Guidelines to enhance the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community living at Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province

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1   Introduction

Guillermo Bernal and Emily Sáez-Santiago (2006) state that, over the last few decades, health professionals have called attention to the importance of considering cultural and ethnic-minority aspects in any psychosocial interventions. Although, at present, there are published guidelines on the practice of culturally competent psychology, there is still a lack of practical information about how to carry out appropriate interventions with specific populations of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In this article, we review the relevant literature concerning the consideration of cultural issues in psychosocial interventions as well as data collected by Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019). We present arguments in favour of culturally sensitive interventions. In addition, we look at important findings to guide such a framework in the South African context for the San community in Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.

South Africa, with its 2018 population estimate of 57.7 million people (Statistics South Africa 2018), is one of the most racially and ethnically complex societies in the world (Afolayan 2004). Of the five major groups, the Khoi-San are regarded as the first and the earliest inhabitants of the country and, according to the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), the San are the living descendants of the first populations that inhabited Southern Africa 20,000 years ago (Miti, Letsaolo, Greehy & Mpungose, 2011). Gebregeorgis (2016) states that although a variation in population density is found, the present-day San are citizens of different Southern African countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Then again there is no simple answer to the question "Who are the indigenous people in South Africa?" (International Labour Office, 1999). As stated by Hitchcock (2012), indigenous peoples in southern Africa are highly diverse – ranging from small communities of foragers (hunters and gatherers) to sedentary agro-pastoralists and peri-urban factory workers in the industrial economies of Southern African states (Sapignoli & Hitchcock, 2013).

It is needed to briefly look why the provision of standard social work to a traumatised low-income community with special cultural needs in the Northern Cape might not be appropriate: While it can be argued that there has been an active movement from Social Work in South Africa towards the strength's perspective to approach clients from an eco-systemic perspective, with a focus on the strengths of ecosystems as a whole (see Maboeta, 2021) the immense poverty of many South Africans cannot be ignored. In this regard researchers such as Chikadzi and Pretorius (2011) refer to the Social Work profession's role in poverty alleviation as "unhelpful help" (p. 255). For example, a recent 2020 United Nations report stated that 1 in 5 South Africans are living in extreme poverty; and, although historically,

South Africa has struggled to aid its most economically vulnerable citizens, health matters such as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020) intensify these difficulties in low-income settings (Luthar, Lyman, & Crossman, 2015) resulting in almost half of the SA adult population currently - that is in 2021 – is living under the poverty line. If we add to these crucial matters issues related to the Euro-centric bias of mental health care and how it has to be reconsidered, reconfigured and co-created in South Africa in particular with its racialized history of mental and social services, it is evident that guidelines for interventions aimed at the enhancement of the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community living at Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province are much needed.

Also, the proposal that cultural and social processes must be considered in treatment, prevention, and mental health service delivery is progressively part of the 21st century service delivery (Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006). Westerman (2010) refers to research studies on aboriginal groups in Australia and argues that the development of universal models could be accepted if these models require cultural diversity as a primary foundation of all practice. Increasingly, in the South African context, a growing number of authors are emphasising the need to consider cultural and contextual aspects in psychosocial interventions (Ebersöhn et al. 2018; Mahali Lynch, Fadiji, Tolla, Khumalo, & Naicker, 2018). Apart from contextual vulnerabilities, other factors to be considered involve the major differences between the global North and the global South. "While the North lives/acts, the South survives/reacts" (Tosa, as quoted in Mahali et al. 2018, p. 1) is an insightful quote to illustrate the contrast between the global North and the global South. Although sub-Saharan Africa remains the epicentre of crisis, with continuing food insecurity, increasing poverty, and high child and maternal mortality, a focus on these challenges does not downplay the resources embedded in the unique socio-cultural features of this context.

For example, relationships between people are a dominant social structure across global South countries. The African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (an ethical concept referring to shared humanity) reflects a legacy from a history where survival was determined by kinship and social relationships (Mahali et al., 2018). This philosophy remains crucial for the wellbeing of people living in sub-Saharan Africa. In a South African study, Ebersöhn et al. (2018) urge researchers and health workers to firstly explore the traditional African psychosocial support practices used in postcolonial Southern Africa in order to understand contextual vulnerability in marginalised communities. Ebersöhn et al. (2018, 14) also recommend that outside interventions should not be developed around episodic and individual needs, but rather that outside investors who focus on the provision of psychosocial support should build interventions around the existing traditional psychosocial practices of care and support that are already in place.

