominant white culture can no longer be viewed as the superior of all cultures is a necessary shift in thinking and is indicative of growth and progress within this society (1992:68).

In order to ensure that the main tenets of this discourse are perceived and understood within the context of the authors intent, the primary concepts involved in the discussion of cultural diversity and cross-cultural competence will be identified and defined so as to provide an indication of the basis on which the discourse will follow, as well as the understanding of the authors from which arguments will be made.

Culture

"Culture" has been collectively perceived as an inventory of sorts - the catalogue characteristics, elements or products, either created by human endeavour or flowing from human existence. In line with this, Jayasuriya (1992:39) identifies several constituent elements of culture in his discussion on present and past trends in cultural theorising, namely: the *normative* (value norms), *affective* (sentiments, loyalties), *cognitive* (knowledge, myths, beliefs), *aesthetic* (beautiful, pleasing) and *behavioural* (customs, practices, rites). He argues that these are not only the distinctive features of any particular group, but "are also uniform and regular characteristics manifest in the ideational systems and the material arrangements of a society". He also provides a view of Geertz (from 1957) in which culture is seen as "the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions". The manner in which culture accords each individual a unique way of interpreting his or her world has important implications for those in the helping professions - it becomes important to understand and "meet" the individual within the confines of his or her subjective world.

Strydom (1995:116) provides a more common sense approach in defining culture as the learned method of living that has been adopted by a group of people, and which is transferred and refined from one generation to the next. This conceptualisation is seen as including both tangible and other less tangible elements, but more globally, it reflects the total of human creation, experience and expression that is manifested in each individual's own life and world perspective.

Multicultural

Strydom (1995:39) provides a definition of "multicultural" as meaning a diversity or plurality of cultures, which therefore implies more than a mere two-directional transfer between only two cultural groups. In relation to Social Work, this indicates that training should take place in a cultural-pluralistic environment in which students learn to provide social work services in a manner appropriate to multiple cultural groups as are naturally occurring.

"Multicultural", however, has been understood by Imbrogno (1996:22) as a "catchall heading" for various competing paradigms. Amongst these paradigms are the concepts of mono-cultural (within a cultural value system), bi-cultural (two conflicting cultural patterns), pluri-cultural (such as the so-called cultural "melting-pot"), and cross-cultural (variables running across

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various cultures). For the purposes of this discussion, "multicultural" will be understood as incorporating all of the above to a certain extent, but with the emphasis on the coexistence of plural or multiple cultural systems, as practised by diverse groups of people.

Cross-cultural Competence

Cross-cultural competence has been conceptualised by Sikhitha (1996:61) as the ability to "cut across the powerful effects of class differences, gender, ethnicity, age, race and all other such observable differences among people".

In contrast to this perspective, Krajewski-Jaime *et al.* (1996:16) add a more functional component to the understanding of cross-cultural competence by focusing on this concept as an element that should be inherent to social service provision. They define this concept as a "set of academic and interpersonal skills that allow service providers to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural similarities and differences within and between groups so that they are able to draw on a particular community's values, traditions and customs in developing effective and appropriate interventions". This categorisation of skills includes "understanding the importance of culture as well as the dynamics which result from cultural differences, the ability to make culturally based assessments, and the ability to adapt services to meet culturally unique needs" (Krajewski-Jaime *et al.* 1996:16). Williams (1997:14) further operationalises this functional aspect of cultural competence as the "ability to deliver services in a way that is not only respectful of a different culture, but builds on the strengths of the culture and is consistent with the culture". This is aligned with the belief that it is the responsibility of the social worker to make services more responsive to culture.

Certain elements have been identified as being necessarily inherent to possessing a relative degree of cultural competence, and these may serve as guidelines for qualifying the concept in more detail. For instance, Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler (1996:38) identify the following five elements for becoming culturally competent in a helping profession such as social work, namely: (1) awareness and acceptance of difference; (2) self-awareness; (3) dynamics of difference; (4) knowledge of the client's culture; and (5) adaptation of skills to compensate for cultural differences. These elements are mentioned as basis for the foundation of a proposed model for "infusing educational content into the generalist curriculum designed to develop culturally competent practitioners" (Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler 1996:38). Therefore, these elements are included in the authors' conceptual definition due to their being applicable to the ensuing discussion of supervision as means for promoting cultural competence in undergraduate social work students.

