

**CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE
WORKERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is a dedication to my late father John Malope Nkato Molepo as well as my late grandparents Mamathula Molepo and Maseteba Mosebjadi Molepo. All these people have laid a solid foundation of supporting me financially through primary and secondary school. I wish they had lived to see the ultimate results of their sacrifices.

All the Glory goes to the Almighty God!

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DECLARATION

I declare that “**Challenges and coping strategies of child and youth care workers in the South African context**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....
(Signature)

Lesiba Phineas Molepo

05 September 2014
.....

Date

SUMMARY

CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORKERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

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Child and Youth Care is another profession that falls under the social services sector. A contextualization of child and youth care field within the broader socio-economic South African context is presented. In particular, the contribution of child and youth care as a unique field is outlined in this study.

The ecological systems theory was used as the theoretical framework to underpin the study. This theory acknowledges that child and youth care as a field and child and youth care workers as professionals are not working in isolation, but are affected by the socio-economic dynamics within the broader macro-system. In the context of applied research, this study investigated the **challenges and coping strategies of child and youth care workers in the South African context.**

Qualitative methodology was used to allow participants some reflection on the challenges experienced and coping strategies used by them. By utilizing the collective case study design, 11 focus group interviews were conducted in six provinces of South Africa to collect data from 93 participants. The participants were employed in government organisations and non-governmental organisations. Participants further represented child and youth care workers from rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

Findings revealed that child and youth care workers are faced with an array of challenges which fall under the following categories: psycho-social challenges, professional challenges and socio-economic challenges. Under each of these categories, a range of themes and sub-themes have emerged.

Themes and sub-themes that emerged under psycho-social challenges are as follows: inability to disengage from work environment, disengagement from socialisation activities, personal trauma, invasion of personal boundaries and emotional well-being issues. Coping strategies that emerged are: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal mission, substance use and quitting.

Under the professional challenges category, the following themes have emerged: dealing with clients' behaviours, personal risk, lack of tangible and immediate results, poor stakeholder relations, lack of clarity on the role and title of the child and youth care worker, inconsistent job requirements, lack of recognition, lack of training and promotion opportunities and inadequate working conditions. To cope with these challenges, the following strategies have emerged: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal support networks and professional support networks. A range of concepts emerged under each of the sub-themes.

The specific features of the sub-theme 'personal support networks' include: rationalizing, self-protection and self-care.

Coping strategies under professional support networks include: colleagues, team meetings, supervision, and psychological support systems.

Challenges that emerged under socio-economic category are: inadequate remuneration structures and inadequate programme funding. To cope with these challenges, it emerged that participants resort to budgeting, formal and informal lending mechanisms, and alternative income generating streams.

Upon closer inspection of all the challenges, the study revealed that many of these challenges originate from child and youth care workers not being fully recognised as professionals. Formal recognition of this category of workers will go a long way in resolving a number of challenges raised by the participants. It is also assumed that when registered, child and youth care workers will experience better working conditions which will also enable them to be remunerated properly in line with their counterparts within the social service professions.

Key words:

Orphans and vulnerable children

Child and youth care

Child and youth care workers

Coping strategies

Psycho-social challenges

Professional challenges

Socio-economic challenges

Residential care

Secure care

Social service professions

OPSOMMING

UITDAGINGS EN HANTEERINGSSTRATEGIEË VAN KINDER- EN JEUGSORGWERKERS IN DIE SUID AFRIKAANSE KONTEKS

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Kinder- en jeugsorg is 'n beroep in die maatskaplike dienste sektor. 'n Kontekstualisering van die kinder- en jeugsorg veld binne die breër sosio-ekonomiese Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is aangebied. Meer spesifiek, die bydrae van kinder- en jeugsorg as 'n unieke veld is in hierdie studie uiteengesit.

Die ekologiese sisteem teorie was gebruik as die teoretiese raamwerk om die studie te steun. Hierdie teorie erken dat kinder- en jeugsorg as 'n veld en kinder en jeugsorgwerkers as professionele persone nie in isolasie werk nie, maar dat hulle deur die sosio-ekonomiese dinamika in die breër makro-sisteem geaffekteer word. In die konteks van toegepaste navorsing het hierdie studie die uitdagings en hanteeringstrategieë van kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks ondersoek.

Kwalitatiewe metodologie was gebruik om die deelnemers geleentheid te gee om te reflekteer rondom die uitdagings en hanteeringstrategieë wat hulle ervaar. Deur gebruikmaking van die kollektiewe gevalle studie ontwerp, was 11 fokusgroeponderhoude in ses provinsies van Suid Afrika gevoer ten einde data van 93 deelnemers in te samel. Die deelnemers was in diens van beide regeringsorganisasies en nie-regeringsorganisasies. Die deelnemers het kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers van landelike, semi-stedelike en stedelike gebiede verteenwoordig.

Bevindinge het dit duidelik gemaak dat kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers met 'n verskeidenheid van uitdagings onder die volgende kategorieë gekonfronteer word: psigososiale -, professionele -, asook sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings. Onder elke een van hierdie kategorieë het 'n verskeidenheid van temas en sub-temas na vore gekom.

Temas en sub-temas wat onder psigososiale uitdagings geïdentifiseer is, was die volgende: onvermoë om te ontkoppel, ontkoppeling van sosialisering aktiwiteite, persoonlike trauma, oorskreiding van persoonlike grense en emosionele welstand kwessies. Hanteeringstrategieë wat na vore gekom het is: nie-bestaande hanteeringstrategieë, persoonlike missies, dwelmmisbruik, en bedanking uit beroep.

Onder die professionele uitdagings kategorie het die volgende temas na vore gekom: hantering van kliënte se probleme, persoonlike risiko, gebrek aan tasbare en onmiddellike resultate, swak verhoudings met belanghebbendes, onbekende en strydige titels vir kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers, strydige werk vereistes, gebrek aan: erkenning, opleiding, bevorderingsgeleenthede, en onbevredigende werksomstandighede. Om hierdie uitdagings te hanteer het die volgende tegnieke na vore gekom: nie-bestaande hanteeringstrategieë, persoonlike ondersteuningsnetwerke en professionele ondersteuningsnetwerke. 'n Verskeidenheid van konsepte het onder elk van die sub-temas na vore gekom.

Die spesifieke eienskappe van die persoonlike ondersteuningsnetwerke sub-tema sluit die volgende in: rasionalisering, self-beskerming en self-sorg.

Hanteeringstrategieë onder professionele ondersteuningsnetwerke sluit die volgende in: kollegas, spanvergaderings, en psigologiese ondersteuning sisteme.

Onder die sosio-ekonomiese kategorie het die volgende temas tevore gekom: onvoldoende vergoedingstrukture en onvoldoende befondsingsprogramme. Om hierdie uitdagings te hanteer het die volgende tegnieke na vore gekom: begroting, lenings deur formele en informele meganismes, asook alternatiewe inkomste skeppings.

By nadere ondersoek van al die uitdagings, het die studie getoon dat baie van hierdie uitdagings ontstaan omdat kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers nie as professionele persone erken word nie. Formele professionele erkenning van hierdie kategorie van werkers sal 'n stap nader wees aan 'n oplossing vir die uitdagings wat die deelnemers aan die lig gebring het. Dit word ook aanvaar dat wanneer kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers professioneel geregistreer word, dat hul beter werksomstandighede sal ervaar wat hul ook in staat sal stel om behoorlik vergoed te word in ooreenstemming met hul eweknieë in die Maatskaplike Diensberoepe.

Sleutelwoorde

Weeskinders en kwesbare kinders

Kinder- en jeugsorg

Kinder- en jeugsorgwerkers

Hanteeringstrategieë

Psigososiale uitdagings

Professionele uitdagings

Sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings

Residensiële sorg

Veilige sorg

Maatskaplike Diensberoepe

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC:	African National Congress
BQCC:	Basic Qualification in Child Care
CBOs:	Community-based organisations
CDG:	Care Dependency Grant
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
CSG:	Child Support Grant
CYC:	Child and Youth Care
CYCW:	Child and Youth Care Worker
CYCWs:	Child and Youth Care Workers
DHET:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DG:	Disability Grant
DSD:	Department of Social Development
DUT:	Durban University of Technology
EC:	Eastern Cape
FCG:	Foster Child Grant
FET:	Further Education and Training
FETC:	Further Education and Training Certificate
FS:	Free State

GP:	Gauteng
GIA:	Grant in Aid
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRD:	Human Resources Development
HRDSSA:	Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa
HSRC:	Human Sciences Research Council
ISDM:	Integrated Service Delivery Model
KZN:	KwaZulu-Natal
LP:	Limpopo
MP:	Mpumalanga
MTech:	Magister of Technologiae
NACCW:	National Association for Child Care Workers
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NDP:	National Development Plan
NW:	North West
NC:	Northern Cape
NPC:	National Planning Commission
NPOs:	Non-Profit Organisations
NSDS:	National Skills Development Strategy
NQF:	National Qualification Framework

NYC:	National Youth Commission
NYP:	National Youth Policy
OAG:	Old Age Grant
OVC:	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PBCYC:	Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Workers
SA:	South Africa
SACSSP:	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SASSA:	South African Social Security Agency
STATS SA:	Statistics South Africa
UNISA:	University of South Africa
UP:	University of Pretoria
US:	United States
WVG:	War Veteran's Grant
WC:	Western Cape

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	
Acknowledgements	
Declaration	
Summary	
Opsomming	
List of abbreviations	

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1	Introduction.....	1
1.2	Literature review.....	2
1.2.1	Psycho-social factors.....	5
1.2.2	Practice related factors.....	6
1.2.3	Professional and training related factors.....	7
1.2.4	Socio-economic factors.....	10
1.3	Theoretical framework.....	12
1.4	Rationale and problem statement.....	13
1.5	Goal and objectives of the study.....	17
1.6	Research methodology.....	18
1.7	Limitations of the study.....	19
1.7.1	Language.....	19
1.7.2	Transcription.....	20
1.7.3	Number of focus groups.....	20
1.7.4	Timing and settings of focus group sessions.....	21
1.7.5	Composition of participants.....	21
1.7.6	Sample size.....	23
1.7.7	Biographical information.....	23
1.7.8	Researcher's authority and bias.....	23
1.7.9	Duration of the study.....	24

1.8	Contents of the research report.....	25
1.9	Conclusion.....	27

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

2.1	Introduction.....	28
2.2	Systems theory.....	30
2.3	Key concepts in systems theory.....	32
2.3.1	System.....	32
2.3.2	Boundaries.....	33
2.3.3	Subsystem.....	34
2.3.4	Homeostasis.....	34
2.3.5	A role.....	35
2.3.6	Relationship.....	35
2.3.7	Input.....	35
2.3.8	Output.....	35
2.3.9	Feedback.....	36
2.3.10	Interface.....	36
2.3.11	Differentiation.....	36
2.3.12	Entropy and negative entropy.....	37
2.3.13	Equifinality.....	37
2.4	Additional concepts of ecological / systems framework.....	37
2.4.1	Synergy.....	37
2.4.2	Open and closed systems.....	38
2.4.3	Interactions and interrelations.....	38
2.4.4	Steady state.....	39
2.5	The ecological systems theory.....	39
2.5.1	The important concepts of the ecological systems perspective.....	40
2.5.1.1	Social environment.....	40
2.5.1.2	Transactions.....	41
2.5.1.3	Interdependence.....	41

2.5.1.4	Energy.....	41
2.5.1.5	Adaptation.....	41
2.5.1.6	Coping.....	44
2.5.1.6.1	Relatedness.....	45
2.5.1.6.2	Competence.....	45
2.5.1.6.3	Self-esteem.....	45
2.5.1.6.4	Self-direction.....	45
2.6	Similarities between systems theory and the ecological systems theory.....	47
2.7	Differences between systems theory and ecological systems theory.....	48
2.8	Levels of the ecological systems theory.....	49
2.8.1	Microsystem.....	51
2.8.2	Mesosystem.....	52
2.8.3	Exosystem.....	53
2.8.4	Macrosystem.....	54
2.8.5	Chronosystem.....	56
2.9	The relevance of the ecological systems theory to CYC.....	56
2.9.1	Working with individual children (microsystem).....	57
2.9.2	Working with families and communities (mesosystem).....	58
2.9.2.1	Working within families.....	59
2.9.2.2	Working within communities (exosystems).....	61
2.9.3	Working within the broader society (macrosystem).....	63
2.10	Conclusion.....	64

CHAPTER 3

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WITHIN THE BROADER SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

3.1	Introduction.....	65
3.2	Legislative and policy framework.....	65
3.3	The South African population.....	67

3.3.1	Children and youth.....	69
3.4	Patterns of HIV and AIDS prevalence in SA.....	69
3.4.1	The impact of HIV and AIDS on children and youth.....	72
3.4.2	The impact of HIV and AIDS on women.....	73
3.4.3	Young people's sexual activities.....	74
3.4.4	The impact of HIV and AIDS on families.....	75
3.4.5	Orphanhood.....	75
3.4.5.1	Child-headed household.....	77
3.5	Non-attendance of school.....	77
3.6	Poverty, economy and employment.....	81
3.6.1	Poverty and age.....	82
3.6.2	Poverty at provincial level.....	83
3.6.3	The economy.....	84
3.6.4	The level of unemployment.....	85
3.7	Intervention strategies.....	86
3.7.1	Social protection.....	87
3.7.2	Social security grants.....	88
3.7.3	The National Development Plan.....	90
3.7.4	Skills Development Amendment Act 31 of 2003.....	93
3.7.4.1	The National Skills Development Strategy.....	94
3.7.5	Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa.....	94
3.7.6	The Integrated Service Delivery Model.....	96
3.8	Conclusion.....	97

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW: CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK

4.1	Introduction.....	99
4.2	Historical background of Child and Youth Care.....	99
4.3	Definition of Child and Youth Care.....	104
4.3.1	Key concepts of Child and Youth Care.....	107
4.3.1.1	Relationship.....	107

4.3.1.2	Engagement.....	111
4.3.1.3	Therapeutic care.....	113
4.3.1.4	Life-space.....	114
4.4	Recipients of CYC services.....	118
4.4.1	Managing difficult behaviours.....	120
4.4.2	Life Cycle Approach.....	125
4.4.3	Rights based agenda.....	126
4.5	Definition, motivations and roles of CYCWs.....	130
4.5.1	Definitions of Child and Youth Care Workers.....	131
4.5.2	Motivations for joining Child and Youth Care Work.....	133
4.5.3	Roles of Child and Youth Care Workers.....	134
4.6	Contexts and settings of CYC practice.....	135
4.6.1	Residential care.....	136
4.6.1.1	Challenges and limitations of residential care.....	138
4.6.2	Secure care.....	143
4.6.3	Working with families.....	146
4.6.4	Community-based child and youth care.....	148
4.7	Challenges facing CYCWs.....	152
4.7.1	Practice-based challenges.....	153
4.7.2	Socio-economic challenges.....	153
4.7.3	Psycho-social challenges.....	155
4.7.3.1	Stress.....	156
4.7.3.2	Burnout.....	156
4.8	Coping strategies of CYCWs.....	158
4.8.1	Supervision.....	160
4.8.2	Multi-disciplinary team work.....	164
4.8.3	Relationship with other professionals.....	165
4.8	Conclusion.....	169

CHAPTER 5

LITERATURE REVIEW: PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

5.1	Introduction.....	170
5.2	Rationale for professional status and development.....	170
5.3	Education and training.....	172
5.3.1	The flaws of training.....	173
5.3.2	Institutions offering accredited Child and Youth Care programmes.....	174
4.3.3	Levels of education and training.....	175
5.4	Registration and regulations.....	177
5.5	In-service training and continued professional development.....	178
5.6	Professional boards and professional associations.....	180
5.6.1	Professional board.....	181
5.6.2	Professional associations.....	182
5.7	Conclusion.....	184

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1	Introduction.....	185
6.2	Research approach.....	185
6.2.1	Type of research.....	186
6.2.2	Research design.....	186
6.3	Population, sample and sampling method.....	187
6.3.1	Population.....	187
6.3.2	Sample and sampling method.....	189
6.4	Data collection method.....	192
6.4.1	Pilot study.....	192
6.4.2	Research method (Focus group interviews).....	193
6.4.3	Research assistant and recording of data.....	194
6.5	Data analysis.....	194
6.5.1	Trustworthiness of qualitative data.....	196

6.6	Ethical considerations.....	198
6.6.1	Informed consent and voluntary participation.....	199
6.6.2	Deception participants.....	200
6.6.3	Confidentiality and anonymity.....	200
6.6.4	Avoidance of harm and debriefing.....	201
6.6.5	Competence of the researcher.....	202
6.7	Conclusion.....	202

CHAPTER 7 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

7.1	Introduction.....	203
7.2	Part A: Biographical information of participants.....	203
7.2.1	Race of participants.....	204
7.2.2	Gender of participants.....	204
7.2.3	Language of participants.....	205
7.2.4	Age of participants.....	206
7.2.5	Educational level of participants.....	206
7.2.6	NACCW membership of participants.....	207
7.2.7	Length of service in CYC field.....	208
7.3	Part B: Qualitative findings.....	209
7.3.1	Category 1: Psycho-social challenges.....	212
7.3.2	Category 2: Professional challenges.....	224
7.3.3	Category 3: Socio-economic challenges.....	277
7.4	Conclusion.....	288

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1	Introduction.....	290
8.2.	Discussions of the key empirical findings.....	291
8.2.1	Psycho-social challenges and coping strategies.....	291

8.2.1.1	Inability to disengage and disengagement from social activities.....	292
8.2.1.2	Personal trauma and mental related illnesses.....	293
8.2.1.3	Invasion of personal boundaries.....	295
8.2.2	Professional challenges.....	296
8.2.2.1	Dealing with clients' behaviours and personal risk.....	297
8.2.2.2	Lack of tangible and immediate results.....	298
8.2.2.3	Poor stakeholder relations.....	299
8.2.3	Coping strategies for professional challenges.....	302
8.2.4	Socio-economic challenges and coping strategies.....	303
8.3	Conclusions of the key findings.....	306
8.4	Summary of recommendations.....	308
8.4.1	Support networks.....	309
8.4.2	Professional titles and registration.....	309
8.4.3	Education, training and development.....	310
8.4.4	Programme funding.....	313
8.4.5	Remuneration of CYCWs.....	313
8.4.6	Recommendations for further research.....	315
8.5	Accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the study.....	315
8.6	Conclusion.....	316
9	List of references.....	318

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Similarities between systems theory and the ecological systems Perspective.....	48
Table 3.1	Mid-year population estimates for South Africa by population group and sex, 2013.....	67
Table 3.2	Mid-year population estimates by province, 2013.....	68
Table 3.3	HIV prevalence estimates and number of people living with HIV, 2002 – 2013.....	71
Table 3.4	Overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality, South Africa, 2012 (HSRC, 2014: xxv).....	72
Table 3.5	Total number of social grants by grant type and region as at 31 January 2013.....	89
Table 6.1	Organisations that were used for research purposes.....	190
Table 6.2	Distribution of focus groups participants.....	192
Table 7.1	Summary of identified categories, themes, and sub-themes.....	209
Table 7.2	Psycho-social challenges and coping strategies.....	212
Table 7.3	Professional challenges and coping strategies.....	224
Table 7.4	Socio-economic challenges and coping strategies.....	277
Table 8.1	Accomplishment of the study objectives.....	316

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Person-in-environment conceptualization.....	43
Figure 2.2	Levels of the ecological system.....	50
Figure 3.1	Profile of children aged 7–17 years.....	69
Figure 3.2	Children aged 7-17 years by parent survival.....	76

Figure 3.3	Characteristics of children aged 7–17 years not attending school.....	78
Figure 6.1	South Africa's nine provinces.....	188
Figure 7.1	Race of participants.....	204
Figure 7.2	Gender of focus group participants.....	204
Figure 7.3	Language of participants.....	205
Figure 7.4	Age of participants.....	206
Figure 7.5	Educational levels of participants.....	207
Figure 7.6	NACCW membership of participants.....	208
Figure 7.7	Length of service in CYC field.....	208

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Biographical information letter
- Appendix 2: Biographical information form
- Appendix 3: Focus group interview schedule
- Appendix 4: Ethical clearance letter
- Appendix 5: Permission letters from organisations
- Appendix 6: Informed consent letter

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Beukes and Gannon (1996:2) define Child and Youth Care (CYC) as:

A therapeutic intervention which aims at the care and re-education of children whose early development is marred or impeded by unfavourable circumstances with the result that they show disturbances in their physical, emotional and/or cognitive functioning. Child care is an attempt to correct the negative influences and the resulting disturbed behaviour by a variety of means, starting with the removal of the child from its harmful environment and then fostering productive, age-appropriate behaviour and strengthening ego-functioning, thus promoting improved coping and life skills.