Nevertheless, there are very few guiding frameworks available to investigators who are interested in designing interventions or wellbeing programmes to work with specific populations of various cultures and languages. Evidently, the challenge is to develop evidence-based, culturally sensitive interventions (Bernal & Sáez-Santiago, 2006; Ebersöhn et al. 2018). Also, notwithstanding the presence of difficulties and environmental stressors, the researchers hold the standpoint that any community has unique strengths, assets and resources that undergird its processes of survival (Lazarus, Taliep, Bulbia, & Naidoo, 2017) and provide a foundation for tapping into these unique competencies or qualities (Accomazzo, 2014). This point of departure is particularly important in research about indigenous people of South Africa, such as the San. For example, Tempelhoff (2014) refers to the historical recollections of water for the San community in Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province, since for them

as indigenous people, water is an important resource. In essence, water represents life: the water they drank in former times gave them energy. They knew how to manage water when there was little available. In the past, the San people were innovative and able to store water and thrived under conditions where outsiders would succumb to thirst. For example, formerly, their forefathers were able to secure water supplies from the bark of trees, rivers, and natural and man-made lakes. In other words, it is needed for researchers and health workers to take note that when the San in the 21st century find themselves in the undesirable position of having to rely on a municipal authority for a water supply (Tempelhoff 2014), these matters have serious significance for them. Another recent example can be given, such as during the lock down period in South Africa (2020), when people were compelled to stay at home and to uphold social distancing. Such practices were rather strange for the San community living at Platfontein due to their cultural habit to roam freely as people of the veld. Clearly, developers should target distinct contextual factors identified by members of the community to enhance intervention effectiveness.

1.1 Information about the San in Platfontein

Many authors refer to the ancestral San people's rich culture rooted in thousands of years of hunting and gathering, having lived in southern Africa since ancient times (Adhikari, 2010; Gebregeorgis, 2016). The San people's intimate knowledge of nature and animal behaviour is well-documented (cf. Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019); and, their legacy include, for example, the well-known treasure of rock paintings of Tsodilo Hills, located in north-west Botswana, contains around 400 rock art sites with more than 4,000 individual paintings, and has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2001 (https://africanrockart.britishmuseum.org/country/botswana/tsodilo/). Bassett (2001), in his book *Rock paintings of South Africa: Revealing a legacy,* illustrates the many spaces all over Southern Africa where the San's artwork can be found, such as Cederberg (p. 34); Koue Bokkeveld (p. 54); Gamka berg (p. 58); Kammanassieberg (p. 62); Stormberg (p. 76); and Southern Drakensberg (p. 118). Bassett (2001) explains that the San people's rock paintings tell that, for them, "the past was alive in the present" (p. 7). The valuable illustration of their rock paintings also shows how the San perceived many connections between animals and people in the spiritual and mythic realms (p. 20). This understanding of animal behaviour in terms of human activities is still valid today (Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019, p. 5). Also, in data collected for this research, the community leaders spoke spontaneously about the eland with reverence, and this is confirmed by these rock paintings (Bassett 2001) where the eland was revered as the "creator deity" (p. 54) and painted strikingly to display its supernatural potency of all the antelope.

Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019) found that San community at Platfontein was proud of their culture and this heritage was an integral part of their collective self-esteem. But, interestingly, differences existed among younger and older persons' understanding of the San's psychosocial wellbeing. In alignment with this finding, Tsholofelo (2017), distinguishes between collective self-esteem as the evaluation of the social group to which one belongs and private collective self-esteem, which is about the type of self-esteem linked to one's own evaluation of one's social group or "the in-group" (p. 165). Seemingly, an understanding of the San community's collective as well as private collective self-esteem is an important matter for this community, taking into account, for example, the centrality of community leaders; their understanding of their past and the maintaining of traditional practices; and, of course, their language.

Language is part of the San people's tradition and cultural heritage, and therefore it is important that the next generation will be enabled to preserve it. San people were convinced that the regard for their language is central to their traditions and family functioning (Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019). Increasingly, the issue to promote the San language through speaking as well as documenting is stressed. Language also provides the San groups/tribes with a self-identity, so that the outside world may distinctively identify them as either '!Xun or Khwe'. Adhikari (2010) quotes David Kruiper, the leader of the = Khomani San people, lamenting about his people '...we have been made into nothing.' (p. 19). Langauge and the recognition of language can be linked to the San people' fundamental need to be valued; and, as such, refers to an issue of dignity (Prilleltensky, 2019).