Before entering the discussion on promoting cross-cultural competence in social work students, attention needs to first be given to the manner in which individuals differ with respect to their cultural orientations, as this will be beneficial in developing an understanding of the different approaches of people within the worker-client relationship.

DELINEATION OF THE VALUE AND BELIEF DIMENSIONS ALONG WHICH CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS OCCUR

Beckett and Dungee-Anderson (1996:37) emphasise that the values on which cultural groups differ serve to underscore how important it is for trainers of multicultural communication to provide learning activities/exercises that increase practitioner self-awareness and sensitivity to the values of others - therefore, in any discussion on multicultural awareness, a distinction should be made in the manner in which cultures differ - as Williams (1997:14) states, a requirement for cultural competence is that we actively deal with the various dimensions of diversity. What have been considered to be the dimensions in question differ according to

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various authors. For the purpose of this discussion, the five dimensions as identified by Beckett and Dungee-Anderson (1996) will be given credence and described briefly.

Person to nature/environment

Beckett and Dungee-Anderson (1996:33) describe this as the relationship that exists between people and their physical environment. According to the authors, the perspectives which various cultural groups possess within their environment and approach their interactions in it are greatly diverse - resulting in differing values or orientations which in their own right result in cultural differences. These orientations consist of three primary directions - subjugation to nature in which life is largely directed by external forces; harmony with nature; and mastery over nature.

Time orientation

Time focus describes whether groups "predominantly focus on the past, present or future in their daily interactions and current involvements with each other" (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1996:33). For instance, a cultural group that maintains a past-orientation will value tradition and deem the past as important - learning takes place through understanding history, or so they believe. Opposed to this, the present-oriented group believes that "the present moment is everything" (Ibrahim in Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1996:33). Future-oriented cultural groups believe that sacrifices in the here-and-now should be made in order to ensure improvement in the future. Other differences also identified by those authors involve polychronic and monochronic (1996:34) time orientations - in other words, focusing either on several things at once while stressing interpersonal transactions, or focusing on tasks, schedules and procedures or characteristics.

Relations with people

This dimension is seen as focusing on defining human relationships. Beckett and Dungee-Anderson (1996:34) distinguish between linear relationships, which are vertically characterised by leaders and followers; individual autonomy; independence; and competition. They state that persons of colour often value collateral social relations which are characterised by a view that "family and friends are primary resources for problem-solving, and that helping others is more important than competition" (1996:34). This distinction is identified as being important due to it resulting in the potential for a social worker or other service provider to assess persons valuing such collateral or horizontal relations as being unmotivated and unproductive, or even lazy, simply because they do not behave competitively in the manner expected by traditional society (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1996:34). This has particular relevance to South Africa due to the vast differences in orientations between indigenous cultural groups functioning with a very much more traditional cultural orientation (viewing kinship networks as being of primary importance) and the more western cultural groups.

Preferred mode of activity

Here the nature of human activity is said to be a cultural dimension that describes how cultural groups most often behave. Beckett and Dungee-Anderson (1996:36) identify three recurring characteristics of human activity, namely: "being"; "being-in-becoming" and "doing". A group valuing a "being orientation" believes that "the value of life is in life itself", while a group valuing a "being-in-becoming orientation" values life for the opportunities offered for development of the inner self. On the other hand, "doing oriented" groups tend to be very active and hard working, believing that the greatest rewards in life come from hard work (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson, 1996: 36).

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Nature of person

In this final dimension, the focus is placed on how different cultures view the inherent nature of human character. In other words, whether your culture places more emphasis on the internal self as motivator for behaviour, or on the environment and its stressors, will largely determine differences in perspective and approaches, as well as receptivity to the helping process.

INCORPORATING MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE INTO SOCIAL WORK TRAINING

The overarching goal of structured training in multicultural social work

It is important to note that in cross-cultural practice the "social worker, not the client, is attempting to adjust to the cultural context" (Krajewski *et al.* 1996:16). Strydom (1995:117) states that the primary goal of a structured course in multicultural social work in a pluralistic society (such as South Africa) is the preparation of practitioners to work with persons of different cultures. Strydom (1995:117-118) identifies a number goals for a course in multicultural social as identified by various authors, such as:

- to approach others in a non-discriminatory, sincere, warm and self-assertive manner;
- to be sensitively conscious to personal values and to acknowledge the values of others;
- to determine and interpret the individual behaviour of others;
- to realise that people are more similar than different;
- to empower each individual to realise his or her own potential by means of available resources;
- to be able to identify possible sensitive problem areas and deal with conflict proactively;
- to encourage the community to provide for the satisfying of the basic needs of all individuals;
- to encourage all individuals to contribute positively to their own and to the larger community's welfare;
- to strive towards relevant knowledge and appropriate service provision.