It is important for the researcher to define the workers who are engaged in this type of work, as many definitions are being used to refer to them. According to Barford and Whelton (2010:273), Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) are “front-line human service professionals who work in constant contact with children and youth and who are responsible for their daily living needs.” In South Africa (SA), these CYCWs have been working primarily in residential settings (Thumbadoo, 2013:4). According to Barford and Whelton (2010:272), providing care in residential settings is stressful and challenging “yet little research has gone into better understanding of the difficulties these workers face.” Within the South African context, CYCWs have intensified the extension of their services to communities in order to address the diverse needs of the majority of the South African children and youth since the mid-1990s. There are a significant number of children in communities who experience the effects of poverty on a daily basis. CYCWs now have to reach such children as well as “deal with neighbourhood concerns, changes in the community and patterns of violence and crime” (Gharabaghi, 2008:150). From the developments mentioned above, it is clear that the responsibilities placed on CYCWs are enormous, probably bringing about new challenges which require relevant and effective coping strategies.

The Free Dictionary [sa] defines *challenges* as “a test of one's abilities or resources in a demanding but stimulating undertaking.” This definition was suitable for the purposes of this study as it is broad enough to encompass any type of challenges CYCWs in SA may be facing. The psychological definition of *coping strategies* is “the process of managing taxing circumstances, expending effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize, reduce or tolerate stress or conflict” (*Wiktionary*, 2012). In the context of this study, the focus was on an exploration of the challenges experienced and coping strategies adopted by CYCWs in the South African context.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stuart (2009:16), the CYC field “focuses on the developmental needs of children, youth, and families within the space and time of their daily lives.” CYCWs observe what is going on in their daily interactions with children and youth. They further pay attention to how these clients respond to any planned or unplanned interventions. CYCWs then share such information with the relevant multi-disciplinary teams involved in the situation in order to develop suitable intervention strategies or refine those already developed. However, one of the pioneers of the CYC field, Maier (1991b:31), cautions that the focus of CYCWs is “on what to do presently, in the next minute or hour, rather than what is to be accomplished eventually.” This caution suggests the intense level of immediacy in terms of what CYCWs have to do every minute of working with children, youth and families. All the above-mentioned explanations suggest the intense and the complex nature of CYC.

Gharabaghi (2008:150) outlines that internationally, “professional CYC has expanded rapidly over the past three decades which has resulted in the deployment of CYCWs in much more open and different settings like communities.” Within the South African context, CYC organisations became obliged to venture more into community CYC in order to be in line with the transformation agenda that came about after the 1994 political dispensation. To put these changes into perspective, Allsopp and Thumbadoo (2002) noted that:

The intersectoral integrated policy on the CYC system was developed and outlined the need to re-prioritize spending so that resources are used most effectively at prevention levels as an attempt by SA's democratic government to nurture, develop and protect children whose growth environments had been distorted by the political, social and economic policies of apartheid and colonization.

Hence organisations' failure to move into community CYC would have led to "the reality of losing subsidy funding from the state as a result of being deemed untransformed" (Molepo, 2005:14). Community CYCWs are now filling the gap that might have been in existence for decades, whereby many children who needed CYC services did not get them as the focus was on residential settings. Allsopp and Thumbadoo (2002) have since supported the intersectoral integrated policy that advocated for the short-term and specialised residential services to ensure that attention is on community-based services for children and youth at risk. Consequently, many CYCWs have since been deployed to work within communities.

Some of the CYCWs working in communities have been carefully selected, trained and supported. An example of a programme that selects, trains and supports CYCWs is the Isibindi Project. The Isibindi model was developed by the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) and aims at providing safe and caring environments for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in needy communities (Pillay & Twala, 2008:11). According to Narayan (2011:16), "the Isibindi Project has a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system that clearly records number of CYCWs, where they are operating, whom they are supporting and with what services." With these kinds of systems in place, it was anticipated that CYCWs associated with this project are getting the necessary support which enables them to cope with their daily challenges. The question though was how many CYCWs who are doing a similar kind of work, outside this project, were receiving the same kind of support? As with residential CYCWs, chances are that there are many community-based CYCWs who are also experiencing a myriad of challenges, which are unique to their contexts. The concerning factor about community-based CYCWs was that some of them might be operating outside formalised structures, with minimal or no support at all. It was against this background that the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the challenges and coping strategies of the CYCWs in the South African context.

In order for the South African field of CYC to be advanced, all aspects, including the adoption of systematic support systems for CYCWs, need to be adequately investigated and incorporated into the CYC practice. The researcher's view was that support systems can only be developed or effectively implemented if CYCWs' challenges were adequately investigated and coping strategies documented. The researcher was fully aware of the impact of various factors, resulting in some challenges for CYCWs. For example, within the South African context, the inclusion of the political factors in this study would have been even more relevant prior to 1994, the period that was characterised by many years of political violence and other socio-political events that impacted negatively on the lives of children (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002). The researcher believed that Allsopp and Thumbadoo's (2002) work has presented an adequate picture of the post-apartheid CYC situation in SA; hence this study would not focus much on political factors. In addition, work and language have also been cited as the fundamental conditions of human existence which are distorted by domination (Clarke, 2006:1158). This suggests that studies have been conducted in the area of work and language, which is another reason for not focusing on these areas.

Cultural factors are also prevalent in professional environments. Mattingly (2010:12) covered areas of "culture and human diversity." Professional practitioners within the CYC sector are expected to embrace, respect and promote cultural tolerance as they are operating within the context of the Bill of Rights. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) protects everyone in terms of language and cultural choices. The researcher therefore moved from the premise that language and cultural issues should not present too big a challenge for CYCWs, as the legislative frameworks are put in place to address those areas.

The psycho-social factors, professional and practice related factors, as well as the socio-economic factors came under scrutiny in this study. These three areas were deemed likely to present some challenges despite the existence of legislative frameworks.

1.2.1 Psycho-social factors

At a personal level, Stuart (2009:16) notes that: “Being a child and youth care practitioner is not something that I ‘do’; it is what I ‘am’.” This statement suggests the need for greater personal involvement on the part of CYCWs as Gharabaghi (2010:29) eloquently put it: “we offer our client us.” VanderVen (2009:12) also added her voice to this self-offering requirement which aims to help children and youth become better and fulfilled human beings. It is against this background that Garfat, McElwee and Charles (2005:114) maintain that the *Self*, “has become the focal point in the Social Care process of both program design and service delivery.” What this means is that CYCWs need to know who they are, including their needs and desires. According to Smith (2009:134), CYCWs need a reflexive relationship with their ‘selves’. They also need to be in touch with their fears, inadequacies and any other unresolved issues. In Zastrow’s (2013:51) opinion, practitioners who are best able to counsel others are those who have a high level of self-awareness.

According to Fewster (1990:16), failure to know oneself will lead to a situation whereby CYCWs “project their own issues onto children they work with.” This study was meant to give CYCWs an opportunity to reflect on their own issues, something which some of them never do, mainly as a result of on-going job demands. Fewster (1990:16) warns that “if adults have no commitment to self-discovery, they may well become obsessed with their own immediate needs for efficacy or power over others.” Such a scenario will lead to a situation whereby daily practice related issues are not about service recipients, but more about the CYCWs themselves.

Gannon (1990:10) cautions that unlike other categories of workers, CYCWs “have no tools in their hands but must use *themselves* as the tools of their trade.” It is therefore important for CYCWs to be in touch with the *Self* as a means of preparing for positive engagement in this trade (Best, 2009:3). This will assist them to clarify the origin of issues and challenges that they have to deal with. The importance of psycho-social studies is the emphasis on empirical research in which the emotional life of both researcher and respondent are explored (Clarke, 2006:1161). Although the focus of the study was on the CYCWs, the researcher also needed to be in touch with his own *Self* during the entire research process in order not to project his own psycho-social issues at any stage. The call for self-reflection in both practice and

research lends itself to the psycho-social theory. According to Clarke (2006:1153), the psycho-social method in qualitative research enhances both the experience of the research environment by the researcher and the researched, as well as the quality of the information or data collected. For this reason, this theory is deemed ideal to highlight the plight of the CYCWs. A psycho-social methodology enabled the researcher to listen for and analyse the unconscious mechanisms, such as projective identification, both in the subject's response to the interviewer and vice versa (Clarke, 2006:1166).

There are many challenges that confront CYCWs. Gannon (1990:12) suggests that some of these challenges "could be due to internal factors such as their physical and mental shape, their planning skills and management of time." CYCWs need to remain mentally fit in order to continue being productively employed in the CYC sector. Fugate, Kinicki, Blake and Ashforth (2003:15) hold the view that "employability is a psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, and affect, and enhance the individual-work interface." The researcher's question was thus: Do the CYCWs in SA embrace these adoptive behaviours?

Barford and Whelton (2010:273) claim that very few studies have explored the significance of personality and work environment together, particularly in the CYC sector. The above-mentioned situation also rings true within the South African context where there seems to be a lack of scientific verification of challenges experienced and coping strategies adopted by CYCWs. Consequently, the focus is on the professional and practice related factors in the next section.

1.2.2 Practice related factors

At practice level, new CYCWs in particular often do little more than "attend to the crises, stop the battles and put out the fires" (Gannon, 1990:10). This approach may be due to a lack of skills to handle practice related matters in a proactive manner, perhaps as a result of inadequate preparation or training. The common tendency of new CYCWs is to assume responsibility for clients' successes and failures (Moscrip & Brown, 2002). The emotional roller coaster experienced may not be prevalent to new CYCWs alone, but also to the ones with reasonable experience. Some CYCWs

tend to lack the skills to disengage appropriately and separate work issues from personal issues. It must however be stated that in some instances the inability to disengage may be as a result of the complexity of the CYC work itself. Over and above their individual adaptive styles, in some instances, the specific workplaces may be presenting some unique challenges for CYCWs.

Furthermore, there might be situations and instances where CYCWs' own values clash with those held by their employers (Gharabaghi, 2010:45). In other instances, the employers' expectations of CYCWs are far beyond the realities of what these workers have to deal with on a daily basis. Gannon (1990:12) provides this example:

CYCWs may work for an organisation which has difficulty in seeing that a group of hurt, anxious or angry youngsters will produce some disturbing behaviour. The organisation may utterly under-estimate the capacity and resources it should apply to the job or its philosophy may unrealistically value "good" behaviour above treatment needs. CYCWs in turn, are anxious that the clients' continued troubled behaviour will reflect negatively on their ability to handle the job: they need to show their superiors that they have the situation under control, yet they also want to respond to the children's real needs.

The development of a thorough understanding of the agency functions, policies, procedures, rules, politics and power structures, as well as how these functions are related to CYCWs' own role could be another source of challenges confronting CYCWs, especially new workers (Moscrip & Brown, 2002). In other words, the manner and intensity with which CYCWs experience challenges may depend on the professional stages at which these CYCWs operate. In order to emphasise the complexity of CYC, Fewster (2004) conceded that "no educational courses, training programs or text books can give you what you need in order to be with, understand and guide a young person through the fear, pain, chaos and anger once these demons are at work." Fewster's claims should in no way be interpreted as undermining the value of professional training. Hence the status of CYC training in SA is discussed below.

1.2.3 Professional and training related factors

It is important to contrast what is happening within the South African context with what is taking place internationally. Linton and Forster (2003) explain at length:

European child and youth care workers are carefully selected and thoroughly trained at the bachelor's degree level. They receive full stipends in terms of tuition and living costs while in training. Their personal growth in training is a central focus, and extensive individual and group supervision is provided in their direct field work with children. Once employed, they receive salaries and working conditions equivalent to a public school teacher or social worker, are respected members and leaders within the mental health system, and have multiple career growth opportunities within the human service field.

In the researcher's opinion most of the support that CYCWs receive in SA, and probably many other countries, is nowhere near the level received in Europe as explained by Linton and Foster above. There might be some pockets of CYC programmes that endeavour and can afford to provide the kind of support mentioned above although they only do so in some specific areas such as training and supervision. This opinion was confirmed by Linton and Forster (2003) who presented the following contradicting scenario about the CYC field in some countries around the world:

CYCWs receive virtually no social recognition or professional status for the difficult, exhausting, and important work they have chosen. On the contrary, low pay and status, the lack of career ladders, the frequent exclusion from decision-making in the workplace, long and irregular hours and other unsatisfactory working conditions.

Gharabaghi (2008:155) also observed that CYC "finds itself at the bottom of the hierarchy of public and professional perception within the broader field of human services as well as other professionals." The society at large has its own perception of who CYCWs are and what they do. Barford and Whelton (2010:274) lamented that CYCWs have faced considerable difficulty in gaining respect from society. Any professional deserves respect from the society he or she serves, especially after undergoing the minimum required training. Kelly (2005:36) laments that CYCWs are viewed as "Old World craft persons with limited awareness of theory or dynamics". Linton and Forster (2003) also added that "some members of society may still hold the view that the field is dominated by socially marginal employees."

In SA, more coordinated support systems need to be introduced to ensure professional sustainability and continuity for those in the CYC field. CYCWs are mentioned among key professional personnel in the Service Delivery model. These

CYCWs are therefore supposed to benefit from the professional arrangement as outlined in the Service Delivery model (Department of Social Development, 2006:34). The above-mentioned model clearly outlines the ideal systems that should be in place. The question was whether these processes are in place or experienced as such by the CYCWs. Winfield (2011:22) proposes that:

...a range of learning opportunities at a range of educational levels, and at universities and organisations throughout will serve not only the needs of aspirations of SA CYCWs but ultimately equip those workers to meet the developmental and therapeutic needs of young people at risk more effectively in the future.

On the professional and educational front, Moscrip and Brown (2002) contend that “assessing skills needed to function effectively in any position and then identifying how and where to obtain further skills is a key aspect to success in CYC.” One can actively assess the skills one needs in an environment where a variety of required skills can be provided for. Moscrip and Brown (2002) highlighted that there are many avenues of beefing up one’s professional skills, such as “reading up-to-date publications, attending and participating in workshops, conferences, and post graduate courses.” The researcher thus had the following question: Does the South African environment provide for all the above-mentioned avenues to take place with regard to CYCWs?

Some service providers in SA, such as the NACCW, have developed accredited CYC training up to level 4 of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Scott, 2012/08/29). These courses are meant to enhance the knowledge level and skills for CYCWs. However, knowledge and skills alone are not enough. They have to be supported by a system that will ensure that CYCWs effectively carry out their duties.

With regard to tertiary education, there have always been some qualifications that attempted to address the educational needs of CYCWs. Prior to 1999, there was a certificate in CYC that was offered by the University of South Africa (UNISA) prior to transferring that certificate to the then Technikon Southern Africa. In 1999, Technikon Southern Africa began to offer formal CYC qualifications, from diploma up to Bachelor’s degree (BTech) level. In 2006 Technikon Southern Africa and UNISA

merged to form a comprehensive open and distance learning institution. Prior to the merger, Technikon Southern Africa had already introduced a pilot CYC Master's Programme in 2003 which was subsequently approved by the Council for Higher Education in 2007. However, as a strategic move, the newly merged UNISA saw it necessary to "rationalise, reengineer, and reposition programmes which were no longer financially viable" (UNISA, 2004:11). As a result UNISA phased out, among others, all CYC qualifications. The move by UNISA to discontinue all CYC qualifications may have negatively affected many CYCWs who had aspired to hold not only a diploma, but ultimately a degree in the field. Given its open and distance learning nature, many employed CYCWs were able to further their studies through UNISA. On the other hand, Durban University of Technology (DUT) continued to offer CYC qualifications from 1999 to date (DUT, [sa]). Monash South Africa is also offering a Bachelors degree in child and youth development (Monash South Africa, 2012). All the qualifications mentioned here are in line with the current NQF framework that was introduced under the post-apartheid South African Government.

Although formal education is important, it is however a long-term strategy. There has to be other short-term and medium-term strategies that can immediately benefit CYCWs, including those who did not have access to formal education. CYCWs that complete any form of accredited training and/or acquire recognised qualifications are inclined to have raised expectations in terms of promotions, better working conditions and benefits. Hence the researcher also hoped to discover "the social and dynamic processes that may link identity construction to privilege and hierarchy" (Clarke, 2006:1164). Following from professional and training related matters, it therefore makes sense to focus on the socio-economic factors next.

1.2.4 Socio-economic factors

Knapp and McDaid (2012:1) alluded to the fact that there will always be scarcities of resources. Any country will therefore, from time to time, be faced with the dilemma of cutting and redirecting funding from one sector to another; a practice which is not peculiar to SA. Equally, every industry will be faced with the reality of scarcity of resources and the CYC sector is therefore not immune to this situation. Curry, Lawler, Schneider-Munoz and Fox (2011:3) alluded to the fact that the CYC fields have experienced significant legislative changes, as well as increased funding

challenges. This sector might therefore, from time to time, be faced with the hard decision to curb the salaries of CYCWs in order to meet the direct and basic needs of children and youth in their care. It can be expected that this practice is likely to result in unhappiness on the part of those affected. The perception and/or reality of retrenchments may unsettle the CYC workforce.

Throughout the world, new employment patterns are emerging. According to Gharabaghi (2008:152), practices such as CYC positions “being hired ‘on contract’ or in the form of casual or relief-based employment” are becoming more prevalent. Some of these scenarios may ring true for the South African context as well. As a result of funding dynamics, it is not unusual for employers in major urban areas to receive a large number of applications for a single vacancy (Moscrip & Brown, 2002). This is an illustration of factors that will force governments to review their funding models.

The researcher’s interest around the socio-economic discussion involved the CYCWs’ ability to earn a reasonable income (adequate living wage), a sense that there is a prevailing climate and possibility to keep one’s job (job security), and the possibility to advance and move up the professional ladder in one’s chosen field (career advancement). In most sectors, experienced, competent, properly trained and qualified workers tend to realise the above-mentioned socio-economic benefits. Curry et al. (2011:3) highlighted the need for a competent and caring workforce to deal with the complex challenges in the CYC sector. It would be difficult for any CYC employer to attract and retain the calibre of such CYCWs if there are perceived, unresolved and persistent socio-economic challenges.

Over and above the specific factors discussed in the preceding paragraphs, Gharabaghi (2010:5) proposed that a ‘professional issue’ should meet some, most or all of the following criteria:

- Societal, cultural, and political issues that impact or potentially impact on the practitioner.
- Issues that reflect the systems context in which child and youth care practitioners operate.