Just as the telling of stories and the beauty of the indigenous languages of the San are part of the strengths of this community, their socio-cultural richness embraces those practices and rituals to share: "But the San is a unique human. They're humans who can share" (Louw 2019, p. 111). Ebersöhn et al. (2018) use the concept of "flocking" to explain these practices related to interconnectedness, so typical to the African context. In contrast to concepts about "flight or fight", flocking is used to describe collective, networking, and pragmatic behaviour. In this sense psychosocial support comprises those collective endeavours that connect individuals in similar high-need circumstances with one another by tapping into shared experiences of adapting to challenges; psychosocial support is leverage for collaboration; and psychosocial support favours pragmatic tried and tested solutions. Sharing has always been part of the San's culture. If a family or an individual has food, all the other extended families will visit every day and share meals together. "When they get their money – end of – the pay day, then he goes to town or somewhere and buys enough food and he shares with his family who are close to him" (Louw, 2019, p. 111). For this San community, the premise of psychosocial support in terms of social capital and networking during problem-solving – especially to buffer against financial insecurity – is clear. However, there are also examples where tapping into "sharing" is limited due to poverty in this community. Although psychosocial support encourages communal support and promotes caring (sharing food), in other cases, parents choose to take their children with them to the site of the father's seasonal work. In some cases, this could imply that children cannot attend school for 6 months with grave consequences for children's education.

Another aspect of psychosocial support in this San community can be described as pragmatism. Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019) showed that, for example, in some instances related to abusive behaviour, the San people refrain from protection by the law. In the past, the San believed in the notion of "an eye for an eye"; if, for example, a man killed his wife, he would also be killed and both corpses would be collected at the same time and taken to the mortuary. Such behaviours have led to the occurrence of many orphans. With the introduction of the police and justice systems (for example, courts) which deal with murders/killings, rape, et cetera, crime has decreased. People have a choice to report petty crimes such as stealing either to traditional leaders or to the courts.

Apparently, there is a wealth of possibilities to protect and promote the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community living in Platfontein. While the accumulation of many struggles of the San living at Platfontein in terms of physical, psychological, and social vulnerability (still intertwined with a social confusion due to their background of dispossession, relocation, and mass destruction) cannot be disregarded, significant guidelines can be offered toward the strengthening of this community's psychosocial wellbeing.

2 Strengths-based approach

As mentioned in the introduction of this article, an ecological stance is essential to culture-sensitive interventions. While the embeddedness of persons and families is acknowledged from micro - to macro levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Rosa & Tudge, 2012), a strength-based perspective provides a framework and tools enabling us to also work with partners (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2012). This approach also allows the intentional recognition of personal, interpersonal, and collective strengths (Prilleltensky 2014; 2019), since all persons, families, and communities have strengths (Saleeby, 2012). Hobfall and Lilly (1993) indicated that individuals have a primary goal to protect and preserve those resources they value.

While empowerment and resilience are concepts that are often used in social sciences, Brodsky and Cattaneo (2013) show that researchers should distinguish between empowerment and resilience in the context of fundamental risk. They define empowerment as "a meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world", with power defined as "one's influence in social relations at any level of human interaction, from dyadic interactions to the interactions between a person and a system" (p. 336). Similar to the process of resilience, a key component of the empowerment process is an awareness of a desire for change. *Resilience* consists of internal, local-level goals that are aimed at intrapersonal actions and outcomes – adapting, withstanding, or resisting the situation as it is. For the San community-members it is crucial that empowerment is enacted socially – aimed at external change to relationships, situations and power dynamics; along with an internal, psychological shift (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2014). So, processes of community empowerment must build on individuals' resilience to provide the bridge that connects individual power to social power in the local community. In other words, it is important to clarify those internal factors associated with individuals' psychosocial wellbeing, such as their resilient coping; and, those external factors associated with the context, such as the community's resources or contextual vulnerabilities.

Keeping in mind those facets typically associated with the San people's resilient surviving for numerous years and their practices of collective wellbeing, the following seven protective factors were looked at to guide possible future interventions for this San community, namely, relationships; identity; power and control; social justice; access to material resources; cohesion; and, cultural adherence (Ungar, 2015). These common protective factors appear repeatedly for populations with complex needs who face significant levels of adversity (Ungar 2015).