These specified goals for a structured course in multicultural social work have been included due to their relevance, in essence, to cross-cultural competence. A model will be suggested for the incorporation of cross-cultural training into the supervision system by means of which undergraduate social work students receive guidance in their involvement in practice education; therefore, the intentions paraphrased by the above statements assist in directing the focus of expected outcomes to the training of cross-cultural competence.

Pinderhughes (1997:20) has identified 6 specific elements inherent to being competent in working with diverse others. Briefly, they are the following:

(1) Knowledge of the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of particular clients.

(2) The ability to respect and appreciate the values, beliefs and practices of all clients, including those who are culturally different and to perceive such individuals in their own cultural context instead of the practitioner's.

(3) The ability to be comfortable with difference in others and thus not be trapped in anxiety about difference or defensive behaviour to ward off such anxiety about being different from others.

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(4) The ability to control and even change one's own false beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes, which means one will have less need for defensive behaviour to protect oneself.

(5) The ability to think flexibly and to recognise that one's own way of thinking and behaving is not the only way.

(6) The ability to behave flexibly. This is demonstrated by the readiness to engage in the extra steps required to sort through general knowledge about a cultural group and to see the specific ways in which knowledge applies, or does not apply, to a given client. These steps take extra time, effort and energy.

In their discussion of a proposed curriculum content for enhancing the cultural competence of social work students, Sowers-Hoag and Sandau-Beckler (1996:39) have identified a number of values which they believe cultural competent practice should be based upon, namely: (1) respect for the uniqueness of the client's culture; (2) commitment to preserving the dignity of the client by preserving their culture; (3) acknowledge and value the natural helping systems of a client's culture as primary supports; (4) respect the family as defined by each culture as primary supports; (5) advocate for culturally sensitive services for minority groups; (6) respect cultural differences that value process rather than goal orientation in practice; (7) assess the client's behaviours within the context of their culture; and (8) sensitivity to the value conflicts of cultural groups with dominant societal values.

Principles involved

In incorporating these various value elements in the training of culturally competent social workers, attention should be accorded to the following essential principles. These are also considered by the writers to be of relevance to the use of supervision as opposed to a structured course for the promoting of culturally competent practice.

Acknowledged differences between cultures

This relates to the need to learn from and about other cultures. It is important for those in the helping professions to know that "acknowledging individual and group differences is not racist" and that it does not perpetuate stereotypes, nor does it "prevent practitioners from seeing multicultural commonalties" (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1996:38). This will increase the sensitivity of social workers to the client's individuality, and helps to decrease the likelihood for practitioners to develop ethnocentric practice perspectives.

Know yourself and other cultures

Cultural self-awareness is necessary for sensitive multicultural social work intervention as it helps prevent distorted perceptions of particular groups, which in turn helps to promote effective cross-cultural communication and service delivery (Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1996:38). But when taken further, in having knowledge and understanding of how cultural values contribute to the behaviours of individuals, the social worker will be less likely to react judgementally or intolerantly.

Identify value differences

Only by consciously distinguishing between the various value bases in terms of which cultures differ can the social worker effectively guard against cultural misunderstandings that may occur. A tendency exists for those in the helping professions to attempt to trivialise cultural differences - choosing to believe that, as human beings, we are more similar than dissimilar and that we are thus able to join as equal participants in the interpersonal helping relationship. Even though this latter point is of the utmost importance, the danger is that, in assuming such similarity, we are

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even more challenged by differences that may impede the intervention process as they are now considered to be out of place and unexpected - thus having a greater potential to derail the process.

Identify and avoid stereotypes

Torrres and Jones (1997:167) address the importance of heightening the awareness of both the functional and dysfunctional consequences of stereotyping people of colour - a practice that has historically been extremely prevalent in South Africa. They state that in order to avoid the reinforcement of stereotypes and the fostering of a "we-them" pattern of thinking, "students' learning should involve both the initial exploration of their own ethnic, racial, and cultural identities and biases, and the later inclusion of similar knowledge about other cultures". Stereotypes are mental and affective conceptions of groups of people that are easily acquired, but difficult to erode. They allow us to generalise from that which we see and are told and "simplify" our reactions by establishing a common, yet false, understanding of the "other" that is shared by those similar to us and from which we may act within a common frame of reference. The threat that stereotypes pose to the helping relationship is the degree to which they obscure the true nature of a particular group's cultural orientation and thus prevent social work processes from proceeding on a basis of mutual understanding, but rather on the basis of perceived and accepted knowledge which may not be empirically based.