- Issues that reflect the employment context of child and youth care practitioners.
- Issues that reflect the career development prospects of child and youth care practitioners.
- Issues that reflect the interactions of practitioners with professionals within the field or from other fields.
- Issues that are fundamentally about the practitioner, even if they manifest themselves within the context of the practitioner 'being' with a child, youth or family.

Up until this study was undertaken, the above-mentioned issues could merely have been possible challenges that CYCWs in SA were experiencing. These challenges remained speculations until such time that they were scientifically investigated; hence the researcher's decision to undertake this study with the view to identify their level of prevalence amongst CYCWs.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gharabaghi (2008:151) highlights the fact that children and youth encountered by CYCWs "frequently have been involved in helping systems beyond that in which any particular practitioner is employed." Hence this study sought to capture a variety of challenges and coping strategies as experienced by CYCWs. The focus included psycho-social, professional and socio-economic areas in order to get a holistic view of the challenges they face, as well as their coping strategies.

Kelly (2005:35) states that CYCWs are "uniquely positioned to catalyze change in the lives of the people they serve through meaningful three dimensional relationships that span the ecological framework in which child/youth exists." These three dimensional relationships may include the following overview of ecosystems as presented by Phelan (2004:71): "family, peers, school, work, religion, and culture in the microsystem; neighbourhood, career opportunities, local political environment, the mesosystem; and economic conditions, national issues, and environmental concerns in the macrosystems." This means that CYCWs are expected to take note

of what is going on in the lives of these children. The ecological systems theory thus helps to sensitise practitioners to the effect that environmental demands have on the personal, interpersonal, and social competence of human beings (Maluccio, 2001:53). What is taking place around children and youth is of importance to CYCWs and what is going on around CYCWs affect children and youth. The ecological systems theory was therefore the relevant theoretical framework for this study where the focus was on how CYCWs fit and adapt to their environments. These interactions are dynamic; “that is the ‘goodness of fit’ between the individual and his/her environment” (Zide & Gray, 2001:9). This view is further supported by Bronfenbrenner’s (1995:620) proposition that “human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate environment.”

According to Derksen (2010:326), “ecological systems theory not only has deep and far reaching roots in the field, but also has the potential to influence new directions and development in CYC.” Beker and Eisikovits (2001:313) add that “within an ecological orientation, contextual influences encompassing intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and societal/cultural domains are taken into account.” It is this theoretical framework that also provided the context for the rationale and problem statement of this study.

1.4 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Gharabaghi (2008:150) states that CYCWs “are impacted by the social, political and cultural context of their employment spaces, and this has raised myriad professional issues for the discipline.” These various contexts result in more complex information that needs to be processed by CYCWs. Ricks (2001) rightfully cautions that this complexity can overwhelm CYCWs who might therefore find themselves faced with, among other challenges, a great deal of occupational stress. According to Whitehead (1984), occupational stress refers here to “workers’ ‘physiological and psychological responses to situations perceived as potentially disruptive’ and which may be either desirable or undesirable.”

The profession of CYC is considered one of the most difficult and emotionally exhausting careers in the human service sector (Krueger, 2002). According to Linton and Forster (2003), CYCWs' clients are "typically handicapped, emotionally or developmentally disabled, aggressive and acting out, multi-problem, 'troubled' children and youth." Hence the everyday life in a CYC setting is marked by a range of events, some of which are dramatic (Maluccio, 2001:49). The types of behaviours described above can potentially be taxing for CYCWs. Despite the nature of their clients, these CYCWs are entrusted with the tasks of "upbringing and representing the values and norms of society and of the kids' families, as well as the philosophy and goals of the agency they work for" (Gannon, 1990:11). At times, there may be conflicts between the employees' values and ethical obligations and the requirements of their organisations (Barford & Whelton, 2010:273).

All of the above is a broad background of the situation within which CYCWs find themselves. Krueger (2007:233) states that many factors, such as low pay and demanding working conditions, make it difficult to recruit and keep competent CYCWs. In other parts of the world, national experts are increasingly concerned about the state of the CYCWs, emphasising alarm regarding issues pertaining to personal preparation, recruitment and retention (Curry et al., 2011:3). The researcher is of the opinion that challenges specifically relevant to the South African context have not been investigated, making CYCWs prone to experiencing burnout. As a result, these CYCWs may quit the field earlier than expected. Large-scale studies of the CYC workforce highlighted "a vocation plagued by alarmingly high rates of staff turnover" (Gable & Halliburton, 2003:176). When this happens, CYC employers will be left with no option but to employ inexperienced and/or unqualified CYCWs. Any environment that is saturated by inexperienced and/or unqualified workers may lead to a lack of long-term commitment on the part of newly recruited CYCWs. This will ultimately create instability and a vacuum in terms of experience. In the worst case scenario, these inexperienced and/or unqualified CYCWs may vent their frustration on children and youth and hurt the very people they are supposed to care for (Molepo, 2004:18). This will therefore "increase the risk of further abuse for children and youth who have already been abused and abandoned several times" (Krueger, 2007:233).

Whitehead (1984) cautioned that although the well-being of CYCWs has long been generally and implicitly addressed in training and supervision, there have been few efforts to identify the problems confronting CYCWs and to reflect on their consequences. The researcher took cognisance of the fact that Whitehead's statement was referring to CYCWs in a country other than SA. The statement was also made more than two decades ago. Training has been given to a significant number of CYCWs in SA; however, the provision of supervision may not have been a standard practice across the spectrum.

One of the questions Jansen (2007:7) suggests the researcher asks in order to develop a research question is: "Does the existing research speak to my context?" Although Carstens (2007) carried out research on experiences of CYCWs from an educational psychologist's perspective, to the researcher's knowledge no research has been conducted specifically on the challenges experienced by CYCWs from a CYC perspective in SA. The researcher was however aware of the work done by some of the South African CYC practitioners such as Gannon (1990:10) through his article "Staying Sane as a Child Care Worker." Furthermore, in her thesis, De Kock (1999:221) also recommended the empirical research on the effect of the work environment on the functioning of CYCWs. Conducting research on critical issues affecting long-term development was one of the focus areas of the National Development Plan (NDP) (National Planning Commission, 2011:26). As the researcher believed that issues relating to children were of importance to the South African society, contributions through studies such as this one needed to be expanded.

Esterberg (2002:37) contends that "by knowing what other researchers have already said about your topic, you are in a better position to come up with well-thought-out research plan." This study thus took an exploratory format which justifies the use of a research question instead of a hypothesis. Gharabaghi (2008:151) made a valuable suggestion that when exploring issues affecting CYCWs, "one needs to be conscious of the broader social, political and cultural dynamics unfolding locally, nationally and even globally." Therefore the research question for this study was: **What are the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context?**

In order to answer the main question, the following sub-questions also needed to be answered:

- What are the psycho-social challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA?
- What are the professional challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA?
- What are the socio-economic challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA?
- What are the coping strategies adopted by CYCWs in SA to deal with the psycho-social, professional and socio-economic challenges in practice?

Whitehead (1984) cautioned that many CYCWs lack the professional knowledge which would enable them to assess their own everyday effectiveness. This study was meant to first of all benefit the CYCWs themselves in their individual capacities as workers. Findings from the study will hopefully assist CYCWs to be able to evaluate whether they have the skills needed and, if they do not, ascertain where and how they can obtain them (Moscrip & Brown, 2002). CYCWs will also scrutinise their coping strategies to ensure long-term survival in the field. In other words, CYCWs will be aware of the areas in which they experience challenges and will strive to deal with those specific areas. Without awareness, CYCWs are less likely to identify the need to seek support. The availability of information from a study such as this one will enable CYCWs to make choices and act on available opportunities to their benefit (Cearley, 2004:314).

The study was also meant to benefit the main role players of the CYC field, namely the Professional Board for Child and Youth Care Workers (PBCYC), the NACCW, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and educational institutions. Although each role player will be playing its role in accordance with its mandate, they might endeavour to collaborate in order to introduce and enforce certain measures that are meant to ensure that CYCWs continue to holistically take care of themselves and/or even be taken care of when necessary. Krueger (2007:235) advocated for the care of CYCWs in order for them to be able to care for children and youth. In brief, it is hoped that each stakeholder will benefit in this ways:

- The PBCYC will ensure that CYCWs are not only compliant and accountable, but also supported.

- The SACSSP will ensure that only people who are deemed fit to practice in the CYC field are involved in this kind of work.
- The NACCW is likely to advocate and ensure that areas that present challenges are continually being prioritised and addressed.
- Educational institutions and other service providers will make sure that relevant courses and workshops are developed to address both the short-term and long-term educational, psycho-social and support needs of these CYCWs. These institutions will also endeavour to consistently research new trends of challenges, as well as come up with new ways of addressing those challenges.

Information derived from this study was meant to benefit the above-mentioned stakeholders in various ways. The field of CYC within the South African context needs to move from utilising existing knowledge towards creating new knowledge (Eisikovits, Beker & Guttman, 2001:9). The findings of this study therefore have a direct impact on the field of CYC in general and in particular the CYC field in SA.

1.5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to **explore the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context.**

The following objectives were formulated in order to attain the goal of the study:

- To identify the psycho-social challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.
- To identify the professional challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.
- To identify the socio-economic challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.
- To explore the coping strategies adopted by the CYCWs in SA to deal with the psycho-social, professional and socio-economic challenges in practice.
- To formulate strategies that will contribute towards ensuring that CYCWs' working conditions are improved.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Garfat (1998) argued that some research questions lend themselves more naturally to a qualitative approach. The nature of this study's topic almost dictated the method chosen. Hence qualitative methodology seemed to be the most suitable method in that it allowed participants some reflection on matters that affected them. The researcher was primarily interested in the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs from their own perspectives. This study was therefore carried out within a qualitative approach, as the researcher was primarily interested in the meaning subjects give to their life experiences (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320) within the CYC field. The applicable type of research for this study was applied research in that the researcher believed that some of the coping strategies uncovered could benefit CYCWs immediately. Neuman (2012:12) concurs that applied social research "addresses a specific concern or offers solutions to a practical problem that an employer, club, agency, social movement, or organisation identified." Recommendations made in this study are intended to be of immediate benefit to various stakeholders.

Durrheim (2006:34) notes that research design is "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and execution or implementation of the research." The researcher used a case study design in order to get an in-depth understanding of the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs. Stake, in Fouché (2005:272), argues that the sole criterion for selecting cases for a case study should be the opportunity to learn more. In particular, the researcher adopted a collective case study design as it involves multiple cases (Fouché, 2005:272). In this case, multiple experiences of CYCWs from different CYC programmes were of interest to the researcher.

As far as the population is concerned, the researcher was interested in the challenges experienced and coping strategies adopted by all CYCWs in SA. Hence purposive sampling was deemed relevant, to include representatives of CYCWs from rural and urban areas, as well as those from government and non-government sectors. The idea was really to cover a broader spectrum of the CYC workforce. A sample of 93 participants was selected as an attempt to represent the population in

this study. This number does in no way claim to be a comprehensive representation of the entire population of CYCWs in SA as no random sampling was carried out.

Qualitative data was collected through the use of focus group interviews. Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013:172) define a focus group as “a carefully planned discussion with a small group of people on a focused topic.” Specifically, an interview schedule was designed by the researcher to guide the interview process. According to Strydom and Delpont (2011:393), “a pilot study is usually undertaken with few respondents to ascertain certain trends.” A pilot study was therefore carried out with seven participants to test the developed interview schedule and establish if it needed any adjustments prior to the actual data collection. Eleven focus group interviews were conducted in rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

With regards to data analysis, the researcher typically followed the following steps as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994:10): data reduction, data display and drawing, and verifying conclusions. Trustworthiness of the data collected was established through the use of the following: reflexivity, audit trail, member checking, and co-reviewing process. A detailed description of the research methodology will be discussed in chapter 6.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation section of this chapter is concerned with the factors that could have affected some areas of the research process with or without the researcher’s awareness. Mainly those factors that the researcher was aware of will be reported on in this section.

1.7.1 Language

As far as the researcher is concerned, the question of language could have been a major limitation. Focus group interviews were conducted in English as it is the “lingua franca of the country” (Hlagala, 2012:136), but also to accommodate the researcher as he is not fully fluent in all 11 of SA’s official languages. Although many participants have cooperated and used English as a medium of communication during the interviews, it cannot be assumed that they were all at ease to express

themselves. It must be mentioned that the researcher assured the participants that should they really feel the need to express themselves in their mother tongue, they were free to do so. Indeed some participants used their mother tongue which was subsequently translated.

1.7.2 Transcription

Singal and Jeffery, cited in Guest et al. (2013:290), stated that, “whoever is doing translation needs a thorough understanding of both languages and subcultures within which they are being used.” The fact that transcription was not done by the researcher himself could be another limitation. However, this was in a way a positive factor in that the research assistant speaks IsiZulu (which is part of the Nguni language group), whereas the researcher speaks Sepedi (which is part of the Sotho language group). Although there are many African languages in SA, the majority of them fall under the Nguni or Sotho language groups. The researcher and the research assistant in a way complemented one another in terms of dealing with the language issue. It is therefore the researcher’s opinion that no meaning was lost during the transcription of the audio recordings.

1.7.3 Number of focus groups

Another limitation could be that the researcher did not conduct focus groups with all 12 groups as initially intended. This came as the researcher was forced to abandon one focus group session in the rural Kwazulu-Natal Province due to rainy weather conditions which made it impossible for him to access the focus group site. Neither the participants were able to leave their area for a number of days, not only for focus group interview purposes but for other normal daily living operations as well. Arrangements were subsequently made with NACCW to hold another focus group interview in the North West Province in order to replace the abandoned site. Unfortunately the earmarked North West Isibindi Project site leader passed away few days closer to the scheduled focus group interview date. It was at this point that the researcher settled for 11 focus groups interviews conducted, mainly due to time constraints. As the omitted Isibindi Project group falls under the same umbrella organisation as two other groups with which focus group interviews have been conducted, the researcher’s opinion is that not much might have been lost from the focus group that has been left out.

1.7.4 Timing and settings of focus group sessions

The other limitation was the timing of the interviews. In one group, the researcher could not get to the last question on how participants coped with the socio-economic challenges. An earlier delay resulted in the interview session not commencing on time and the researcher ran out of time.

The settings within which interviews took place should also be noted as an area of concern. With regards to the venues, the majority of venues were conducive for focus group interviews. It was only one particular venue that was noisy, making recordings a bit difficult. Another venue was not large enough, resulting in participants being cramped into a too-small space without proper ventilation. This may have made them too uncomfortable to fully participate.

1.7.5 Composition of focus groups

Given that focus group participation was open to all CYCWs, there were instances where some supervisors also participated. As a result, some of the participants may have felt uneasy to speak out in front of their supervisors. The power of the supervisor in the supervisor-supervisee relationship would have had a significant effect on what participants were prepared to share (Booyens, 2014:4). Neuman (2012:319) discourages the mixing of supervisors and their employees. Time constraints were the main reason the researcher could not hold focus group sessions for junior CYCWs separate from their supervisors. Another factor is that in all cases, there was only one supervisor per focus group session. Interviewing supervisors separately would have made the interview a one-on-one method (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006:195) instead of a focus group.

The dynamics between supervisors and junior CYCWs within focus groups were valuable to the interview processes. Hence in some instances some supervisors acted like spokespersons for the participants, but the researcher confronted this behaviour earlier on to ensure that each participant was given a fair chance to speak. The researcher relied on his professional skills as a facilitator to ensure that all focus group participants were given an equal opportunity to express their views, feelings and experiences. The researcher's sense was that the majority of participants felt free to speak except in one specific programme whereby only few

people were speaking voluntarily. The researcher is therefore uncertain as to whether participation in the focus group may have caused harm to some supervisees (Gharabaghi, 2014:4). In this particular programme, one participant only spoke after a question was directed to him towards the end of the session. Even when he finally did speak, his responses were a one word kind of response, answering directly what had been asked. Another participant did not say anything at all, despite having sat through the entire focus group session.

As far as the composition of focus groups were concerned in terms of numbers, in one group there were only five participants and in another group there were 20 participants. This dynamic made one group too small and another far too big. However, it must be mentioned that the group with five participants consisted of participants who knew a lot about the topic given their length of service. In this particular group, the participants' duration of service ranged from 15 to 35 years. The length of service of the other focus group which consisted of 20 participants ranged from one year to four years. It must however be noted that this particular programme was a fairly new programme, as it has been less than five years since its inception. Guest (2013:177) outlined that a smaller focus group is recommended when participants know a lot about the topic and a larger group is recommended when the goal is to hear numerous brief suggestions. It must further be noted that in both focus groups, the researcher was constrained by time (Denscombe, 2012:108) and so could not reconfigure some groups to allow for the recommended focus group size of 6-12 members (Neuman, 2012:318). This time constraint was exacerbated by the fact that all group members were based in rural-based programmes, and have had to travel back to their respective communities in order to arrive on time for the children who were awaiting them. Hence dividing the group into two was not a viable option for the researcher. The researcher acknowledges that a focus group that consisted of 20 participants could not have given all participants equal opportunity to speak and contribute to the discussion.

Another area that is worth noting as a limitation relating to the selection of participants is the length of service of some participants. Although one of the selection criteria was a minimum of one year service in the field of CYC, four participants were employed for less than a year in one particular focus group. This

was due to the fact that these were the only available participants organised by the supervisor of that specific programme. Given the subject matter, it is likely that the experience of challenges and the development of coping mechanisms in response to these challenges are time sensitive. In other words, someone with 10 years or more in the field would likely have experienced different challenges, and certainly have developed different coping mechanisms than someone with 3 years experience. Therefore, it would have been useful to analyse differences related to years of experience (Gharabaghi, 2014:4).

1.7.6 Sample size

Although a sample size of 93 participants could be interpreted as being too small, this was mitigated by the qualitative nature of this study. The researcher consciously recruited participants from diverse geographical areas i.e. rural, semi-urban and urban areas to ensure a fair representation of participants. The fact that participants were recruited from 6 provinces, which are diverse in nature, also mitigated the concern about the sample size.

1.7.7 Biographical information

Another factor that is worth noting is that although the names and length of service of participants were collected on the day of the interviews, biographical information such as race, gender, home language, age, highest standard passed, length of service in the field of CYC, and status of NACCW membership, was only collected later after the researcher realised that this information could also be useful for this study. He therefore wrote a letter (Appendix 1) which accompanied the developed biographical information form (Appendix 2) sent via email to the identified participants in order to collect this key information. It was a struggle to get these forms back on time, hence telephonic calls were made as a follow-up. Key participants in each focus group collated this information on behalf of the researcher. The researcher can therefore not be certain about the authenticity of this information as it was not collected directly from the participants by the researcher.

1.7.8 Researcher's authority and bias

According to Neuman (2012:54), the researcher's credentials, training and professional role legitimate his power and expert authority. It is against this

background that the researcher's profile and his role in the field of CYC also needed to be taken into account. The researcher has shared his professional and academic career with the participants so that everyone knew his motivation for conducting this particular research. As relationships are central in clinical and educational settings (Hays & Singh, 2011:vii), it was important for the researcher to share with the participants who he was. Given his past involvement as a CYC lecturer within an Open and Distance Learning tertiary institution, this introduction made him familiar as it also emerged that some of the participants had attended his lectures in the past. He was also an ex-colleague of some of the other participants. Some of the participants known to the researcher played an active role in organising the other participants on the day of the interviews. Therefore although there is no explicit indication as to where this may have impacted on the study, the researcher felt this point should be mentioned in case an element of researcher 'bias' (Maxwell, 2013:124) is suspected.