Finally, we emphasize the guidelines given in the next section is offered in order to encourage social work practitioners to apply indigenous and innovative philosophies and approaches in order to optimize culture-sensitive interventions. Luwangula, Twikirize, Twesigye and Kitimbo (2019) stress that social work can only be meaningful and effective if it provides context-specific and tangible responses to the given social problems in African countries.

3 Guidelines for an intervention to strengthen the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community living in Platfontein

Since story-telling is such an integral aspect of the heritage of the San people, it is proposed that contextual information collected by means of participatory methods, should be used in combination with academic information for an intervention programme to promote this community's psychosocial wellbeing. An integration of the abovementioned seven protective factors (Ungar 2015) with contextual information (see Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019) could be used in the following ways:

3.1 Relationships (for example, relationships with significant others, peers, mentors, and family members within one's home and community).

This protective factor can be linked with the San people's viewpoint about relational and physical health as integral to their psychosocial well-being:

> "A happy San person is a healthy San person, you can see if you arrive somewhere, the children are playful and the people are joyful. They communicate happily. And you will also see their bodies. The body is normal. They don't appear sick, they are neatly dressed, and you will also see they are not hungry." (San Youth Male cited in Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019, p. 8)

Social workers initiating culturally sensitive programmes in this context should stress the importance of personal and interpersonal health and living together in harmony. Continuous efforts could include stressing the importance of competent families entailing, for example, celebrating Family Day during the month of May. These efforts could also include the nurturing of healthy families as well as offering information about annual programmes on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (Dalton-Greyling & Greyling, 2007), COVID 19 and other related illnesses encouraging people to take care of the health and family members who are sick.

An ameliorative approach should also be taken in consideration, since abusive behaviour associated with for example, alcohol abuse was indicated in this San community (Becker, 2003). Therefore, knowledge about interdicts/protection orders against abuse should be included in such an intervention programme. More recently, Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019) found that the occurrence of incidences related to gender-based attitudes and violence in the San community in Platfontein were not uncommon.

Within this context a real life knowledge of the !Xun and Khwe is of the utmost importance to effectively intervene towards the strengthening of this community's relational connectedness, since the !Xun and Khwe did not originate in this Platfontein community; they are not on their traditional territory; the older generation experienced substantial trauma during the bush war in Angola and Namibia; and, the community was relocated to a military base in South Africa just as apartheid ended (see Louw, 2019). Since the whole nature of the trauma and intergenerational trauma in the community is highly relevant to this article, the skilful use of collective wisdom should be central to social workers' operational strategies.

Then again, the importance of relationships is of major importance for the San people. This is proudly well-preserved by their cultural traditions that indigenous knowledge is mainly transmitted and communicated by grandparents (Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019). Evidently, the assistance of the older members of the San community who play such a significant role in the sharing and attainment of knowledge (Mchombu, & Mosimane, 2010) should be utilized intentionally toward the restoring and nurturing of the relational health of this community.

3.2 Identity

(e.g., a personal and collective sense of who one is that fuels feelings of satisfaction and/or pride; sense of purpose to one's life; self-appraisal of strengths and weaknesses; aspirations, beliefs, and values; and spiritual and religious identification).

Amidst the wealth of the San community's collective strengths, it is needed to acknowledge the indigenous identity of the !Xun and Khwe, since apart from the challenges associated with the Platfontein context, the differences in design of social services to other cultural groups in

the wider community should be taken into account. According to Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019) the collective sense of identity that fuels feelings of pride for the San community living at Platfontein is central to the wealth of their cultural heritage.

> "They teach them how to use the bow and arrow. And then the grandfather informs him on what he is supposed to kill and he will go from a situation starting first with the springbok, may be a hare then a springbok and then may be a kudu or whatever he will get. But the main one he must find, the last one which he is supposed to kill is the eland. If he can kill the eland, then he is a good hunter and a man who will care for and can look after his people." (San Male Adult in Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019, p. 6)

The issue of identity should be a particular driver of an intervention programme to enhance the San community's psychosocial wellbeing living in Platfontein, since their history of trauma (McFarlane, 2018) associated with the resettlement in the 1960s when they were recruited by the then South African Defence Force (SADF) to serve as trackers for its operations in Namibia and Angola still persists in many ways (see Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019). Yet, although the pride of the San people's solid knowledge of nature and their stories about the ceremonies when an eland is hunted and its role to their rites and rituals within the could appear to be farfetched, guidelines aimed at effective social work interventions should intentionally involve these beliefs and practices.