Link cognitive and affective learning

Krajewski *et al.* (1996:17) state that acquiring a "true cross-cultural base for practice relies on learning in both the cognitive and the affective domains". They propose that if an academic course makes an attempt to establish inter-cultural sensitivity or cross-cultural competence by focusing on the cognitive content alone (such as traditional informational exchanges in lecture situations), while assuming that knowledge inevitably leads to attitude adoption, very little reduction of prejudice will occur. This may convey to the student that, by treating all individuals equally, they are automatically practitioners of cultural competence.

Krajewski *et al.* (1996:18) believe that it is in field placements that social work students are best able to "generalise skills to work effectively with diverse populations because field placement combines cognitive and affective experiences". We therefore argue that in as far as the supervision situation/relationship is an extension of the practice education experience, this statement by Krajewski *et al.* may be aligned with the proposition of utilising supervision as a means for enhancing the cross-cultural competence of social work students as stated in the proposed tricomponential supervision model below.

PROPOSED TRICOMPONENTIAL MODEL OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE ENHANCEMENT BY MEANS OF SUPERVISION

Cohen (1999:462) identifies three essential elements on which traditional definitions of social work supervision have been based, namely: administrative, supportive and educational supervision.

He further elaborates the educational function by defining it in terms of two aspects: the tutorial mode, which is relevant to students beginning their professional development; and the consultation mode, which is focused more on supervising experienced workers.

The development of cultural competence has been identified as being a "dynamic process of growth through ongoing questioning, self-assessment, knowledge and skill-building, starting with the students' level of current competence and supporting enhancement of their abilities" (Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler 1996:37).

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Cohen (1999: 462) states that the supervisory relationship "cannot help but provide the workers with a model for his or her approach to clients. It is the supervisor's responsibility to recognise conflicting philosophical or theoretical perspectives and, along with the supervisee, to seek solutions to the resulting difficulties". It is from this purposive basis of supervision that we propose an enhanced role of the educational component of the supervision process in addressing multicultural practice issues, and thereby a proposed model identifying the areas of focus is suggested for incorporation by the supervisor within the undergraduate practice education programme of the social work student. The focus is thus placed on what Cohen identifies as the tutorial mode of supervision.

Theron (1995:49) states that the educational function of supervision is aimed at the specific learning needs of a particular social worker (whereby the present authors include undergraduate social work students) with a specified case load. Therefore the social worker/student will experience unique problems which in and of themselves require specific and unique addressing within the supervision interchange. The occurrence of problems in everyday practice may be a universal phenomenon, but the nature of those problems in terms of the causative factors, scope, consequences for the practice environment and relationship are determined by a number of interacting conditions - of which the cultural milieu within which the client exists and functions should be considered a distinguishing one.

Within South Africa social work students are exposed to a practice environment which is inherently multicultural due to the diversified nature of the cultural composition of our communities, and the distribution of specific problems-in-functioning across the spectrum of the various racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, specific and structured efforts need to be directed towards enhancing the cross-cultural competence of the social worker who finds him- or herself at the beginning of their professional development - and supervision provides a medium for the said development, a medium that may prove to be more effective than the predominantly unidirectional lecture situation. As mentioned above, Krajewski *et al.* have mentioned the necessity for learning in both the cognitive and affective domains for acquiring cross-cultural competence. The supervision environment, however, provides for the involvement of supervisee and supervisor on a more affective level - practice education which is theoretically driven exposes the unsure student to a very real, and initially intimidating involvement with actual clients experiencing very real problems. It is within the supervision situation that students are provided with a structured opportunity to deal with the impact of cultural factors on their involvement with diverse client systems, and thus the honing of skills can take place through a learning approach utilising both cognition and affect.

In suggesting a conceptual framework for using the supervisor-supervisee relationship as a means to enhance cross-cultural competence in the undergraduate social work student, the three primary components of social work practice as identified by Johnson (1992:35) will serve as foundation for the social worker's professional competence and perspective, namely:

- values;
- knowledge; and
- skills.