1.7.9 Duration of the study

The proposal for this study was conceptualised during 2012. Since then, a lot of developments have taken place in the field of CYC. For example, at the time of the conceptualisation, the PBCYC was not in place, but it has since been inaugurated. Also the recognition of CYC was not and is still not promulgated. It is the researcher's concern that by the time this study is finalised, a lot might have changed. The dilemma for the researcher from the onset was that there has always been backward and forward moves in the field of CYC. As far back as 2000, there was hope for formal recognition of the CYC profession as the NACCW made an application to the SACSSP on behalf of the CYC sector for recognition of CYC as a social service profession (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:25). In 2008 such recognition had not been realised (Phelan, 2008). In 2012, such recognition was still not in place (Department of Social Development, 2012). All these delays left the researcher in doubt with regards to the currency of some information contained in this study. But given the core nature of the study, a lot of information will remain relevant even if some developments overtake some of the issues raised.

The above list of limitations should not be interpreted as evidence that the researcher made a poor choice of research design or method, but should rather serve to allow the reader to interpret the findings cautiously (Denscombe, 2012:106).

1.8 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Below is the outline of the contents of the research report, which gives a breakdown of chapters and describes, in brief, what will be contained in each chapter.

- **Chapter 1: General background of the study**

This chapter serves as the general introductory chapter in which the researcher gives the background of the field of CYC, the problem statement, research question, brief outline of the methodology in terms of the goal, objectives, research design, data collection procedures as well as sampling procedures. The outline of the entire study is also contained in this chapter.

- **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: The ecological systems theory**

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework in which the CYC field is embedded. The selected ecological systems theory framework is described in detail. An explanation of how this framework relates to the CYC field, as well as how it was used to inform this study, is outlined.

- **Chapter 3: Child and youth care within the broader South African socio-economic context**

In this chapter, the broader socio-economic context of SA is discussed in order to contextualise the study. The legislative and policy frameworks that inform CYC are also discussed. An overview of the SA population and how different categories of the population are affected by the socio-economic dynamics have been highlighted. Permeating through the chapter is the discussion on the contribution that CYC as a field is making in terms of addressing the socio-economic challenges that SA is grappling with.

- **Chapter 4: Literature review: child and youth care work**

This chapter is dedicated to the literature review, including a thorough conceptualisation of relevant concepts, an overview of the CYC field in general, as well as the challenges of the field of CYC nationally and internationally. The settings as well as the contexts within which CYCWs operate have also been discussed in detail.

- **Chapter 5: Literature review: Professional status and development of child and youth care**

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review. However, it focuses on some of these challenges revolving around the professional status of the CYC field. The professional status and development of CYC is discussed in detail. Special focus is on the following areas: education and training, registration and regulations, in-service training and continued professional development, professional boards, and professional associations.

- **Chapter 6: Research methodology**

In this chapter, the research methodology employed in the study is discussed in detail. The justification of the use of qualitative method and focus groups in particular is presented. How this method has been applied during data collection, sampling and data analysis is thoroughly outlined. Ethical considerations were also discussed.

- **Chapter 7: Empirical findings**

Chapter 7 focuses on the qualitative data collected as well as the analysis of such data. All the empirical findings are interpreted and discussed. In some instances, topic specific recommendations are made.

- **Chapter 8: Discussion of key findings, conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter 8 presents the discussion, conclusions and recommendations of the entire study. Broader recommendations which attempt to address the relevant CYC stakeholders are also included in this chapter.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher has presented background information of the research study. A brief background of the CYC field, a brief literature review, the theoretical framework, and the research methodology have all been presented in order to provide the reader with an overview of the contents of this entire research report. What follows in subsequent chapters is a detailed account of every area of this research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2010:15) hold the view that practitioners need orienting frameworks to ground their work in achieving certain competencies. This notion applies to researchers as well. The purpose of any theoretical framework is to provide guidance in determining what needs to be examined (Mattaini, 2008:357). The goal of this study is to explore the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context. It is therefore essential that CYCWs strive to ensure that their thinking and practice is informed by theoretical perspectives, research, and conceptual frameworks that challenge and critique the current “truth” (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:78).

Ambrosino, Hefferman, Shuttleworth and Ambrosino (2012:47) noted that many factors contribute to social welfare problems and therefore argue that a broad theory or framework to understand them is needed. Ambrosino et al. (2012:50) further made an observation that systems theory has gained increased attention in different fields. Authors such as Smith-Acuna (2011:6) added that systems theory “could be used in a variety of disciplines to move scientific inquiry forward.” The disciplines referred to may include the CYC field. VanderVen [sa] describes CYC as the field that “focuses on children and youth in their life space, improving quality of life in that space, and ensuring that the space is developmentally and holistically growth producing.” This definition sets the platform and calls for attention to various settings within which CYCWs operate. From this definition, it is clear that CYCWs are expected to create “a warm and responsive environment for the child” (Righton, 2005). Hence the researcher was prompted to adopt an ecological systems theory as the framework for this study.

According to Ambrosino et al. (2012:50), ecological systems theory “allows for identifying all the diverse, complex factors associated with a social welfare problem, or an individual problem; understanding how all of the factors interact to contribute to

the situation.” The selected ecological systems theory will be described in detail as well as an explanation of how it relates to the CYC field.

Derksen (2010:332) states that across North America and within Europe, descriptions of CYC practice are consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems paradigm that acknowledges the significance of varied contexts on the development of the child. CYC has also been conceptualised by Canadian scholars in various models such as the umbrella model, the cube model, the ecological onion model, and the web model (White, 2007), which have to a varying degree all been influenced by Bronfenbrenner (Derksen, 2010:332). Ferguson, Pence and Denholm (1993b) in Derksen (2010:333) state: “...an ecological perspective is central to the continuing development, understanding, and promotion of the field of CYC.”

The South African CYC field is mainly influenced by CYC practices from other countries including North America and Europe (Phelan, 2007). Denmark for example has had collaboration with SA. Through that collaboration, Denmark “has influenced as well as ‘infiltrated’ curricula in SA” (Allsopp, 2015).

It therefore follows that the framework adopted by these countries be considered and probably adopted within the South African CYC context as well. Adopting a framework that is in line with other international practices creates an opportunity for benchmarking. In SA, many children find themselves in different challenging situations. Some of these children have been removed and placed into residential programmes. Others receive CYC services whilst remaining in their families and communities. It therefore makes it imperative for practitioners and researchers to pay attention to the influence of these various settings on the young people receiving CYC services. Failure to do so will result in them not appreciating the fact that hidden problems faced by children are likely to be multi-layered (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:91). The researcher is interested in establishing how CYCWs navigate their personal and professional lives in the contexts of the ever changing environments. The impact of these environments on CYCWs also needs to be investigated.

Given the influence as well as the role played by European countries as discussed in the preceding section, it becomes necessary to briefly discuss the concept of social

pedagogy. The discourse on education and schooling in Scandinavia slogan like dialogue on social pedagogy has been in frequent use since the early 1970s (Jarning, 1997:413). Eichsteller (2013:1) advanced the view that one of the reasons social pedagogy attracted much interest in the United Kingdom was due to its focus on authentic, positive and strong relationships. Jarning (1997:414) describes social pedagogy as “a specialisation, a form of compensatory education from agents of state or society outside the realm of formal schooling.” Hence Humer ([sa]) situates social pedagogy within the context of CYC as being based on humanistic principles, as well as being a holistic approach to child development with some therapeutic aspects. Smith (2008) however describes that social pedagogy in the United Kingdom is associated with parenting. He also highlighted that the association of caring for other people’s children with parenting can be frowned upon in social work discourses (Smith, 2008), and perhaps by other professions as well. It therefore stands to reason that when the concept of social pedagogy is being discussed within the context of CYC, many systems are likely to be affected, resulting in challenges for CYCWs.

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:9) argue that regardless of professionals’ field of practice, having a sound knowledge base in systems theory is helpful. Given that the ecological systems theory is a subcategory of systems theory (Zastrow, 2013: 51), it makes sense that systems theory be explained first before zooming into selected ecological systems theory.

2.2 Systems theory

The origin of systems theory can be traced back to the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist who was born in Vienna and whose 1968 summary work was translated into English as General Systems Theory (Smith-Acuna, 2011:6). According to Zastrow (2013:50), the key concepts of general systems theory are *wholeness*, *relationship*, and *homeostasis*. The concept of wholeness means that objects or elements within a system produce an entity that is greater than the sum of the separate parts (Zastrow, 2013:50). The other two concepts, i.e. *relationship* and *homeostasis*, will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

Parallel to Bertalanfy's work in biology, work by the mathematician Norbert Wiener (1948) also explored systemic ideas (Smith-Acuna, 2011:6). Without running the risk of turning this entire section into a lengthy history lesson, what is clear is the fact that systems theory was initially used to understand the functioning of the human body whereby medical practitioners realised that when one component of the human body fails to function effectively, it affects the way that other systems within the body function and, in turn, the way the whole human body functions (Ambrosino et al., 2012:50). The human body's systems are interrelated and cannot function without impacting the functioning of other systems.

The emergence of systems and ecological theory occurred in the 1970s (O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:33). Smith-Acuna (2011:14) argues that systems theory helps those using it to understand the inevitability of multiple perspectives. This theory is therefore antireductionist, asserting that "no system can be understood or totally explained once it has been broken down into its components parts" (Zastrow, 2013:50). Zastrow (2013:50) further adds that systems theory opposes simple cause-and-effect explanations. In contrast, linear thinking emphasises that A causes an effect that changes B at a certain point in time, while A remains unchanged (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). Ecological thinking is less concerned with cause and more concerned with the consequences of exchanges between A and B and how to help modify maladaptive exchanges (Germain & Gitterman, 1995).

It must be noted that the casual-relationship viewpoint usually is not appropriate when examining social welfare problems (Ambrosino et al., 2012:47). When looking at factors related to social welfare problems, it is more appropriate to view them in association with the problem, meaning that all factors are connected to or relate to the problem, rather than saying that one isolated factor, or even several factors, directly cause a social problem (Ambrosino et al., 2012:47). It is therefore beneficial to adopt a theory that acknowledges that multiple variables contribute to our ability to predict outcomes (Smith-Acuna, 2011:36). In so doing, it becomes possible to gather rich information and gain a broader perspective of phenomena.

2.3 Key concepts in systems theory

Smith-Acuna (2011:6) subsequently defines systems theory as “a set of unifying principles about the organization and functioning of systems.” It is always important to first understand the key concepts of a theory before focusing on its relevance to any study. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:4) mention the following terms which can bring about a better understanding of systems theories: system, boundaries, subsystem, homeostasis, role, relationship, input, output, feedback, interface, differentiation, entropy, negative entropy, and equifinality. In the next section, each term will be explained in brief with the view of bringing even more clarity to what systems theory entails.

2.3.1 System

As back as 1972, Lazslo in Smith-Acuna (2011:6) defined systems as “meaningful wholes that are maintained by the interaction of their parts.” Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:4) have also defined a system as “a set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole.” Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:9) give the person, the person’s class, the family, and the university as examples of a system.

Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2006:244) state that all the parts of a system are engaged in transactions resulting in interdependence between systems and their components. Interdependence is the mutual reliance of each person on each other person (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). Individuals are interdependent because they rely on other individuals and groups of individuals within social environments. Likewise, these other individuals are reliant on one another for input, energy, services and consistency (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). It is evident that these authors (Hepworth et al., 2006; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012) concur that the system as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

In the context of this study, it would therefore be inadequate and insufficient to only look at individual CYCWs when exploring the challenges they face. The influence of systems on CYCWs (individually and/or collectively) needs to be taken into

consideration. When conducting a study of this nature, it is of paramount importance that one understands how the whole system and its parts affect an individual, as well as how the individual/s impacts the system. It is assumed that in practice, CYCWs will seek to understand the impact of systems on their clients, as the systems perspective emphasises looking beyond the client's presenting problems (Zastrow, 2013:50). Failure to adopt this perspective may result in CYCWs experiencing undue challenges. The focus of systems approaches is to offer the possibility of redefining client issues as more than individual problems (Arthur & McMahon, 2005:217).

In terms of systems theory, the individual is a system in its own right, with the intrapersonal influences depicted as representing its subsystems (Arthur & McMahon, 2005:212). Given that the main responsibility of CYCWs is to care for children and youth, intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of CYCWs also warrant an investigation.

To capture the relevance of systems in people's lives, Checkland and Haynes (1994:189) use this metaphor: "We are gregarious animals, and we join (and are born into) various tribes, as members of these, we live our professional and private lives."

2.3.2 Boundaries

A system has some sort of boundary or point at which one system ends and another begins (Ambrosino et al., 2012:50). The existence of boundaries is supported by Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:4) who noted that boundaries are "repeatedly occurring patterns of behaviour that characterize the relationships within systems and give that system a particular identity." These authors went further to explain the function of boundaries within professional disciplines as that of assisting groups to identify their designated job responsibilities and the clients they serve (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, (2004:4). According to Smith-Acuna (2011:93), boundaries can further be thought of as the rules that govern the amount and type of information that can enter and leave a system and therefore help regulate the amount of closeness and proximity experienced in relationships. A boundary is fundamentally a static concept, one that is constructed in a place where its function is to protect what is inside of the boundary from that which might intrude (Gharabaghi, 2010:25). The other defining

feature is that boundaries can be defined in whatever way people choose and drawn wherever it seems appropriate (Hall, 2013:48).

2.3.3 Subsystem

A subsystem is a secondary or subordinate system and therefore may be understood to be a smaller system within a larger system (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:4). The definition of subsystem above suggests that it would be insignificant to talk about a subsystem outside the context of a larger system. The shift between parts and the whole can help identify what is and what isn't working in a system (Smith-Acuna, 2011:86). Within the context of this study, subsystems of the individual (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and motivational) (Hepworth et al., 2010:16) also warrant an investigation. Subsystems make us remember that people view their environments and the forces that shape them differently, depending on many factors: biological factors such as their own heredity and intelligence; personal life experiences, including their childhood; ethnicity and culture; and level and type of education (Ambrosino et al., 2012:46).

2.3.4 Homeostasis

Systems inherently resist change and seek to maintain a certain predictable order (Smith-Acuna, 2011:67). Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:4) define *homeostasis* as “the tendency for the system to maintain a relatively stable, constant state of balance.” This does not mean that change will never happen. Nor does it mean that change is undesirable. Instead, it suggests that when any change happens, balance will always be sought within a system. This concept is linked to *resilience*, which Walker, Holling, Carpenter and Kinzig (2004:4) define as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.”

One other critical feature about the concept of homeostasis is that “most living systems seek a balance to maintain and preserve a system” (Zastrow, 2013:50). Hence systems are constantly reorganising and transforming themselves (Smith-Acuna, 2011:67). The fact that there are constant changes in sectors such as CYC requires continual attention in order to establish how these changes may be setting off challenges in CYCWs' personal and professional lives. CYCWs would therefore

also need to take cognisance of these complexities when dealing with the changes taking place within their field.

2.3.5 A role

A *role* is “a culturally determined pattern of behaviour expected of an individual in a specified social relationship” (Norlin & Chess in Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:5). This concept is even more relevant within the social services sector, where many professionals from different disciplines are expected to know and play their specific roles without interfering with or infringing on the roles of others. Once again, the concept of boundary becomes relevant when the concept *role* is mentioned. Undefined role and/or failure to stick to one’s professional role within allocated boundaries may result in challenges among social service role-players.

2.3.6 Relationship

A *relationship* is “the mutual emotional exchange; dynamic interaction; and affective, cognitive and behavioural connection between two or more persons or systems” (Barker in Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:5). The concept *relationship* is also closely linked to the concepts *boundary* and *role*. In the context of this study, it suggests that how members of the social service system relate has a bearing on individual members themselves. As to whether the relationship is positive or negative is insignificant at this point. What matters is that when individuals co-exist within a system, a relationship exists. Bronfenbrenner (1979:56) stated that “a relation obtains whenever one person in a setting pays attention to or participates in the activities of another.”

2.3.7 Input

Input involves “the energy, information, or communication flow received from other systems” (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:5). The extent and manner in which one system disseminates or does not disseminate information will undoubtedly impact on other systems.

2.3.8 Output

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:5) define *output* as a more general term for the result of a process which refers to what happens to input after it has been processed

by some system. Output can also be viewed as the same flow emitted from a system to the environment or to other systems. It is apparent that in order for the system to function, there has to be an input as well as an output.

2.3.9 Feedback

According to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:5), *feedback* is a special form of output and involves a system receiving information about its own performance. Positive feedback is valuable and involves a system receiving information about what it is doing correctly in order to maintain itself and thrive (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:5). VanderVen (2009:10) suggests that within some CYC contexts feedback means that new information is being fed into a system which then changes the nature of the system. However, negative feedback can also prevail. As a result of negative feedback, the system can choose to correct any deviations or mistakes and return to a more homeostatic state (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:5).

2.3.10 Interface

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:6) define an *interface* as “the point where two systems (including individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities), come into contact with each other or communicate.” Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:12) add that it is the exact point at which the interaction between an individual and the environment takes place. People working together or people and their clients also have their own interface. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:12) give practice related advice that an interface has to be accurately targeted in order for more time to be spent on the real problems. This suggestion is equally relevant to research. The focus of any research has to be clearly defined, i.e. CYCWs’ challenges and coping strategies in this case. Interfaces are not limited to individual systems, but can characterise interactions among virtually any size system (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:6).

2.3.11 Differentiation

Differentiation is a system’s tendency to move from a more simplified to a more complex existence (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:6). Relationships, situations, and interactions tend to get more complex over time (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:6).

The social services sector in SA has undergone many changes. These changes have also affected the CYC sector in particular and by extension CYCWs.

2.3.12 Entropy and negative entropy

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:6-7) describe *entropy* as “the tendency of a system to progress toward disorganization, depletion, and death.” These authors add that as time passes, older agencies and systems are eventually replaced by new ones. The concept *entropy* has undoubtedly been experienced by many organisations within the social services sectors throughout the world. The field of CYC has also gone through a process whereby programmes that were once regarded as ‘ground breaking’, have been stopped and replaced by new ones. Negative entropy is the process of a system toward growth and development (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:6-7).

2.3.13 Equifinality

According to Ambrosino et al. (2012:54), equifinality refers to the concept that “the final state of a system can be achieved in many different ways.” Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:6) further note that “it is important for one not to be locked in one way of thinking.” Their contention is that in any situation there are alternatives, although some may be better than others (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:6-7).

2.4 Additional concepts of ecological / systems framework

Ambrosino et al. (2012:50) made some of the following additions as major concepts used to understand and apply ecological/systems framework: synergy, open and closed systems, interactions and interrelations, and steady state.

2.4.1 Synergy

As already discussed, a system can be defined as a whole, an entity composed of separate but interacting and interdependent parts (Ambrosino et al., 2012:50). In order to accrue the full benefits of all the parts, there has to be some level of synergy. When the larger system functions optimally, it is said to have achieved synergy.

Professionals from different disciplines view the world somewhat differently (Ambrosino et al., 2012:46). This study sought, by extension, an insight into how CYCWs experience the broader systems as well as subsystems within which they operate. Within the social services sector, it is expected that all the professionals will work in such a way that synergy is achieved. In so doing, the goals of the sector will be achieved. Mattaini (2008:357) advanced the view that the systems thinking is intended to recognise and accommodate multiplicity, complexity and uncertainty, and this appears to be characteristic of people's realities, both historical and in the twenty-first century. CYC is a complex business; however, its complexity is masked by the simple tools and everyday events that are used to support change (Gannon, 2006; Ricks, 2001). It would therefore be beneficial for CYCWs to immerse themselves into these complexities without losing themselves or their purpose. An individual as a system does not live in isolation, but rather as part of a much larger contextual system (Arthur & McMahon, 2005:212). Striving towards achieving synergy should therefore be the intention of each social service professional.