Such efforts could be encouraged in combination with activities, such as, the celebration of Heritage or Traditional Day when the two cultures, the !Xun and Khwe, have a good time by dancing and wearing their traditional clothes. Having attended the Heritage Day celebration with the San people in the past, they would leave very early to hunt a big animal (probably a kudu) and bring it to the traditional village to slaughter it. Many people would be gathered and watch how the men slaughter the animal. Thereafter, the women would be provided with the meat to cook for all the community members to eat together. Apparently, Heritage Day brings a sense of togetherness where all the community members are gathered at one place/traditional village for the whole day. All the community members from young to old participate in traditional songs and dancing. Some elders show the young how the San used to make fire in the veld by holding two sticks in the middle of their hands, and rubbing them till they turned into fire. These efforts could be used in combination with the sharing of knowledge of traditional healing practices, for example, in the past, the San elders would heal a sick child or person (with a sore, epileptic attacks, et cetera) by using traditional medicine (Mchombu, & Mosimane, 2010). Clearly, the use of indigenous knowledge that is embedded in the San culture is integral to their identity.

It is proposed that these meaningful traditions must be expanded in cooperation with the San community's traditional leaders to protect and promote their psychosocial wellbeing.

3.3 Power and control

(e.g., experiences of being able to care for oneself and others; personal and political efficacy; the ability to effect change in one's social and physical environment in order to access resources; political power).

Matters related to power and control correlate with the concerns of the San community about those factors obstructing their psychosocial wellbeing. The San people's constant dealing with poverty and the transmission thereof (Ward, Makusha, & Bray, 2015) from one generation to another is a constant peril for their wellbeing. Louw and Van Schalkwyk (2019) found that

many San families living at Platfontein experience the disempowering effect of unemployment and the negative spirals of poverty. Gebregeorgis (2016) found that the San people at Platfontein were struggling with a "trauma-poverty-trauma vicious cycle" (p. 101) where the unemployment and poverty which they still experienced kept them trapped in their background of dispossession and relocation. Experiences of extremely high unemployment makes people feel powerless and defeated (Wright, Noble, Ntshongwana, Neves, & Barnes, 2014). Seeking employment outside of the province in order to provide for children and family gives a sense of power or dignity.

> "Others go to the farms in search of employment. And searching for employment is not easy. Yes they also go to far away places, other provinces in search of employment so that they can be able to feed their children, feed themselves." (Male Youth in Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019, p.8).

While the high incidence of unemployment is a terrible issue in South Africa, this is an area where social workers could encourage community leaders to increasingly find partners to take hands on this journey. Partnering with organisations who could offer financial and social capital must not limit those initiatives formed by the San people, such as providing a service (knitting and braiding hair). Also, the important function of the radio station for the promotion of the San culture was shown as a primary source for employment in this community, as opposed to mere entertainment (Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019).

However, obtaining more political power should not be omitted when intervening with this San community, since experiences of being able to care for themselves are crucial. Therefore, an intervention programme should offer sufficient opportunities to discuss the many frustrations due to the socio-economic gaps the San members are experiencing (Gebregeorgis, 2016). Though the healing of the deep-rooted trauma and enabling the community to be self-sufficient to solve their socio-economic problems are vital (Gebregeorgis, 2016), empowering and capacity-building sustainable support should be centred in a mix of indigenous knowledge and contemporary enterprise (Amunkete & Rothman, 2015).

3.4 Social justice

(e.g., experiences related to finding a meaningful role in one's community; social equality; the right to participate; opportunities to make a contribution).

The San people feel that the opportunities in the community are too few and the government does not care about them: "Because we are excluded, the government exclude us. They don't perceive us as human beings in Platfontein. We are put aside" (Louw, 2019, p. 118). Prilleltensky (2012; 2019) states clearly that wellbeing and social justice cannot be separated, and in this sense matters related to external assets or rather serious scarcity thereof are vital for social justice. Social justice embraces all those protective mechanisms as a means to thriving and increased levels of psychosocial wellbeing. Therefore, these matters of social justice should be foremost for an intervention programme for this community.

It is proposed that that experiences of social injustice should be purposefully communicated to local and provincial authorities by emphasising the San people's fundamental need to "matter" (cf. Prilleltensky, 2019, p. 16). In other words, the San's psychosocial wellbeing cannot be enhanced without paying attention to the existential need to feel valued and to add value to their community by enlarging opportunities to make a contribution. The advocacy role of social workers in this community is of key importance.