Johnson further states that professional social work rests on a "body of knowledge (ways of understanding), and on a set of values (attitudes toward people) that [are] operationalised through development of a set of skills". The author states that this blending of knowledge, values and skills "gives substance to the ... problems of social functioning with which a social worker is confronted" (Johnson 1992:35).

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In formulating this proposed tricomponential model in directing the supervision relationship to fulfil the facilitation of development of a cross-cultural competence, both the involvement of the supervisor and supervisee will be taken into account.

Values

Johnson (1992:40) suggests that values are a part of the affective or emotional component of practice, and that they indicate "what is held to be desirable; they are used to identify what is preferred". Johnson (1992:40) further states that the literature clarifies values as:

- guides to behaviour;
- growing out of personal experiences;
- modified as experiences accumulate; and
- evolving in nature.

In terms of the above criteria, the authors argue that supervision as a component of professional social work practice is inherently equipped to advance the practice of cross-cultural competence, and the following suggested values may be seen as a framework of positive affective beliefs or approaches which the social worker should adopt and enforce.

VALUES		
Value-orientation	***Role of Supervisor***	***Role of Supervisee***
Belief in the uniqueness of all individuals within and because of their individual life-context, of which the cultural component plays a determining role in establishing the perspective or world-view of that individual.	The supervisor must convey to the student the importance of respecting the individuality of all clients, irrespective of race, language, culture or class.	The supervisee must be willing to adopt the perspective that all individuals are unique in their own right and deserve to be responded to as such.
The client has the right to be engaged in a manner wherein his/her cultural beliefs are recognised and acknowledged as being valid in their impact on the individual, as well as within the client-worker relationship.	The supervisor needs to convey to the supervisee that the influence of cultural orientations on the client system's circumstance cannot be trivialised, nor can their impact on the helping relationship be ignored.	The supervisee needs to be willing to address the issues of culture and ethnicity within the helping relationship in a sensitive manner - acknowledging their influence on the totality of the situation.

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It is the responsibility of the social worker to make a conscious attempt to identify, understand and acknowledge the cultural beliefs, values, attitudes and practices of the client system as they differ from those of the worker, knowing that they may potentially lead to incongruence in the approaches of both parties to the intervention process.	The supervisor is required to lead the supervisee firstly in the process of introspection, and thereafter in objectively identifying the cultural orientation of the client. It should be made clear to the student that incongruence between the cultural orientation of the client and that of him/herself will inevitably lead to practice incompatibility.	The supervisee must be willing to enter into the process of introspection in order to identify his/her own cultural orientation and its various components in order to understand the impact that this will have on the perspective with which the client system is viewed once their cultural orientation has been identified.
It is the responsibility of the social worker to make a conscious attempt at trying to identify, understand and incorporate the impact of such cultural beliefs, values, attitudes and practices on the nature of the client system's dysfunction or maladaptive environmental fit in the assessment and planning components of the intervention process.	The supervisor must explicitly lead the supervisee in applying the understanding of the client system's cultural orientation, while assessing the client's situation and consequently in planning for the intervention activities.	The supervisee must be willing to respond to the expertise of the supervisor and accept guidance in attempting to take the client system's cultural orientation into consideration when directing the progression of the intervention process.
The social worker should base his/her approach to enhancing cross-cultural competence on the sincere belief that even though cross-cultural misunderstanding or incongruence occurs, they may be overcome when a joint effort is made between client and worker through the joint problem-solving approach.	The supervisor must instil a sense of hope in the supervisee that cultural misunderstandings are inevitable, but that they may be overcome - all that is required is a conscious, mutually participative effort from both client and social worker.	The supervisee is required to adopt a belief in the manageability of cross-cultural incongruence, and that this may impact on the process but not necessarily sabotage it.

Knowledge

This component has been identified as the cognitive or thinking component of social work practice. Johnson (1992:37) identifies social work knowledge as "what is known about people and their social systems. It is relative to the situation in which it was developed [and] is descriptive of the phenomena of person in situation". Furthermore, she states that knowledge helps us gain an understanding of the functioning of individuals and the larger social system, while also serving to guide the actions of social workers as they embark on the professional relationship.

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The following five facets of knowledge are suggested as being essential for the social worker to develop and practice an effective degree of cross-cultural competence. The role of the supervisor and supervisee in acquiring this knowledge is indicated.