2.4.2 Open and closed systems

As systems have boundaries, drawing and ascertaining how permeable those boundaries are is a way of determining how open or closed a particular system is. Those systems that have easily permeated boundaries between units are referred to as open systems (Ambrosino et al., 2012:51) and are moving towards greater organisational complexity over time (Amerikaner, 1981:33). In contrast, those that have rigid and tightly knit units are referred to as closed systems (Ambrosino et al., 2012:52). It is therefore important for each subsystem to be open and closed at appropriate times in order to achieve the objectives of the whole system. Amerikaner (1981:33) adds that "a person's areas of 'blockage' or growth stoppage can be seen as the ways in which personality functioning is no longer open and has become like a closed system."

2.4.3 Interactions and interrelations

Another additional feature of the ecological/systems framework is its emphasis on the interaction and interrelations between units rather than on the systems or subsystems themselves (Ambrosino et al., 2012:53). The relatedness and interactions incorporate the concept that change or movement in one part of the

system (or in one system), will impact on the larger system (or on other systems) (Ambrosino et al., 2012:53). Amerikaner (1981:33) argues that for as long as exchange with the surrounding environment never ceases, the impact of interactions and interrelations cannot be ignored when investigating the challenges of CYCWs.

2.4.4 Steady state

Another integral concept in the ecological/systems framework is steady state, in which systems are not static, but are steadily moving (Ambrosino et al., 2012:53). The system is adjusting constantly to move toward its goal while maintaining a certain amount of order and stability (Ambrosino et al., 2012:53). Now that the systems theory and its key concepts have been discussed, the ecological systems theory will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.5 The ecological systems theory

The ecological framework is “a broad, overarching paradigm or metatheory, bridging several fields of theory and research, and orienting practitioners and researchers to the importance of integrative, multilevel, and multidimensional approaches to person-environmental relationship” (Kemp, 2010:3). This framework is particularly relevant to this study as the researcher is also interested in finding out how CYCWs adapt within various environmental relationships.

In CYC, as in other professions such as Social Work, increasing importance is accorded to environmental factors, i.e. adopting an approach that views people as dynamic and reciprocal interactors with their environments (Hall, 2013:45). Hence the researcher is not only interested in how CYCWs fit in their environments, but also on how these environments affect them. White and Klein (2008) and Bubolz and Sontag (1993) in Smith and Hamon (2012:188-189) articulated the following key assumptions of the ecological systems theory:

- Human beings and groups are a product of both genetics and environment.
- Humans are dependent upon their environment to meet their biological needs.
- As social beings, humans are dependent on others.
- Human beings are finite, such that time is both a limitation and a resource.

- Humans organise their interactions within their spatial environments.
- Human behaviour can be comprehended on at least two levels: individual and population.

The above points are so relevant that it makes sense to focus the forthcoming discussion towards understanding the ecological systems theory in detail.

2.5.1 The important concepts of the ecological systems perspective

Ecological systems theory incorporates concepts from a number of different theoretical perspectives. In addition to general systems and ecosystems theory, concepts are drawn from social support, stress and coping perspectives, as well as from cognitive-behavioural theory (Rothery, 2001:70). Hence in the next section the focus will be on the key concepts of the ecological systems theory in order to come to an in-depth understanding of the theory.

2.5.1.1 Social environment

The social environment involves the conditions, circumstances and human interactions that encompass human beings (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:7). Individuals must have effective interactions with their environment in order to survive and thrive. The social environment includes the actual physical setting that the society or culture provides. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) cite the type of home a person lives in, the type of work a person does, the amount of money that is available, and laws and social rules people live by as examples of physical settings.

According to Krueger (2002:14), the developmental-ecological perspective emphasises the interaction between persons and the physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings. Here Krueger did not confine the definition to the physical environments, but deliberately included the social environments. The social environment includes individuals, groups, organisations and systems with which a person comes into contact, including family, friends, work groups and governments (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:7). All these social environment elements are relevant to this study as they affect CYCWs. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) add that social institutions such as health care, housing,

social welfare and educational systems are yet other aspects of this social environment.

2.5.1.2 Transactions

People communicate and interact with others in their environments. In the ecological systems theory, “interaction is what makes the system a system, what makes a set of parts form a community, and what to study if the system is to be understood” (Jordan, 2009:1579). These interactions are also referred to as *transactions* which are described by Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) as “being active and dynamic, because, something is communicated or exchanged.” According to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7), transactions may be positive or negative. There are undoubtedly various positive and negative transactions between CYCWs and their environments which might be consequential in challenges.

2.5.1.3 Interdependence

Interdependence is “the mutual reliance of each person on each other person.” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). Individuals are interdependent as they rely on other individuals and groups of individuals in the social environment. Likewise, these other individuals are reliant on one another for input, energy, services and consistency (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12).

2.5.1.4 Energy

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) define *energy* as “the natural power of active involvement among people and their environments, which can take the form of input and output.” According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:12), “input is the energy coming into a person’s life and adding value to that life.” On the other hand, *output* refers to “energy going out of a person’s life, and taking something away from it” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). It would therefore be important to establish which inputs are adding into the CYCWs’ lives and which are taking away from their professional and personal lives.

2.5.1.5 Adaptation

Adaptation is “the capacity to adjust to surrounding environmental conditions; the concept which implies change” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). A person must change or adapt to new conditions and circumstances in order to continue functioning effectively. As people are continually exposed to changes and stressful

life events, they need to be flexible and capable of adapting (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). Germain and Gitterman (1995) add that adaptations are continuous, change-oriented, cognitive, sensory-perceptual and behavioural processes people use to sustain or raise the level of fit between themselves and their environment. In other words, adaptations include actions to change the environment (including moving to new environments), or people themselves, or both (Germain & Gitterman, 1995).

Germain and Gitterman (1995) note that the ecological systems perspective makes clear the need to view people and environments as a unitary system within a particular cultural and historic context. These authors further noted that both person and environment can be fully understood only in terms of their relationship, in which each continually influences the other within a particular context. People are affected by their environments and vice versa. As a result, people can and do change their environments in order to adapt successfully (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). As adaptation is a two-way process involving both the individual and the environment, the focus of many helping professionals will therefore mainly be on improving person-in-environment fit (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:9). The question to be asked is whether CYCWs themselves are adapting.

Kemp (2010:3) clarifies that in the social sciences, ecological theories, research and intervention models focus on the complex, dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human organisms and a range of environmental contexts, from family and immediate milieus to larger socio-cultural, political and institutional arrangements. The notion by Hepworth et al. (2006:229) that the ecological systems perspective does not represent a swing of the pendulum from primary focus on the person to the other extreme of primary focus on the environment is of significance. Assessment focuses on the transactions between the two, or *the goodness of fit* between the person and his or her environment (Hepworth et al., 2006:229). There are myriad factors in the environment that affect human beings, which need to be taken into consideration when any form of investigation is carried out, hence the introduction of the ecological model in Figure 2.1 below.

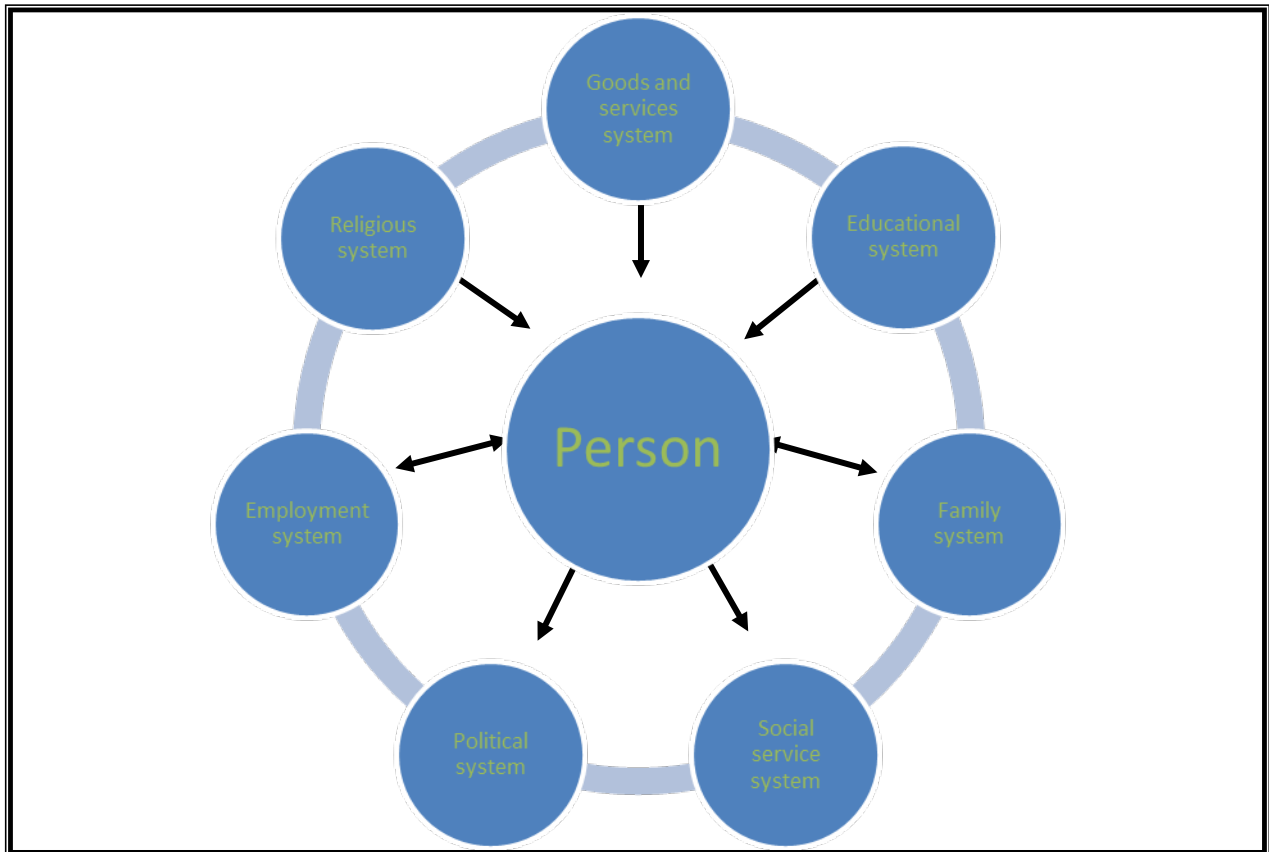


Figure 2.1: Person-in-environment conceptualisation

According to the ecological model, human beings are viewed as developing and adapting through transactions with all elements of environments (Zastrow, 2007:24). Adaptation of the ecological model makes a close conceptual fit with the “person-in-environment” (Hepworth et al., 2010:15). The person-environment fit is the actual fit between an individual or a collective group's needs, rights, goals and capacities, and the qualities and operations of their physical and social environments within particular cultural and historical contexts (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). A person-in-environment focus sees people as constantly interacting with various systems around them. These systems include the family, friends, work, social services, politics, religion, goods and services, and educational systems (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012: 9).

According to this model, the person is portrayed as being dynamically involved with each of the above-mentioned systems (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:9). Human beings are therefore compelled to adapt in order to live in harmony with every element

found within their varied and complex systems. As people are affected by their environments and vice versa, adaptation becomes critical.

By using the lens of ecological systems theory in this study, the researcher is not only interested in how CYCWs and the systems are adapting to each other, but also in CYCWs' abilities to get their needs met (Rothery, 2001:70). Hence it must be noted that the focus of the study includes CYCWs' coping strategies. Given that different environments will have different affordances and will be responded to in different ways by different individuals (Darling, 2007:204), it makes sense that an insight into CYCWs' varied coping strategies be obtained; hence the introduction of the concept *coping* at this point.

2.5.1.6 Coping

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:12) define *coping* as “a form of human adaptation and implies a struggle to overcome problems.” These authors further present a clear distinction between two concepts that can easily be confused. They noted that although *adaptation* may involve responses to new conditions that are either positive or negative, *coping* refers to the way people deal with the problems (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:12). Germain and Gitterman (1995) describe coping measures as special behaviours that are devised to handle the demands posed by a life stressor, which include efforts to regulate immobilising, negative feelings and to engage in effective problem solving as required by the particular life stressor. They add that successful coping depends on various environmental and personal resources. Ambrosino et al. (2012:50) hold the view that opportunities within the environment encourage an individual to meet his or her own needs and to develop as a healthy, well-functioning person. Hence the researcher incorporated the availability and/or type of resources which enable CYCWs to cope with their challenges.

In order to sufficiently cover this concept of coping, Germain and Gitterman (1995) further outline the following four attributes which indicate outcomes of adaptive exchanges between the person and past and current environments: relatedness, competence, self-esteem and self-direction.

2.5.1.6.1 RELATEDNESS

Relatedness refers to attachments, friendships, positive kin relationships, and a sense of belonging to a supportive social network (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). In the case of CYCWs, supportive social networks may include belonging to professional bodies and positive professional relationships.

2.5.1.6.2 COMPETENCE

Competence assumes that all organisms are innately motivated to affect their environment in order to survive (White in Germain & Gitterman, 1995). This motivation, most highly developed in human beings, is termed “effectance.” Germain and Gitterman (1995) argue that opportunities for effective action must be available in the environment from infancy to old age for the development and sustainment of a sense of one's efficacy. CYC as a field believes that it has some competencies to make a contribution within the broader social services sector. CYC practitioners in particular have developed specific competencies which enable them to interact with the children, youth and families with whom they work.

2.5.1.6.3 SELF-ESTEEM

According to Germain and Gitterman (1995), self-esteem is the most important part of self-concept; it represents the extent to which one feels competent, respected and worthy. These authors add that a high level of self-esteem is intrinsically satisfying and pleasurable. It is particularly important in childhood and adolescence, but continues to develop and even to change in adulthood. Germain and Gitterman (1995) further argue that low self-esteem reflects a lack of respect for oneself and feelings that one is inadequate, inferior, unlovable and unworthy. It is often associated with depression (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). This is an area that undoubtedly needs attention. CYCWs work with young people, most of whom have dented self-esteem because difficult circumstances. For these CYCWs to assist young people to develop positive self-esteem, it is critical that CYCWs themselves have positive self-esteem.

2.5.1.6.4 SELF-DIRECTION

Self-direction is the capacity to take some degree of control over one's life and to accept responsibility for one's decisions and actions, while simultaneously respecting

the rights and needs of others (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). Issues of power and powerlessness are critical to self-direction (Germain & Gitterman, 1995). Self-direction as a concept is thus closely related to empowerment which, according to Zastrow (2013:51), is “the process of helping individuals, families, groups or organisations and communities to increase their interpersonal, personal, political and socio-economic strength so that they can improve their circumstances.”

The ecological systems theory is very much relevant to this study as the researcher believes that the systems not only affect CYCWs, but may also present them with some challenges. Another significant factor about ecological systems theory is that it gives attention to both internal and external factors (Zastrow, 2007:24). This view is in line with Hepworth et al. (2006:206) who argue that problems, strengths and resources result from interactions among intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental systems. Ecological systems theory posits that individuals constantly engage in transactions with other humans and with other systems in the environment, and that these individuals and systems reciprocally influence each other (Hepworth et al., 2010:15).

Hepworth et al. (2010:15) identified *habitat* and *niche* as the two concepts of the ecological systems theory that are especially relevant to social workers. The researcher believes these concepts are equally relevant to CYCWs. Germain and Gitterman (1995) recorded an observation that when habitats are rich in the resources required for growth and development, people tend to thrive. But where there are deficiencies in vital resources, physical, social and emotional development, as well as on-going functioning may be adversely affected (Hepworth et al., 2010:15). In the context of this study, habitat also includes opportunities for growth and development. According to Germain and Gitterman (1995), people's habitats include dwelling places; physical layouts of urban and rural communities; physical settings of schools, workplaces, hospitals, social agencies, shopping areas, and religious structures; and parks and other amenities.

Hepworth et al. (2010:15) further linked *niche* to the statuses or roles occupied by members of the community. Some CYWCs chose CYC as their professional niche area. They therefore justifiably held the expectation that the field, as well as the

entire environment within which they work, would support their chosen *niche*. Being able to locate one's niche, presumes that opportunities congruent with human needs will also exist (Hepworth et al., 2010:15); something which needed to be established through this study.

Ambrosino et al. (2012:54) took note that the ecological/systems framework is criticised for emphasising the broad environment at the expense of psychosocial and intrapsychic aspects of the individual. At the same time, they also noted that proponents of this framework argue that “the individual is perceived as a highly valued system itself and that intrapsychic aspects and psychosocial aspects, which incorporate the individual's capacity and motivation for change, are parts of any system involving individuals” (Ambrosino et al., 2012:54). The discussion from the preceding section illustrates that the satisfaction of human needs and mastery of developmental tasks require adequate resources in the environment, as well as positive transactions between people and their environments. The researcher endeavoured to ascertain whether the varied needs of CYCWs are being met or not. Now that the two theories have been described in detail, a summary that demonstrates their similarities as well as differences will be presented in the next section.

2.6 Similarities between systems theory and the ecological systems theory

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) acknowledge that there is some disagreement about how the systems theory and the ecological system theory fit together. This disagreement might be emanating from the fact that there are some terms, for example *input*, that are used in both the systems theory and the ecological systems theory (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004:7). Hence it became important for the researcher to present a summary of some of the major concepts in and similarities between these two theories, as presented by Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:13) in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Similarities between systems theory and the ecological systems theory (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:13)

Some major concepts in systems theory	Similar concepts in both	Some major concepts in the ecological systems theory
System	Input	Social environment
Dynamic	Output	Person-in-environment focus
Interact		Transactions
Homeostasis		Energy
Equifinality		Interface
		Adaptation
		Coping
		Interdependence

Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004:7) contend that the systems theory and the ecological systems perspective together “focus on systems within the environment and describe how these systems interact with and affect people.” In order to get a full understanding of the two theories, their differences will also be presented.