3.5 Access to material resources

(e.g., availability of financial and educational resources; medical services; employment opportunities; and access to food, clothing, and shelter).

The San people appreciate the external assets or resources of the Platfontein community, such as medical services (clinic), law and order (policing), and educational opportunities (school) (Louw & Van Schalkwyk, 2019). But, these resources showed serious limitations, for example, the medical clinic is only operational during the day; there is no police station or caravan in the San area; and, many frustrations in the education system regarding subject choices and qualifications:

> "The school subjects are very weak for us as the San community, because after completing matric and we intend searching for employment, as we apply for jobs, people look at our matric results, because the job we are applying for does not match our school subjects." (Female Youth in Louw, p. 119)

These matters are closely linked to meaningful existence and should be integrated when compiling an intervention programme with the San community-members as a power to matter (cf. Brodsky & Catanneo, 2013; Prilleltensky, 2012).

3.6 Cohesion

(e.g., balancing one's personal interests with a sense of responsibility to the greater good; feeling as if one is part of something larger than oneself socially and spiritually; one's life has meaning).

Experiences of connectedness with others and God is a no strange language for the San. Also, in modern times, feeling that one is part of something larger than oneself socially and spiritually is fundamental to the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community. More recently, the erection of two church buildings in the Platfontein community where the San people are residing is an indication of the San's openness to spiritual activities. According to Louw (2019), one church building belongs to the Khwe community which is under the leadership of Reverend Manu; and, the other church building was built under the guidance of late Chief/Reverend Mahongo. Prior to the building of the churches, the community held their church services under a tent which would blow away any day during strong winds or get wet inside when it rained. However, the community members had always conducted their religious services despite the circumstances, until their church buildings were erected. Usually, most of the San community who are part of faith communities and committed to church activities do not use of liquor. In other words, the occurrence of domestic violence and abuse of women and children will mostly not occur in these families. So, since many community members believe in God and conduct spiritual services, these activities should be included in efforts to enhance the San community's social and spiritual cohesion.

3.7 Cultural adherence

(e.g., adherence to everyday culture-based practices; assertion of one's values and beliefs that have been transmitted between members of different generations or between members of one generation; participation in family and community cultural practices).

While cultural adherence and their traditional practices are viewed as integral to the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community at Platfontein, they were concerned about the future of their culture in the 21st century (Louw, 2019). For example, the San people fear that

their language might die if it is not documented (Stell, & Dragojevic, 2017). Also, with the introduction of the courts, the chiefs and traditional leaders play an important role in maintaining peace and harmony among the members as a cultural practice. For example, if someone has a problem with another San person, then the leaders can also act to resolve the problem. These incidences are signposts that of cultural adherence.

In summary, the compiling of an intervention programme to promote the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community in Platfontein will include these protective factors grounded in contextual and indigenous knowledge to mobilise existing competent networks. It was shown that such interventions should also take into account those specific needs and risks of this community, such as, to address: i) the gap between subjects learnt at school and the work place and the need for learner support within the school context; ii) serious problems regarding language; and, iii) high incidence of unemployment and poverty. Finally, guidelines should not omit the needed precautions for interventions (Ebersöhn et al., 2018), namely to focus on the "collective", particularly in communities such as the San community in Platfontein where realities are associated with "chronic risk" and population trauma (cf. McFarlane, 2018). It is proposed that social workers could capitalise on those pathways of collective wellbeing to increasingly encourage insider-driven growth. The aim is to steer clear of passive dependence and to and graft onto collective agency (Ebersöhn et al., 2018).

4   Conclusion

In this paper we indicated the importance of cultural and ethnic-minority aspects in psychosocial interventions. Relevant literature and the findings of preliminary research were discussed briefly in order to offer culture-sensitive information when intervening with ethnic minorities, such as, the San community living at Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Although a growing number of authors are emphasising the need to consider cultural and contextual aspects in psychosocial interventions, few frameworks exist for the South African context. Within an ecological stance, it is suggested to accommodate a strengths-based perspective to tap into the wealth of this San community. Specific guidelines were discussed briefly towards the revealing of the inherent dignity and "glorious legacy" (cf. Abrahams, 2000, p. 252) of our indigenous people. While a first-rate level of cooperation between government, civil society, and the corporate sector is needed to address these complex challenges, the role of social workers can be crucial.

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