KNOWLEDGE		
Knowledge facets	***Role of Supervisor***	***Role of Supervisee***
Characteristics (belief system, gender roles, perspective on age) of the specific client system's culture.	To lead and assist the supervisee in identifying the cultural specifics involved in the situation with the particular client system.	To undertake self-study on the nature of the cultural orientation of the client system by means of consulting the supervisor and/or other reference sources in order to understand the culture in totality.
The impact of cultural orientation on the attitude of the client system towards the seeking of professional help.	To provide expertise knowledge to the supervisee on the client system's possible attitude towards seeking help, based on past experience with cultural orientations towards this aspect, and then lead the supervisee in determining the degree to which culture impacts on the situation at hand.	To firstly identify the client's attitude towards involvement in the helping relationship as is evident from practice contact with the client system during contact sessions in order to gather information relevant to the client's gender role and cultural orientation in order to be able to discuss this during the supervision contact.
The nature of the power relations within the client system's structured relationships, and how the cultural orientation interacts to shape these relations - influencing the access to resources or role performance of the client.	To assist the supervisee in determining the nature of the power relations prevalent within the culture (e.g. patriarchal/matriarchal system, etc.) and indicate the primary implications of this for the client system involved.	To assess the nature of the relationships in which the client system functions in terms of their perceptions regarding dominance, authority and power. Thereafter, identify the manner in which these power-relations limit or promote the client's functioning.
The manner in which the social worker's own cultural orientation may be incongruent with that of the client system, and the methods needed to overcome these cross-cultural differences.	To lead the supervisee in identifying areas in which his or her cultural orientation may differ from that of the client system.	After having identified areas of cross-cultural differences, the supervisee needs to make a conscious effort at resolving internal conflicts which may hamper the client-worker relationship.

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Skills

It has been stated that skill is the "practice component that brings knowledge and values together and converts them to action" (Johnson 1992:45). This definition is further elaborated in sociological terms in stating that it is an organisation of behaviour (including both verbal and physical), that has been developed as a result of learning and which is directed towards a certain goal or activity. Five skill elements are proposed as important aspects in the development in cross-cultural competence in the social work student. These may form part of the social worker's interventive repertoire - which Johnson refers to as the combination of knowledge and values to respond to problems of social functioning.

SKILLS		
Practice Skills	***Role of Supervisor***	***Role of Supervisee***
The social worker must be equipped and practised in the skill of introspection as a means of identifying his/her own cultural orientation in order to have an holistic awareness and acceptance of the cultural foundation making up the professional perspective with which he/she enters the client-worker relationship.	To lead the supervisee in the process of self-assessment by means of internal reflections in order to develop an understanding of his/her frame of mind regarding the helping situation.	To accept the importance of critical self-reflection as a means for developing self-knowledge and understanding, and thereafter consciously practice this technique.
The social worker must be equipped with the ability to maintain an objective approach in assessing the client system's cultural orientation in order to identify the beliefs, values, attitudes and practices on which their world-perspective is based.	To provide practical assistance to the supervisee on remaining objective when formulating assessments regarding the client system and planning for intervention activities - thus providing a "watchdog" function.	The supervisee should, through regular self-assessment, guard against over-emotional reactions or prejudiced thinking by means of always basing practice on the values as identified above.
The social worker must possess the ability to make evaluative comparisons between his/her own cultural orientation and that of the client system in order to identify incongruence, acknowledge it and proceed to work with this awareness.	The supervisor should remain focused on the supervisee and his/her involvement with the client system in order to assist in identifying areas of cultural misunderstanding when necessary.	The supervisee must be able to distinguish objectively between his/her own and other cultural practices, yet be tolerant and accepting of deviations from his or her own cultural orientation.

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The social worker needs to be rehearsed in the skill of addressing such cultural differences in a sensitive and constructive manner without placing interpersonal distance between the client and him-/herself, or marginalise the client system by placing it in the culturally subordinate position.	The supervisor must provide concrete guidance in matters of communication (along with the techniques to be employed) when matters pertaining to culture are to be addressed, in order to ensure that this is done in such a manner as not to alienate the client system from the intervention process.	The supervisee must be tolerant and responsive to advice and guidance from the supervisor when it comes to the addressing of sensitive issues with the client system. The supervisor should be regarded as the more experienced party in the exchange and the advice/guidance given should be regarded as valuable.
The social worker needs to be able to maintain an objective and realistic perspective when addressing cultural differences and guard against not placing too much emphasis on such differences, thereby transforming the very act of cultural management into a blockage within the worker-client relationship.	The supervisor has to utilise practice wisdom and experience in order to ensure that the supervisee remains realistic regarding practice activities. This requires the identification of unrealistic expectations or an over-awareness regarding cultural implications on the part of the student.	The supervisee must guard against being "swept up" in the process of identifying cultural differences to the extent of losing sight of the similarities shared with the client system as members of the human species. Should this type of blockage occur, the student must acknowledge the situation in order to resolve it.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