2.7 Differences between systems theory and ecological systems theory

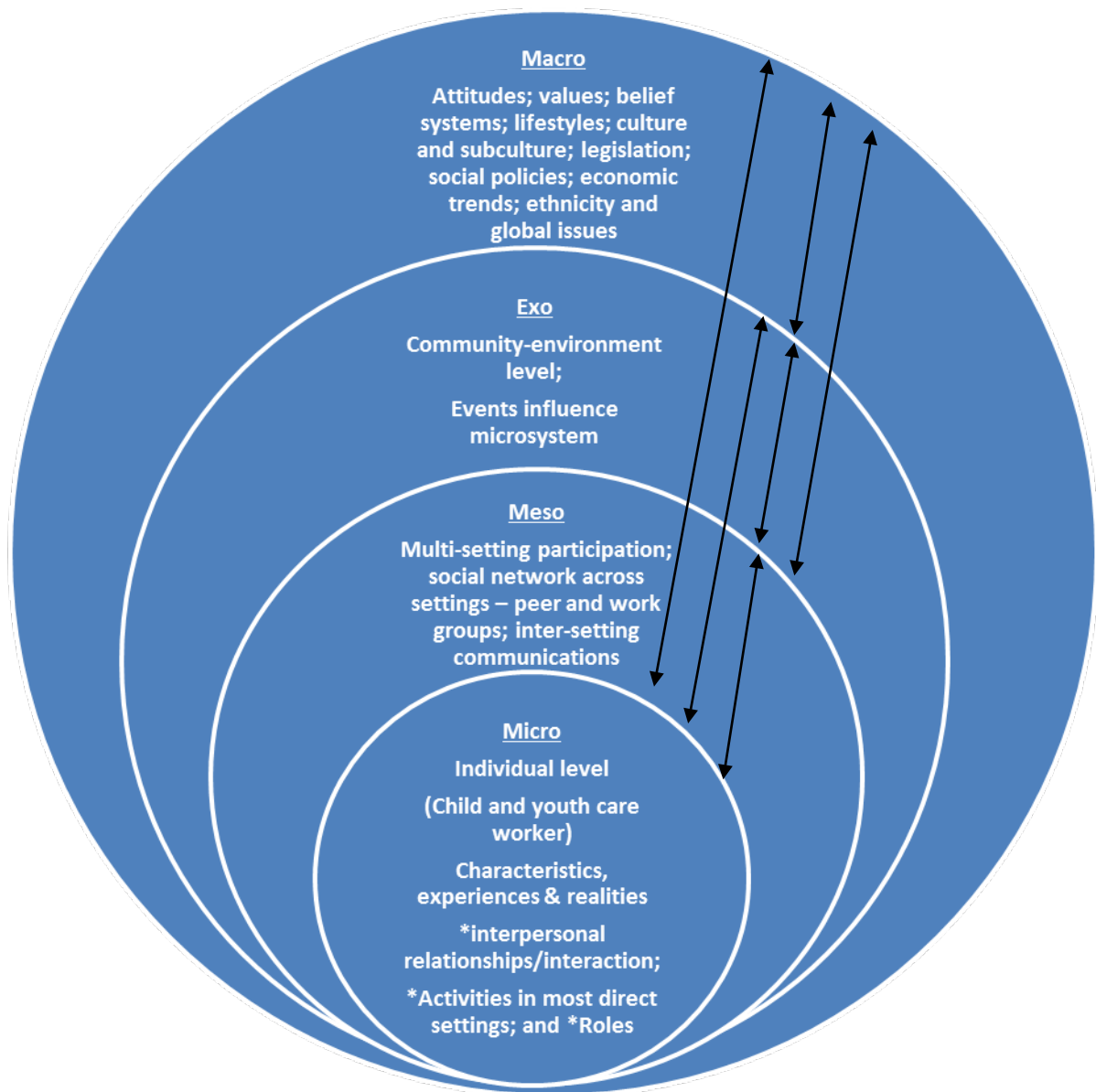
According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:13), there are essentially two major differences between these two theories. Firstly, the ecological systems theory refers to living dynamic interactions; the emphasis is on active participation. Systems theory on the other hand assumes a broader perspective; it can be used to refer to inanimate, mechanical operations, as well as to describe the functioning of a human family.

Secondly, there is a difference in the terms emphasised. For example, the ecological systems theory focuses on the transactions between individuals and the environments at the interface. Systems theory, on the other hand, addresses boundaries of subsystems within a system and the maintenance of homeostasis or equilibrium within a system (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:13).

In the next section, the researcher will focus the discussion on the interactions and exchanges between people and their environments. This will be done by discussing the different levels of the ecological systems theory.

2.8 Levels of the ecological systems theory

The ecological systems theory proposes that individuals exist within a variety of settings, starting at the individual level and extending outward (Duerden & Witt, 2010:110). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:4), this structure is conceived as “a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like the set of Russian dolls”. Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist whose model was known as ecological systems theory, remains the pillar of many ecological systems discussions. In its original formulation, the theory looks at a child’s development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment (Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2013:133). The ecological environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Figure 2.2 below outlines these four levels and portrays the interactions between all the environments that affect all individuals.



Chronosystem: All of these embedded systems change over time

Figure 2.2: Levels of the ecological system.

(Adapted from Ambrosino et al., 2008:61; Hall, 2013).

Since its inception, the ecological model has acknowledged that humans do not develop in isolation, but in relation to other systems. An example of such systems in the case of a developing child would include their family, home, school, community, and society (Chau-Ying Leu, 2008:18). CYCWs and their families are also affected by everything that is taking place at every level. According to this model, various

components of the developing person's environment are not independent, but interact with each other and with the components of the next system as well (Smith & Hamon, 2012:186). Chau-Ying Leu (2008:18) states that each of these ever-changing and multi-level environments, as well as interactions among them, is a key to development.

Chau-Ying Leu (2008:17) then concludes that interactions of structures within a level and interactions of structures among levels is the key to Bronfenbrenner's theory. In the next section, the four basic systems that make up the ecological environment, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1979), will be discussed in detail.

2.8.1 Microsystem

The first and innermost level, the microsystem, represents the immediate environment of the person. This can be the home, the classroom, or as often happens for research purposes, the laboratory or the testing room (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) defines the microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics." He further explains that "a setting is a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Interactions and interconnectedness within settings where people find themselves are therefore very important from the ecological systems perspective. The principle of interconnectedness is seen as applying not only within settings, but with equal force and consequence to linkages between settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). As a critical term in the definition of the microsystem is *experienced* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22), it is important that settings are not defined only in objective terms, but also in phenomenological terms.

According to Ambrosino et al. (2012:55), this level incorporates "the individual's level of functioning, the intellectual and emotional capacities, and motivation; the impact of life experiences; and the interactions and connections between that individual and others in immediate environment." Duerden and Witt (2010:110) add that it represents an individual's immediate context, including associated roles, actors, and environmental characteristics. For CYCWs, examples of microsystems would include their family, schools of their own children and of children in their care, day care

centres, and religious centres (Smith & Hamon, 2012:186). This level would also represent those influences closest to CYCWs, such as their interaction with their immediate colleagues.

At the microsystem level, CYCWs, individually and/or collectively, are tasked to provide direct care to children and youth on a daily basis. In fact, this is one of the defining characteristic of CYC. These direct interactions are likely to generate challenges that affect CYCWs at a personal level. Thus, to study CYCWs' challenges, we are enjoined to look not only at their immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well (Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2013:134), hence the discussion of the mesosystem in the next section.

2.8.2 Mesosystem

The next level, the mesosystem, looks beyond single settings and recognises the links that exist between two or more microsystems (Smith & Hamon, 2012:186). It involves the relationship between two microsystems that are linked by some person who is present in both microsystems (Ambrosino et al., 2012:56). Perhaps these interrelations among microsystems are the reason Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) termed this level "a system of microsystems." Duerden and Witt (2010:110) further clarified the mesosystem as consisting of all other systems the individual frequents and his or her interrelationships. Regarded as of equal importance are connections between other persons present in the setting, the nature of these links, and their indirect influence on the developing person through their effect on those who deal with him at first hand level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:7).

CYCWs navigates through a variety of influential contexts each day, including their own homes, work, CYC programmes, and other free time and peer settings that make up their mesosystems. Therefore the quality of connections and cooperation between CYCWs, families, colleagues and their communities undoubtedly have a noticeable impact on them. Mattaini (2008:356) argues that no client system can be understood apart from its defining social context. Several research findings indicate that the capacity of a two-person system to serve as an effective context for human development is crucially dependent on the presence and participation of third parties, such as spouses, relatives, friends and neighbours (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:5).

This level also involves interpersonal relations that are less intimate than those associated with family life, but more meaningful than among organisations and institutional representatives (Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi in Hepworth et al. (2010:14).

Where there are groups of people interacting, there is likely to be some level of challenges as a result of interpersonal dynamics. Given that in ideal CYC practice CYCWs are expected to work within the multi-disciplinary teams, the presence of other team members is likely to present its own challenges, as conceded by Carstens (2007:22), but it can also present opportunities (Gharabaghi, 2010:92).

Challenges will be compounded when CYCWs are expanding beyond working with individual children and youth within their confined spaces and venturing into working with families and with other stakeholders within the broader communities. The impact of these environments on CYCWs may become immense and also need to be taken into consideration.

2.8.3 Exosystem

The ecological environment is conceived as extending far beyond the immediate situation directly affecting the developing person – the objects to which he responds or the people with whom he interacts on a face-to-face basis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:7).

Bronfenbrenner (1979:3) posits that this third level evokes a hypothesis that the person's development is profoundly affected by events occurring in settings in which the person is not even present. An exosystem level therefore refers to one or more settings that do not involve the person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). This third level "incorporates community-level factors that may not relate directly to the individual but affect the way the individual functions" (Ambrosino et al., 2012:50). In other words, at this level the focus expands beyond transactions that take place within the person's immediate environments. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1986:723) asserted that the psychological development of children in the family is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which children spend their time, but also by what occurs in the other settings in

which their parents live their lives. Examples of exosystems include the neighbourhood, government agencies, the work world, informal social networks, communication and transportation system, and the media (Smith & Hamon, 2012:186). In the context of this study, this level may also be illustrated by governmental and non-governmental agencies which are meant to serve the interests of the general public. The organisational dynamics between these agencies can certainly affect CYCWs.

Duerden and Witt (2010:110) conclude that at the exosystem level, there are certain benefits that practitioners can experience through creating collaborative community partnerships. The capacity of a setting – such as the home, school or workplace – to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:6). Do CYCWs experience these collaborations within the social services sector as suggested? In this study, the exosystem would also incorporate those settings or institutions which CYCWs indirectly deal with, but which affect their functioning in less direct ways. Examples would be working in collaboration with schools, clinics and local municipalities in order to ensure that the children and youth they serve receive the holistic care that they may require. In other words, interactions that are external to, but still influence the context within which CYCWs operate (Duerden & Witt, 2010: 110).

2.8.4 Macrosystem

Beyond the exosystem is the macrosystem level. The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form of content of lower order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:26). This level represents the wider social policy and socio-cultural setting, and includes the customary and legal norms in the society (Hall, 2013:64). Chau-Ying Leu (2008:17) describes the macrosystem level as the blueprint for the ecology of human development. This final level consists of societal factors such as the cultural attitudes and values of the society (Ambrosino et al., 2012:56). According to Smith and Hamon (2012:187), it further includes the customs,

ideologies and laws of the culture in which an individual lives, therefore encompassing all other systems. The macrosystem therefore dictates certain features of all associated systems (Duerden & Witt, 2010:110).

In the context of this study, the macrosystem can be illustrated by the governmental policies; for example social services policies. This does not suggest that other generic policies do not affect CYCWs. As citizens of the country, all other policies affect CYCWs as well. Societal values, policies, and the financial resources the society provides also create the context within which CYCWs function. This will result in CYCWs interacting with a wide range of systems and the institutions that give life to those systems (Gharabaghi, 2010:100).

The processes of policy formulation, either through inclusion or exclusion, may also affect CYCWs. Whether CYCWs are given an opportunity to participate in the formulation of such policies is also significant. For in the final analysis, those policies will bind them. In order for the CYC fraternity to advance its course, there has to be advocacy initiatives at very high and strategic levels. This will ensure that the policies that are developed are inclusive and relevant. But of course, the scenario presented here can only take place in an ideal world. It is hoped that policy formulation processes, especially those directly affecting CYCWs and their work, would enable them to become contributors to policies, rather than just passive recipients.

Within the South African CYC context, NACCW has played a significant advocacy role in advancing the CYC field over the years. In order to achieve the broader CYC objectives, there have to be many other voices that champion the advancement of the CYC field. Hence it is imperative to establish if CYCWs feel that their needs are adequately being championed for. CYCWs' individual behaviour is affected by multiple levels of the ecological context, and therefore interventions that are geared towards CYCWs should target these multiple levels as well (Trickett & Rowe, 2012: 128).

It is worth concluding this section by noting that Bronfenbrenner's theoretical work continued to evolve over his academic career integrating the notion of time as captured by Smith and Hamon (2012:187):

This concept of time purports that development within the individual and within the environment occurs throughout the entire life course. More specifically, future personal development must be examined in relation to an individual's developmental history, as well as the changes in their environment over time.

Based on Smith and Hammon's (2012:187) assertion above, the concept of chronosystem will be discussed below.

2.8.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem is particularly relevant to CYC given constant evolutions prevalent to this field (Garfat, 2003a). The chronosystem indicates that all aspects of time impact on development within the ecological system, and that all the embedded systems change over time (Bronfenbrenner in Keenan & Evans, 2001:3).

It is therefore evident from the above discussion that CYCWs are affected at different levels. Trying to understand their challenges and coping strategies by only focusing on one or two aspects will be a very limiting and unhelpful approach. Now that the four levels of the ecological model have been outlined, it is worth elaborating on the relevance of the ecological systems theory to the CYC field.

2.9 The relevance of the ecological systems theory to CYC

Cameron and Maginn (2009:110) cited children's pre-care experiences, a variety of factors within the child, the failings of 'corporate parenting', and lack of appropriate support in school as examples of contributory factors which can determine the outcomes for children and young people in care. These authors presented a stance that on their own, none of these factors can fully explain why so many looked after children end up with such poor social, educational and personal outcomes. It must have been against this background that VanderVen (2006:254) argued that to significantly influence the quality of human services delivered to children, a comprehensive ecological systems approach which can influence each of the environmental systems that impinge on children and affect their lives is required. Her argument suggests that CYCWs need to move beyond being aware of environmental influences and more towards manipulating these environments in order to make

them conducive for children and youth. In so doing, CYCWs will be creating what Righton (2005) has termed “a warm and responsive environment for the child.” Even authors who have written recent CYC literature, such as Derksen (2010:331), confirmed that Bronfenbrenner’s ideas have resonated within the CYC field whereby reference is often made to the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems.

To emphasise the relevance of the ecological systems perspective, Phelan (2004:71) also lamented the individually focused efforts of some CYCWs that totally ignore both the family and the other systems that surround all people. Radmilovic (2005:127) added his voice by stating that CYCWs are in the practice of facilitating and supporting change in individuals, families and communities. Authors such as VanderVen (2006), Righton (2005), Phelan (2004) and Radmilovic (2005), as well as many others within the field of CYC, consistently make mention of the relevance of the ecological systems approach. This does not mean that the ecological systems theory does not have any limitations. Greene (2009:xi) has correctly posited that “a theory has inherent usefulness to the degree that it gives direction.” Hence the researcher did not dedicate time on the critique of this theory. It would also have been time consuming for the researcher to outline how the ecological systems theory framework applies to different CYC programme settings. The researcher took note of Greene’s (2009) view that for the selection of any theory, values and beliefs of the selector of such theory plays a significant role. Hence the researcher selected a few specific CYC practice areas to illustrate how this framework and the levels outlined above apply to some of the settings within the South African CYC context.

2.9.1 Working with individual children (Microsystem)

Since the 1994 post-apartheid dispensation there has been drastic changes in the focus of CYC in SA. These changes include the role of CYCWs and the locations in which they work (Garfat, 2003a:4) and has resulted in what Bronfenbrenner (1979:6) has termed *ecological transitions*. Bronfenbrenner (1979:6) describes this term as “shifts in role or setting, which occur throughout life span”. In the past, CYC has been practiced mainly in the residential settings. Savicki (1993:442) alluded to this fact when he stated that a systematic look at the environment of the day and residential milieu, which features workers in continuous contact with groups of children and youth in their life space, can help clarify the origins of the profession so that vital

aspects of the profession's identity can be transported to new settings. Due to an increase in the number of children who needed CYC services, new forms of caring have been identified and intensified. As a result, residential treatment has become the last resort for children and families whose functioning does not improve with other forms of care (Bastiaanssen, Kroes, Nijhof, Delsing, Engels & Veerman, 2012). According to Righton (2005), while working with an individual in CYC, the CYCWs need to constantly renew and review their intimate knowledge of each child. It must however be noted that when we talk about working with an individual child, it does not mean that CYCWs have the luxury of working with one child in isolation from others for prolonged periods. Most of the time, these workers continuously work with more than one child at any given time, but endeavour to ensure that persons in milieu programs do not become lost in groups (Barnes, 2004). CYCWs must at all times attempt not to lose focus on an individual's needs. Smith (2009:89) cited an example whereby the misbehaviour of one child may spark a response from another and "the business of trying to manage the resultant dynamics can be beyond the ability if even the best workers." This requires the skill to be on the lookout for the impact of interactions of others on an individual child. Considering that a family may now be conceptualised as what or who children consider to be a family (Smith, 2009:138), the presence of the individual child's family members can also affect the child's functioning at any particular time. This means it can invariably affect the CYCWs as well. Hence the researcher also looked at the relevance of the ecological systems framework in working with families in the next section.

2.9.2 Working with families and communities (Mesosystem)

Zastrow (2004:79) has since contended that problems faced by any individual are usually influenced by the dynamics within a family. The ecological systems framework is useful for assessing families in that the focus may be on the internal family system, yet the framework can also include larger systems' influence on the family (Hepworth et al., 2006:244). Hepworth et al. (2006:244) propose practical interventions such as family assessment, which should include both meso- and micro-level factors such as communication styles, culture, and family interactions and dynamics.

2.9.2.1 Working within families

Cameron and Maginn (2009:102) have emphasised the importance of professional collaboration on the successful support of children and young people. As CYCWs venture into working with families, the assumption is that these workers have the support system, including that of working within multi-disciplinary teams.

According to Carstens (2007:2), a residential care facility is “a system with different parts consisting of youth at risk, social workers, psychologists, nurses, care workers and programmes.” The arrangement of new CYCWs starting off in residential settings has since changed. In the past, inexperienced staff picked up tricks of the trade, such as working with groups, through an apprenticeship model where they learned from ‘old hands’ (Smith, 2009:88). Within the South African context, CYCWs are increasingly working with families whose children have never been in residential settings. It must also be mentioned that the majority of CYCWs no longer work within full complement, multi-disciplinary teams. This is mainly due to the demands made on all social service professionals. It is reasonable that if such multi-disciplinary teams (subsystems) are available, they can serve as a support system for CYCWs. It must also be recorded that the existence of such teams can also contribute to challenges and stress in some instances.

Families perform functions that are rarely replicated in other systems and therefore are considered to be the preferred arrangement for minors (Hepworth et al., 2010c:227). Hence Garfat (2003b:5) postulates that CYC in both theory and practice has now placed family as central for effective helping. Unlike in the past, Garfat and McElwee, in Garfat (2003b:2), affirmed that “we have now, to a great extent, arrived at a place where we see family as a partner, a solution, a way of helping the young person who remains our focus.” It is this proposal that is making it almost compulsory for CYCWs to work in collaboration with families. This implies that CYCWs are required to work with and within different systems; something that requires new set of attitudes and skills on the part of these CYCWs. If CYCWs acquire the required skills, they will be on the right path in terms of personal and professional development. Development is defined in this work as a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). Without the skills of navigating between different systems

that are associated with the family, CYCWs are guaranteed to experience challenges.

In describing family-based CYC work, Phelan (2004:72) noted that CYCWs perform their job in mostly dynamic and less structured environments created by the family in their home, rather than in an office or agency space (Phelan, 2004:72). Some professionals may question the logic of CYCWs working within the family setting raising the notion of boundaries in support of their argument. It would seem Phelan (2004:75) pre-empted this argument when he posed this scenario:

As I enter your life-space and join you, in some ways it becomes my life space also. If I fully accept my presence in this moment, will I lose my ability to become deliberately supportive for you? Can I be present in your life-space without making it my life-space too?

The above paragraph demonstrates Phelan's consciousness about the existence of boundaries. It further demonstrated his awareness about the interactions that will be brought about by CYCWs' presence within family settings. Smith (2009:119) cautions that putting the personal at the heart of work with children introduces a range of boundary issues. Phelan (2004:75) further conceded that "it is not possible to be totally neutral and unaffected (nor is it desirable)." The question therefore is: Are CYCWs able to keep this level of consciousness about boundaries and appreciate interactions as and when they enter the family systems? This is against the acknowledgement that boundaries are essential to self and to interpersonal work (Smith, 2009:135). According to Phelan (2005:351), the boundaries in CYC work are much more intimate than in other professions and, because of this, require a rigorous attention to clear and reflective establishing of safe and respectful personal space.

The "living with" is a mutual process, and it is important for CYCWs to remain both safe and helpful without being absorbed into the family's system (Phelan, 2004:75); a complex and demanding responsibility indeed. Garfat (2003b:5) also concluded that it is hard to imagine anymore a collection of writing about helping young people that does not include an emphasis on family. Hence this study would certainly be incomplete if it were to explore challenges experienced by CYCWs without

incorporating those that arise from working with families and other environmental systems.

2.9.2.2 Working within communities (Exosystems)

In SA the focus on reducing the number of children entering residential services, as well as combatting the HIV epidemic which has resulted in the increase of orphans and vulnerable children in poor areas, necessitated the deployment of CYCWs in communities (Jamieson, 2013:1). One significant area that needs attention though is that of child-headed households; the phenomenon which the researcher will use as an example to illustrate CYC services within communities. CYCWs focus on child-headed households, amongst other areas of their responsibilities within communities. One of the prominent South African practitioners, Thumbadoo (2011:193), states that “the reality of the child destined to head a household in the context of poverty is unusually harsh.” This practitioner seems to be clearly aware of the environmental factors that affect children from child-headed households, as captured in this statement: “CYCWs in South African communities engage with children in their rural homes, many of them informal, without electricity and with very basic food supplies” (Thumbadoo, 2011:193). There are a number of lessons with ecological significance that can be learnt from Thumbadoo’s (2011:193) statement above. These lessons are: (1) the children are from rural homes (environment probably with improper infrastructure), (2) there is no electricity (lack of resources or basic necessities), and (3) the food supplies are inadequate (unmet basic needs). All these realities are environmental issues that are not necessarily the direct responsibility of CYCWs, but have an indirect bearing on their work. Factors beyond CYCWs’ immediate area of responsibility still need to be taken into consideration during any programming work.

It is imperative for CYCWs working with children coming from poverty stricken backgrounds to pay particular attention to these poor living conditions and their impact on the individual children. When CYCWs are planning a programme, they have to utilise resources that are available and relevant within that particular environment. CYCWs themselves are also expected to adapt to working under these trying conditions. They will have to negotiate, through communication, what they are going to do and with what resources. These CYCWs will therefore be expected to

engage with broader societal issues; something which might be seen as ‘interfering’ or ‘overstepping’ their boundaries. Any perceived interferences by other role players and stakeholders may cause tensions. Attempting to address broader societal issues may also lead to CYCWs being stretched beyond their capabilities.

Thumbadoo (2011:193) further cites the following example about the Isibindi Project: “...in partnership with local community organizations, unemployed people, especially women, are trained and then deployed as CYCWs, working directly with vulnerable children and their families in their own communities.” The cited Isibindi Project approach does not only address the needs of vulnerable children in communities, but also the real societal unemployment situation. Those adults who choose to get involved benefit as their ‘unemployed and economic’ statuses change. Darling (2007:204) argued that the central force in development is the active person: shaping environments, evoking responses from them, and reacting to them. As the economic statuses of many women who are involved in children’s programmes improve, their own children are cared for in a better way. Hlagala (2012:44) also made a recommendation that efforts to change societal outcomes should not only be directed at young people, but also at the system in which young people operate. It would therefore be pointless for CYC programmes to turn a blind eye on societal issues.

Sometimes it is important to focus on practical and immediate activities when providing services to children. Other times it is important to focus on societal issues, as eloquently captured by Thumbadoo (2011:194) in the statement below:

Isibindi child and youth care workers assist young people so that they can take advantage of the systems of support available to them. They help them access food parcels and social grants, ensure that the children have educational opportunities and are going to school, network with their extended family and community, and advocate and create opportunities for their rights to be realized.

The paragraph cited above captures an example of the South African CYC practice within communities and reflects the ecological systems framework that informs what CYCWs are doing. It also lays the foundation for the discussion of CYC practice at the macrosystem level.

2.9.3 Working within the broader society (Macrosystem)

Hoffman (1999) has since challenged CYCWs to work towards social change in the wider circumstances which affect the lives of the children and their families. This call has been taken seriously as the field continues to lead decision-makers to an appreciation of the intentionality of the tone, structure, flow and texture that makes up good practice, and to move beyond seeing only outcome and not process in child and youth care work (Allsopp, 2009). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2012:126) reiterated that numerous systems make up our ‘general society.’ Not paying attention to societal systems would not only be irresponsible, but will also result in ineffective interventions. Ambrosino et al. (2012:61) argue that the social welfare system is the product of the interactions and interrelatedness of historical, economic and political forces. The adequacy of children's services has always been an important political issue in many states (Helmet & Griff, 1977:144). Therefore there is no way one can ignore the political systems, the legal systems and the social service agencies’ systems operating within any particular country if one aims to provide a relevant service. Macro practice requires the use of advocacy on behalf of clients (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:126) in order to influence changes within the macro environment.

Some academic courses, and by extension some disciplines, are criticised for their limited attention to larger ecological issues such as improving the societal situations of children, youth and families facing routine discrimination, or living in poverty or inadequate housing (Kuehne & Leone, 1994:353). It is against this background therefore that CYCWs are expected to pay attention to societal issues. Without doing so, it seems as if their efforts will bear minimal results. Of course trying to play an advocacy role as an individual can be extremely difficult. This approach can also result in stress and burnout. Most macro practice is carried out by those in agencies or organisations (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2012:126). It therefore makes sense that CYCWs can really make an impact at this level through their participation and association with broader organisations.

Given that Hepworth et al. (2010:15) contend that adequate assessments of human problems and plans of interventions must consider how people and environmental systems influence one another, it is important to investigate the challenges

experienced by CYCWs using a broader framework. The ecological systems perspective suggests that we cannot discuss the individual without including the environment, or the environment without considering the strong forces of individuals in its formation (Ambrosino et al., 2012:58). Could there be environmental factors that present challenges to CYCWs and therefore make it difficult for them to cope? How are the CYCWs coping with these factors? In what way are the coping strategies adopted by CYCWs affecting them and also influencing their environments? Now that a relevant theoretical framework has been identified, all these questions will hopefully be answered with ease in subsequent chapters.

2.10 CONCLUSION

In concluding this chapter, the researcher is reminded of Maier's (1991a:399) words when he stated: "...an inviting milieu is fostered by full attention to creating an interesting, nurturing environment." This statement rings true for children and youth in care, as well as for CYCWs. By shining a spotlight on the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context, the researcher views this effort as an endeavour towards creating these inviting milieus for children. At the same time, the needs of the staff will be attended to in the process (Modlin, 2013:6).

The identified ecological systems theory outlined in this chapter should permeate through all CYC levels; i.e. spheres of practice, education and research. In other words, every CYC practitioner at every level, as well as in every setting, should be aware of how specific settings present their own dynamics in terms of challenges as well as opportunities. The ecological systems theory will serve as the lens through which the data of this study will be collected and analysed. In other words, this theory will give us concepts, provide basic assumptions, direct the researcher to important questions, and suggest ways to make sense of data (Neuman, 2012:50). It will also form the basis for conclusions and recommendations to be made later on in the forthcoming chapters. In the next chapter, the focus will be on the SA legal and policy framework within which the field of CYC operates.

CHAPTER 3

CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WITHIN THE BROADER SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2, the ecological systems theory has been discussed in detail as a theoretical framework within which this study is based. Implied from this theory is the fact that CYC as a field does not exist in isolation. There are several factors that form part of the environment within which CYC operates; among those are socio-economic factors. In this chapter, the broader socio-economic context of SA is discussed in order to situate the CYC sector. The legislative and policy frameworks that inform CYC will also be discussed. An overview of the SA population and how different categories of the population are affected by the socio-economic dynamics will also be highlighted. All relevant broader national intervention strategies that are meant to mitigate these socio-economic challenges will also be discussed. Permeating through the chapter is the discussion on the contribution that CYC as a field is making in terms of addressing the socio-economic challenges that SA is grappling with.

3.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Republic of South Africa is a democratic state founded on the values that include human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; as well as non-racialism and non-sexism. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, contains the Bill of Rights, which also provides for social and economic rights. Notably section 27(1)(c) of the Constitution provides for the right of access to appropriate social assistance for those unable to support themselves and their dependants. It is worth noting that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, is the supreme law of the country entrenching specific rights, responsibilities and an ethos that everyone must uphold. Of particular note is that contained in chapter two of the Constitution is the Bill of Rights which guarantees and guides the inherent rights and responsibilities of everyone, including children and youth.

It is therefore imperative that every sector is informed and base all its activities on the key legislative and policy frameworks, such as the Constitution, when conducting its business. Prior to the 1994 democratic dispensation, many policies in SA were meant to serve the interest of the minority, namely the white population, to the exclusion of the majority, namely the black population. It is against this background that post-1994 many policies had to be amended in order to ensure the protection and dignity of all populations, including all the children and youth. The two most relevant Acts in the context of this study are Social Service Professions Act (Act No. 110 of 1978) which informs and guides CYCWs, and the Children's Amendment Act of 2007 which guides the services rendered to children. According to Jamieson (2013:1), the Children's Amendment Act aimed to transform welfare services along a developmental model and fulfil all children's constitutional rights to protection from abuse, maltreatment and neglect. SA became a signatory to various international conventions that inform policies relating to services to children and youth. According to the Department of Social Development (DSD) (2005:34) these include the -

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Hague Convention on International Child Abductions
- Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoptions

Another legislation that governs the services to children and youth is the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008. According to Dawood (2006:5), the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 has been introduced to offer child offenders the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour, the means to receive appropriate interventions in order to prevent re-offending, and to be treated in a manner consistent with their age and vulnerability. Dawood (2006:5) further argued that the Child Justice Bill is "an illustration of the manner in which SA has embraced the concept of children's rights within the overall human rights discourse and is striving to create a culture of dignity, fairness and equality for all."

Despite several legislative documents being put in place, there are still many children who do not experience the dignity, fairness and equality that these documents intended to usher in. This is in part due to the lack of sufficient workforce trained to focus on the needs of some categories of children and youth. Although the

plight of children in general has been moved up on the national agenda, in some geographical areas no strides have been made in terms of reaching and protecting vulnerable children. This is where CYC as a sector has focused its attention to ensure that all children and youth enjoy the dignity that is advocated for through the Children's Amendment Act. The impact of the past unjust laws that ensured that the population did not benefit equally from the resources and opportunities is still evident in many sectors such as education, health and economy. Hence in the next section, the SA population will be presented according to different categories such as race, gender and age. This will assist in projecting a better picture of how the different categories of the SA population are faring in terms of the socio-economic status.

3.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION

According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2013:6), the SA population was estimated at 52,982 000 million during the 2013 mid-year period. The black African population group is in the majority (42,28 million) and constitutes almost 80% of the total population. The white population was estimated at 4,60 million, the coloured population at 4,77 million and the Indian/Asian population at 1,33 million. It is also worth noting that approximately 51% (approximately 27,16 million) of the population is female. Table 3.1 below outlines a clearer picture of the mid-year population estimates for SA by population group and sex.

Table 3.1: Mid-year population estimates for South Africa by population group and sex, 2013(Stats SA, 2013:6).

Population group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	% of male population	Number	% of female population	Number	% of total population
African	20 607 800	79.8	21 676 300	79.8	42 284 100	79.8
Coloured	2 306 800	8.9	2 459 400	9.1	4 766 200	9.0
Indian/Asian	669 200	2.6	660 100	2.4	1 329 300	2.5
White	2 239 500	8.7	2 362 900	8.7	4 602 400	8.7
Total	25 823 300	100.0	27 158 700	100.0	52 982 000	100.0

In Table 3.1 above, it is illustrated that the black African population is in the majority; therefore it follows that a significant number of socio-economic challenges will be experienced by this population group. This will be compounded by the past historical context that systematically ensured that this population group is marginalised. The effects of these past unjust laws will most likely remain with this majority of the population for a long time to come. These figures need to be taken into consideration when any planning and interventions are carried out.

Given that this study was carried out in six different provinces of SA, it became important to outline the population by province as well. In Table 3.2 below, Stats SA (2013:3) outlines the 2013 mid-year population by province.

Table 3.2: Mid-year population estimates by province, 2013 (Stats SA, 2013:3).

Province	Population estimates	% of total population
Eastern Cape	6 620 100	12.5
Free State	2 753 200	5.2
Gauteng	12 728 400	24.0
KwaZulu-Natal	10 456 900	19.7
Limpopo	5 518 000	10.4
Mpumalanga	4 128 000	7.8
Northern Cape	1 162 900	2.2
North West	3 597 600	6.8
Western Cape	6 016 900	11.4
Total	52 982 000	100.0

From Table 3.2 above it is clear that Gauteng has the highest population, followed by KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Given that Gauteng is the economic hub of SA, it makes sense that the majority of people are migrating to this province, with the Western Cape placed second in terms of migration patterns (National Planning Commission, 2011:104). People migrate to these developed provinces with the view of finding better economic opportunities. In the process of migration, some people will be forced to leave their children behind in their impoverished home provinces. In some cases, children who are left behind are better cared for by their relatives whereas in other cases, these children are exposed to neglect and abuse. In

response to migration patterns, state resources are likely to be committed to provinces that experience an expansion of population. Efforts to develop impoverished provinces might also be intensified to curb further migration.

It therefore makes sense that CYCWs be strategically deployed in provinces that have the majority of children who are exposed and vulnerable due to various factors. In that process, careful consideration should be given to the fact that trained CYCWs are likely to migrate to provinces that promise better salaries and working conditions as well. Therefore it makes sense that efforts to train CYCWs for rural development should also be supported so that they remain in their rural communities. In order to plan accordingly for the services earmarked for children and youth, the researcher deemed it necessary to present a picture of children and youth in the next section, as these are the main beneficiaries of CYC services.

3.3.1 Children and youth

According to Stats SA (2013:6), just less than 30% of the population is aged 0 - 14 years. This is the age group that requires some form of care most of the time, although most of them are mainly in schools. Figure 3.1 below outlines children under the age of 18 in terms of their gender as well as their race.

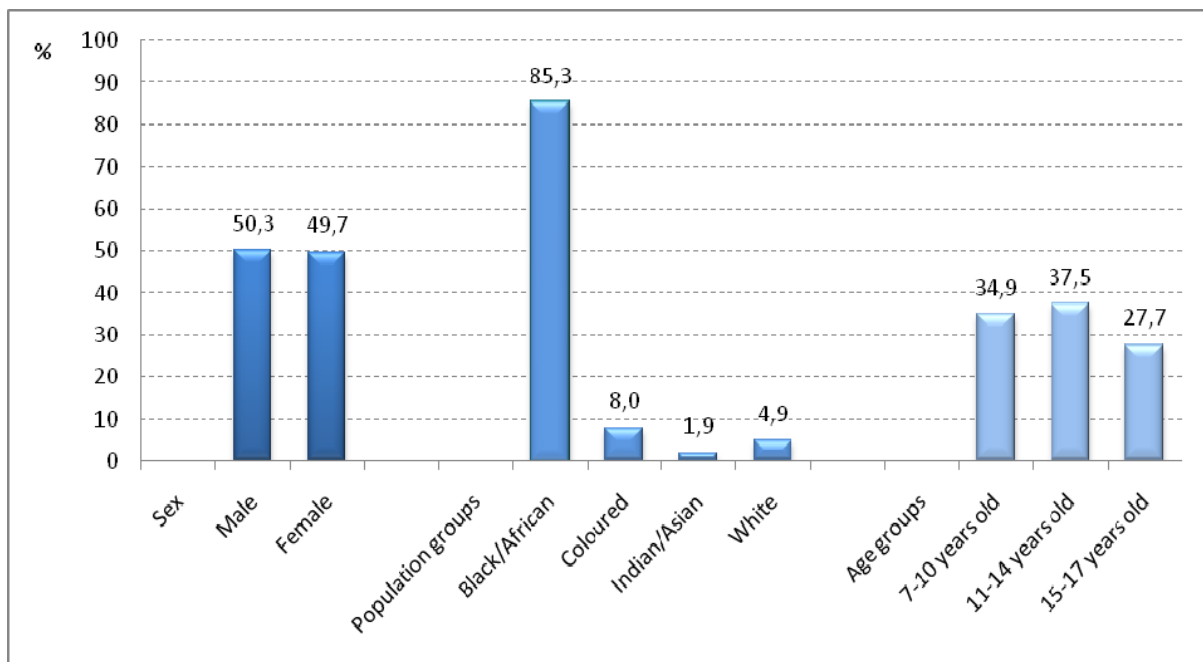


Figure 3.1: Profile of children aged 7–17 years (Stats SA, 2011:v).

Figure 3.1 above represents the results released by Stats SA (2011:v) on Survey of Activities of Young People (SAYP) which showed that in Q3:2010, there were 11,0 million children aged between 7 and 17 years in SA and these children were almost equally distributed across both genders (i.e. 50,3% males and 49,7% females). Their age structure was mostly concentrated in the 11 - 14 year (37,5%) and the 7 - 10 year (34,9%) age groups. The black African population accounted for the highest proportion (85,3%) of children aged 7 - 17 years, followed by the coloured population (8%), then white population (4,9%) and Indian/Asian population (1,9%). Although the designated target population which CYCWs work with is ages 0 - 18, the above figure gives an estimated indication of population of children under the age of 18 years. These estimates could serve to assist in establishing human resources that will be required to provide adequate care and protection for the vulnerable children and youth.

Under normal circumstances, children under the age of 18 are supposed to be under the care of their parents. The HIV and AIDS pandemic has brought about new dynamics and affected a number of children in this age group in a significant way. Hence the HIV and AIDS prevalence will be discussed in the next section to highlight the situation under which the SA children find themselves in terms of being parented.

3.4 PATTERNS OF HIV AND AIDS PREVALENCE IN SA

The NPC (2011:101) acknowledged that HIV and AIDS has been a powerful factor in SA's demographics over the past two decades. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2014:xxiv), it is estimated that 12.2% of the population (6.4 million persons) was HIV positive in 2012, which means 1.2 million more people are living with HIV than in 2008 (10.6% or 5.2 million). This number is projected to rise to 7.3 million by 2030 (NPC, 2011:101). The projected figures should assist sectors such as CYC to plan accordingly.

In Table 3.3 below, Stats SA (2013:4) illustrates the prevalence estimates and number of people living with HIV in SA from 2002 up until 2013.

Table 3.3: HIV prevalence estimates and number of people living with HIV, 2002 - 2013 (Stats SA, 2013:4).

Year	Prevalence				Incidence	HIV
	Women 15 - 49	Adult 15-49	Youth 15 - 24	Total population	Adults 15-49	population (millions)
2002	15.9	15.1	13.6	8.7	1.26	4.00
2003	16.0	15.1	12.8	8.9	1.25	4.10
2004	16.1	15.1	12.0	8.9	1.28	4.18
2005	16.2	15.1	11.4	9.0	1.32	4.25
2006	16.4	15.2	10.9	9.1	1.29	4.34
2007	16.5	15.3	10.5	9.2	1.21	4.46
2008	16.7	15.4	10.1	9.3	1.12	4.59
2009	16.9	15.5	9.7	9.5	1.03	4.74
2010	17.1	15.6	9.3	9.6	0.98	4.88
2011	17.2	15.7	9.0	9.8	0.95	5.01
2012	17.3	15.8	8.7	9.9	0.87	5.13
2013	17.4	15.9	8.5	10.0	0.85	5.26

Despite awareness campaigns and intensified treatment programmes, Table 3.3 above illustrates that the HIV prevalence has been systematically growing since 2002. Innovative measures, which include increasing the number of social services role players such as CYCWs, become more relevant. As CYCWs carry on with their daily CYC duties, they can also assist in monitoring people taking Anti-Retrovirals. The involvement of CYCWs in what is regarded as the domain of health professionals needs to be conceptualised and explained carefully, as it has the potential to cause conflict between CYCWs and other health professionals. The researcher would strongly argue that without more professionals getting involved in HIV treatment and monitoring initiatives, the impact of HIV and AIDS will remain severe.