The implications of facilitating effective cross-cultural competence in social workers may be seen as having many more benefits than merely the establishment and maintenance of effective client-worker relationships. When placed in a more global context, cross-cultural competence serves as a means of promoting effective multicultural social work practice in general, which further benefits the practice of multiculturalism - be it formally or informally driven. For instance, Uehara *et al.* (1996:614) argue that multiculturalism offers social work both a vision of how society could be in the new millennium, as well as a critical perspective on culture and power, which are central to the concept of multiculturalism. Sohng (1996:614) argues that "[multicultural] social work entails not just the pleasure of diversity, but the realities of exclusion that minority groups face. Its mission is to build bridges of understanding [that span] peoples stratified by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language and other social group memberships". In effect, the social worker is placed on the side of societal groupings which actively experiences such prejudice as racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia and the like - in other words, as Uehara *et al.* state, groups who have "less control than dominant groups over critical aspects of their own lives" (1996:614).

When localising this discussion to South Africa, Bernstein (1991:227) argues that there are certain "fundamental issues" which as yet still need to be addressed. Bernstein states that social workers in and of themselves are unable to bring about the changes to these issues by themselves - being both few in number and ideologically divided. However, he argues for the linking of various social change movements on a societal level, which requires a healthy approach to

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multiculturalism - fostered by cross-cultural competence in service providers from grassroots level to the upper echelons of bureaucratic structures. The practising of multicultural social work by culturally competent workers may be viewed as a means for promoting what Bernstein labels the need for social awareness - "[awareness] and the development of alternative perspectives [that] need to be considered on a broad social level" (1991:227). More directively, however, it has been argued that cross-cultural practice involves a non-racial quality - which in terms of South Africa's past ideological practices may be considered to be of the utmost importance. South Africans "]living] in the apartheid system with its enforced segregation of the races has "normalised racism" (Bernstein 1991:227). He continues by stating that there is a need for social workers, in particular, to question commonplace discriminatory practices and identify and acknowledge how their own practices and beliefs may contribute to the perpetuation of racism. It is in this regard that cross-cultural competence in individual social workers and the profession in general contributes to the process of conscientisation which Bernstein argues "helps individuals make connections between the social relations they endorse or perpetuate through their attitudes, values and behaviour and the social positions they occupy" (1991:227). Bernstein argues for the importance of both macro strategies and skills of direct intervention to confront discriminatory practices as well as micro skills for direct intervention with individuals, families and group - micro skills which these authors believe are greatly in need of cross-cultural competence in practice and conceptualisation.

This sentiment is clearly encapsulated in Ramphal and Moonilal's study on whether social work agencies can meet the challenges in a post-apartheid South Africa. They state that institutional (and to a certain extent "normalised") racism has given rise to "cultural dislocation and cultural dissonance" within society (1993:368). This is said to place the responsibility on welfare services to respond with "greater cross-cultural sensitivity and empathy" (368-369) - thus also promoting the call for greater cross-cultural competence in multicultural social work.

THREATS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

As a final focus of discussion, attention will be given to a number of threats that exist and which may impede the practising of multicultural social work in terms of undermining or hampering the competence of workers in cross-cultural situations. The discussion so far has provided various arguments stressing the necessity of cross-cultural competence in social service providers, while also depicting a tricomponential model for utilising supervision as a means for enhancing this competence in culturally diverse situations. For the sake of comprehensives, such a discussion cannot be concluded without identifying a few threats to this competence that will be dealt with briefly below.

Overcompliance and friendliness

Sikhitha (1996:62) states that this particular threat occurs when there is a "power difference between the worker and the client". In other words, the power or lack of it inherent to the roles of the worker and client affect the helping process to the extent that the clients fail to claim self-determination or quality service simply because they assume that they have no power, or have no right to claim quality service - the client then relinquishes all power, overcomplies with the directives of the social worker and becomes uncomfortably friendly within the client-worker relationship.

Mistrust, suspicion and hostility

According to Sikhitha (1996:62), this threat becomes applicable within the context of poor race relations - which has undeniably been prevalent in South Africa as a result of its past segragationary ideological practices. In South Africa, for instance, a practice situation comprised

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of a Black client and a White worker could result in the worker's ability or willingness to help being questioned - the Black client may ask the question of how this worker is able to help him or her - a mistrust that may be seen as resulting from a "long history ... in which trust, confidence, and openness were violated and exploited" (1996:62). On the other hand, a White client assigned to a Black worker "may be reluctant to believe in the competence" of the professional - caused by the racial prejudices that had been normalised being interwoven with stereotypes of racially-based competence.

Denial of ethnicity and culture

This is an avoidance by a client of any issues relating to ethnicity or culture, perhaps the result of a "fear of confronting racism within self" (Sikhitha 1996:62). Sikhitha describes what Comas-Diaz (1990 in Sikhitha 1996) termed the "myth of sameness" - when the client and the worker are indifferent to prevailing societal inequalities, with the unintended result that it is the everyday realities of the clients' life which are trivialised or negated due to their being on the less fortunate side of societal imbalances.

The "clinical anthropologist syndrome"

Here, while obtaining information on the client, the worker is too "curious about the client's culture and she/he spends too much time exploring these issues, at the expense of the client's needs" (Sikhitha 1996:63). The danger inherent to this mindset lies in the degree to which such an overcurious worker may attribute causal explanations to cultural factors as opposed to actual non-cultural pathology - effectively derailing the intervention process through not being responsive to the actual needs of the client system.

Idealisation

Sikhitha identifies this as a particular contextual problem in South Africa (1996:63) in that situations may occur in which a Black client who has suffered at the hands of historical disadvantage and subjugation enters a helping relationship with a worker whom he or she then begins to idealise - seeing the social worker as having "made it". The consequence of such a view is that such clients may become passive and dependent in expecting the worker to help them out of their situation too, and thus limiting the problem-solving abilities of the intervention process.

Lack of indigenous knowledge base on the subject of multicultural social work

Tshabalala (1992:68) states that the process of promoting multicultural approaches in social service provision is itself a "realisation that the dominant white culture can no longer be viewed as the superior of all cultures to give direction to social work practice in non-Western countries". He states that particularly in societies where oppression and discrimination on a racial basis have been the order of human relations, this realisation may even indicate growth and progress within that society. As Tshabalala comments, social work education and training tends to be Eurocentric or foreign-conceptualised knowledge that is imposed on practice settings within South Africa. Thia may result in questions being raised concerning the relevance and appropriateness of such a knowledge-base to the context of a developing country fighting severe social inequality and an uneven distribution of wealth and resources. This lack of an indigenous knowledge base is further hampered by a very rudimentary degree of literature on cross-cultural work in South Africa (Sikhitha 1996:61). It is for this reason that Strydom argues that far too little has been done to develop knowledge and to communicate in order to acquire the skills needed for effective and sensitive addressing of ethnic issues in social work education. Strydom

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further argues that social work theory and practice will increasingly have to be focused on indigenous models that are based on local socio-political and economic conditions (1995:116).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has been primarily aimed at addressing the increasing demand for effective multicultural competence within the South African social service sector. The authors have stressed the importance of cross-cultural competence as an inherent element in both social work practice and theory in order to provide relevant and appropriate services that are responsive to the needs and problems experienced by South Africans. A tricomponential model was suggested in which various value, skill and knowledge elements were identified and applied to the supervision relationship between supervisor and social work student - thus arguing that supervision be used as a tool for enhancing the cross-cultural competence of social workers from the onset of their involvement in practice education. In doing so, principles were identified on which cross-cultural competence is based, while the threats that serve to impede or limit this competence were also identified.

It goes without saying that social service provision within South Africa is and has been undergoing a process of change in as much as the context in which this provision takes place has been changed by the tide of democratisation that has instigated large-scale societal transformation within our country since the landmark elections of 1994. Race relations have played and will continue to play a large role in the distribution of power and resources among South African societal groupings, a situation which is further aggravated by the tendency to politicise issues of race, culture and gender. Given this nature of South African society, even more responsibility is placed on social workers to acquire the skills, knowledge and values on which cross-cultural competence is based - a competence which will not only benefit the individual clients to whom social services are provided, but also facilitate the positive transformation of society by "normalising" the constructive; yet, sensitive managing of cultural differences amongst South Africans of all class, colour and creed.

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