Forward planning will ensure that the affected children can be better cared for should the HIV epidemic continue to grow. Systematic programmes and relevant human capital resources need to be developed so that they are ready to deal with the anticipated situation, whereby the majority of children will be on the receiving end. For example, if we know that rural informal area residents had a significantly higher HIV prevalence than did urban formal area residents (HSRC, 2014:xxv), it makes

sense that the CYC sector should double initiatives to identify, train and deploy CYCWs in these identified areas. According to Pillay and Twala (2008:19), CYCWs based in community-based projects such as the Isibindi Project provide, amongst others, psycho-social support to children using various activities such as memory boxes, grief work, identifying needs and personal feelings, and behaviour management. This is an illustration of how CYCWs have filled the gap in terms of service delivery in areas where they are desperately needed.

3.4.1 The impact of HIV and AIDS on children and youth

Table 3.4 presents an overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality in SA.

Table 3.4: Overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race and locality, South Africa, 2012 (HSRC, 2014: xxv).

Variable	N	%	95% CI
Male	12,896	9.9	8.9–11.0
Female	15,794	14.4	13.3–15.6
Age group (years)			
0–14	8,039	2.4	1.9–2.9
15–24	5,890	7.1	6.2–8.1
25–49	8,830	25.2	23.2–27.3
50+	5,986	7.6	6.5–8.8
15–49	14,720	18.8	17.5–20.3
Race			
Black African	18,629	15.0	14.0–15.9
White	1,733	0.3	0.1–0.8
Coloured	5,625	3.1	2.2–4.2
Indian or Asian	2,626	0.8	0.5–1.4
Locality type			
Urban formal	14,821	10.1	8.8–11.7
Urban informal	3,329	19.9	17.4–22.7
Rural informal	7,801	13.4	12.2–14.7
Rural formal	3,046	10.4	7.4–14.4
Total	28,997	12.2	11.4–13.1

It is evident from Table 3.4 above that the HIV prevalence does not affect adults only. Children between ages 0 - 14 are significantly affected as well. The encouraging pattern though is that with respect to children aged 2 - 14 years, prevalence remained the same in this age cohort between 2008 and 2012. According to the HSRC (2014: xxvi), the stabilisation of HIV prevalence in this age group is attributed to both reduced mother-to-child transmissions and increased

survival among HIV-infected children due to improved access to antiretroviral treatment. This means that efforts that have contributed to curbing the HIV prevalence need to be intensified. Jamieson (2013:1) holds the view that “the HIV and AIDS epidemic and other risk factors have led to a growing number of highly vulnerable children, not just in SA but across sub-Saharan Africa.” CYCWs can undoubtedly play a significant role in this respect. If CYCWs can be recognised as significant role players in partnership with other stakeholders, the HIV prevalence situation can be improved.

The HSRC (2014:xxv) reported that in the teenage population, “the estimated HIV prevalence among females was 8 times that of their male counterparts, suggesting that female teenagers aged 15–19 years are more likely than their male counterparts to have sex, not with their peers, but with older sex partners.” This report shines the spotlight on the very target population group that CYCWs work with. It means that there have to be programmes that target teenage girls to teach them about sexual matters. Teenage boys and older men should also be targeted as they too are contributors to this HIV prevalence (HSRC, 2014:xxvii). CYCWs offer a range of programmes and in partnership with community workers and youth workers, the scourge of HIV prevalence for the population group 15 – 19 years can be arrested. If these categories of professionals are roped in to collaborate with health care workers, there is no doubt that more progress can be made.

3.4.2 The impact of HIV and AIDS on women

In SA, it is mainly women who provide care in the private domain (family/household) (Patel, 2009:8). Of concern though is that according to the HSRC (2014:xxv), females had a significantly higher HIV prevalence than males. This pattern should serve as a warning that more and more children whose mothers and/or caregivers are infected will need additional care when these biological caregivers are not well enough to take care of them. The situation will be even direr should these biological caregivers eventually pass away. The availability of HIV prevalence statistics therefore gives no room for stakeholders to make excuses, for the time has long since arrived where most children are experiencing the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Although the SA Government has made significant inroads into curbing the HIV infection through its various campaigns and intensive treatment programmes (NPC, 2011:29), the number of infected people is still significantly high. What is of great concern is that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) South Africa (2013) reported that the HIV prevalence is twice as high amongst young women as amongst young men between the ages of 15 and 24 years. UNFPA (2013) further highlighted that females are four times more likely to have HIV than males of the same age. CYC programmes can undoubtedly play a role in not only educating young women about the HIV and AIDS risks, but also through engaging them in activities that provide them with opportunities to actively get involved in their communities. There is already evidence that a significantly greater proportion of females (34.7%) than males (25.7%) had accessed antiretroviral treatment (HSRC, 2014:xxvii). This illustrates that the affected female population groups are taking responsibility for improving their situation. They can however effectively continue to take care of themselves if they receive support from different role players such as CYCWs.

3.4.3 Young people's sexual activities

In terms of sexual debut before the age of 15 years, the HSRC (2014:xxxii) found that one tenth (10.7%) of respondents aged 15–24 years reported having had sex for the first time before the age of 15 years. The HSRC (2014:xxxii) goes further to outline that among the key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure are recreational drug users aged 15 years and older (32.0%) and high-risk (alcohol) drinkers aged 15 years and older (32.9%). Black African males aged 25 - 49 years (21.1%) and the disabled aged 15 years and older (15.9%) reported that they had more than one sexual partner in the past 12 months than the other two high-risk groups (HSRC, 2014:xxxii). All these behaviours illustrate the need for children and youth to be engaged in activities and programmes that will occupy them constructively. Whilst being taught about the dangers of early sexual activities, as well as that of having multiple sexual partners, children and youth need to be exposed to programmes that will make them see no need to engage in sex too early. Otherwise if sexual debut before the age of 15 years is not capped, young people will continue to be exposed to HIV and AIDS related infections.

People in this population group are at child bearing age and early sexual exposure might lead them to premature HIV and AIDS related deaths, leaving their children orphans far earlier than usual and compounding the situation. Those adolescent mothers who survive HIV and AIDS infections could also face other challenges such as early termination of schooling with its negative implications on employment (Elder, 1998:6).

3.4.4 The impact of HIV and AIDS on families

The HIV and AIDS pandemic has clearly affected the constitution of families. In particular, it has exposed many children to a variety of challenges, ranging from orphanhood to neglect, abuse and malnutrition, amongst others. Hence the NPC (2011:29) asserts that “there will still be a sizeable number of AIDS orphans and children requiring concerted support from the state and communities for decades to come.” The NPC assertion calls for a thorough plan to ensure that these orphans are adequately taken care of. This is the place where CYCWs can continue to play a significant role, as they have been doing in the past few decades. Thumbadoo (2013:27) argued that the fit of the CYCWs in the reality of South African children in communities requires exploration, understanding and exposure. The role of CYCWs becomes even more central under these circumstances to ensure that orphans are not severely exposed.

3.4.5 Orphanhood

According to the HSRC (2014:xxxix), the overall level of orphanhood in 2012 among those 0 - 18 years of age and younger was 16.9% (maternal, 4.4%; paternal, 9.3%; double, 3.2%). A significantly higher proportion of orphans were found among black Africans (18.9%) than among the other race groups. Similarly, a significantly higher proportion of orphans was observed among those aged 15 - 18 years (30.6%) than among all the other age groups (HSRC, 2014:xxxix). The HIV and AIDS pandemic has left many children without parents. According to the HSRC (2014:xxxix), there was a slight increase in the number of orphans from 2008 to 2012; from 3,032,000 in 2008 to 3,132,041 in 2012. Figure 3.2 below presents a picture of children aged 7 - 17 years by parental survival, which suggests that a significant number of children have lost either one or both parents.

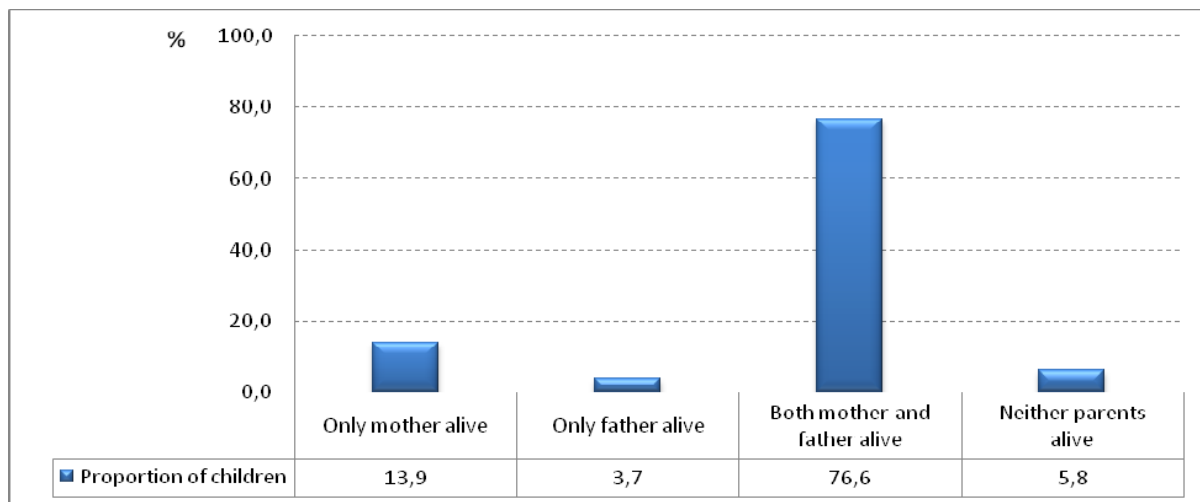


Figure 3.2: Children aged 7-17 years by parent survival (HSRC, 2014:xxxix).

From Figure 3.2 above, it is clear that when combining those children who have lost either mother, father or both parents, a total of 23.4% do not have the benefit of both parents being alive. According to Stats SA (2011:V), both parents were still alive for the majority of children (76,6%) aged 7 - 17 years, while for 5, 8% of them neither of their parents were still alive. According to Amato (2007), children who “grow up in stable, two-parent families have a higher standard of living, receive more effective parenting, and are subjected to fewer stressful events and circumstances.” The absence of one parent due to death is likely to leave a gap in the family system, stretching the surviving parent to the limit. In most cases, the care of children who only live with one parent get compromised as the surviving parent tries to attend to other life demands such as work; mainly trying to raise additional income in order to support the family. It is against this background that Amato (2007) noted that most children living with a single parent are economically disadvantaged.

The surviving parent tends to be away from the children for prolonged hours, leaving them under the care of some relatives and/or even strangers. As a result, most children who have only one parent alive may not receive adequate care and upbringing. The responsibility of bringing up children alone can be an enormous and daunting task. The situation can be worse if such children have either a disability or present behavioural problems. It is important that there are support systems to assist such parents. CYCWs are trained to step in to provide hands-on assistance in such situations. Whether children live with a single parent, both parents, or no

parents, more and more children will require the services of CYCWs given the demanding nature of adults' lives. Today's economic climate in SA is such that many are without work all together. Some parents are forced to do more than one job in order to provide for the needs of their families and this arrangement can prove to be challenging (Alboher, 2014). It must further be mentioned that even in cases where both parents are alive, many families are becoming more and more dysfunctional due to issues such as separation and divorce. As a result, these children will find it difficult to go through their life tasks as will be discussed in chapter 4.

3.4.5.1 Child-headed household

The situation of orphans who have lost both parents can be even direr than the situation of those who have lost only one parent. Such children may find themselves in the position of having to look after one another, making child-headed households even more prevalent. Philips (2011:174) defines a child-headed household as “a household, consisting of one or more members, in which the role of the principal caregiver has by necessity been taken over by a child under the age of 18 years.” It is difficult for children to take care of themselves without any adult support. Amongst the difficulties these children encounter is the trauma of having lost the stable adults in their lives (Thumbadoo, 2013:109). Hence section 137(2) of the Children's Amendment Act, 41 of 2007 makes provision that these children should be under the supervision of an adult. Supervision of child-headed households cannot happen in a haphazard manner. There has to be structured systems that will guarantee these vulnerable children will receive adequate and quality care that they deserve. It is against this background that innovative CYC models such as the Isibindi Project are critical, as they prioritise child-headed households (Pillay & Twala, 2008:11). Amongst the general responsibilities of CYCWs as adults is the responsibility to ensure that children attend school.

3.5 NON-ATTENDANCE OF SCHOOL

The age group 15 - 18 years can be more difficult to manage than younger age groups. As a result, this age group might at times require dedicated and trained people who can guide them into responsible adulthood. Without such guidance, this is the group that can be dangerous to themselves, as well as to their communities.

CYCWs are trained to work with this age group, even after they have transgressed and find themselves in trouble with the law. It must be mentioned that children in trouble with the law are even more difficult to work with and therefore need thoroughly trained personnel. One of the areas that has the potential to be affected when parents are stretched is schooling. In SA there are therefore a significant number of young people who are supposed to be attending school, but for various reasons are not.

In a well-functioning society, the majority of children are expected to attend school until a certain age. Whilst attending school, one would expect those children's needs to be taken care of. The one area that is guaranteed, at least to a large extent, is the area of protection and safety whilst at school. But in SA, children are legally obliged to attend basic compulsory education up to the age of 15 (Patel, 2009:14). The NPC (2011:367) confirmed that there is a high dropout rate from school from age 15. To demonstrate the non-school attendance patterns, Figure 3.3 below captures the characteristics of children aged 7 - 17 years who are not attending school.

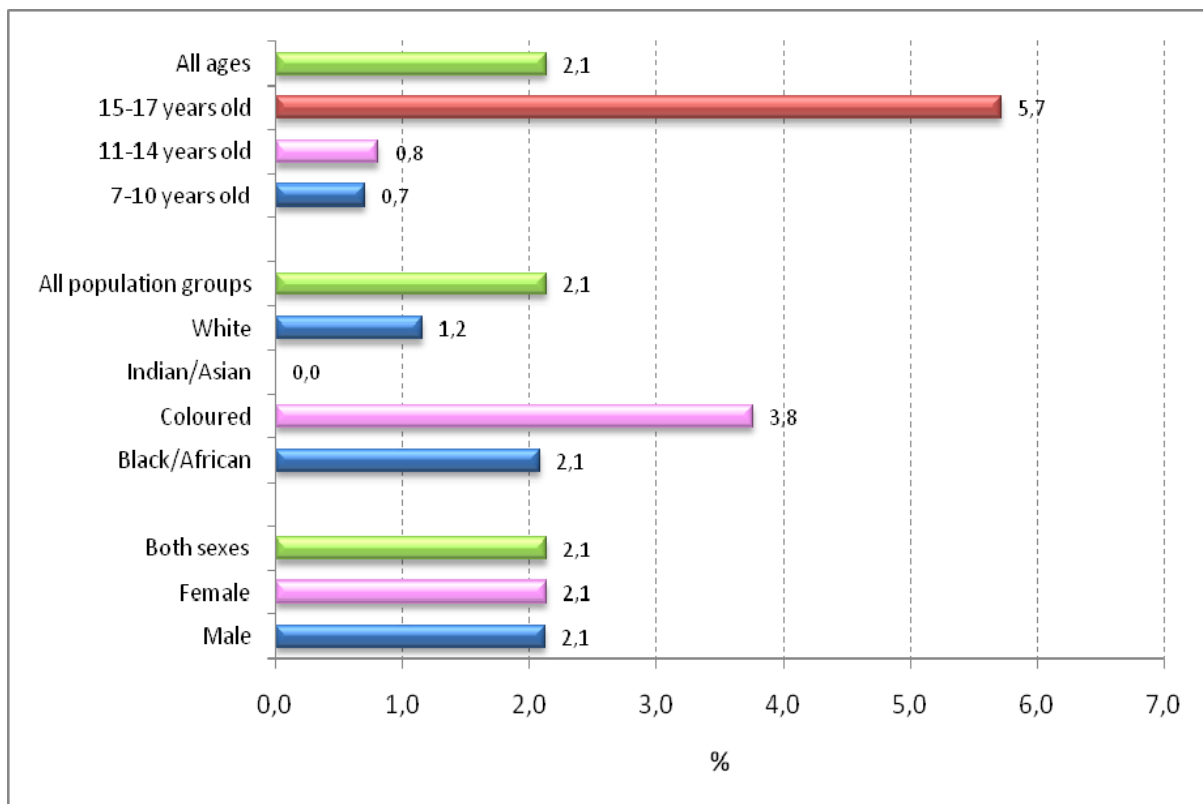


Figure 3.3: Characteristics of children aged 7–17 years not attending school (Stats SA, 2011: x).

Stats SA (2011:x) presented a picture in Figure 3.3 above that shows an equal distribution between boys and girls not attending school (2,1%). A larger proportion of coloured children (3,8%) and black children (2,1%) were not attending school compared to white (1,2%) and Indian children (less than 0,1%). School non-attendance was also higher among children between the ages of 15 and 17 years (5,7%), compared to the younger children. Of the 11 million children in Q3:2010, approximately 10,8 million (97,9%) were attending school, while 235 000 (2,1%) were not attending school in SA.

One can deduce that those children who are not attending school are the ones that are most 'at risk'. 'At risk' refers to "youth who are at risk of being failed by one or more adults or adult-driven system or institution" (Tumbleson, 2001). Out-of school children can present a serious problem in that they do not always have specific, systematic and readily available programmes. As a result, a lot of them find themselves idling most of the time. They therefore get tempted to get involved in other undesirable activities. Although many young people may drop out of school with the intention of securing employment and earning an income, the reality is that few of them manage to secure employment. It is at this point of being unable to secure employment that they may end up falling prey to unscrupulous adults who might recruit them into other dangerous businesses such as gangsterism, drug dealing and prostitution. Children and youth tend to have immature judgment and therefore can be easily influenced. According to the NPC (2011:399), in SA, the youth are often the main victims and perpetrators of crime. Hence the Child Justice Act of 2008 advocates for a system to ensure that the individual needs and circumstances of children in conflict with the law are assessed (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2010:10).

To look into the specific areas affecting youth, the National Youth Commission (NYC) also drafted a National Youth Policy 2009–2014 as an essential planning tool guiding the country on its approach to youth development (NYC, 2009:1). The goal of National Youth Policy 2009-2014 is to:

...intentionally enhance the capacities of young people through addressing their needs, promoting positive outcomes, and providing integrated

coordinated package of services, opportunities, choices, relationship and support necessary for holistic development of all young people particularly those outside the social, political and economic mainstream.

The NYC (2009:16) further highlights that the youth are exposed to high risk behaviours such as rape and exploitation. It therefore becomes necessary for CYCWs and Youth Workers to collaborate and come up with youth programmes that assist this category of their target population, especially as they drop out of or graduate from formal schooling. Such programmes must be run by trained personnel if they are to make an impact. The types of programmes to be offered need to be developmental and, in some instances, therapeutic. This is the area that trained CYCWs excel in. The NPC (2011:399) recommended alcohol- and substance abuse as well as anger-management programmes for youth at an early stage in schools. These programmes will serve as part of diversion programmes for youth at risk of offending. The majority of CYCWs and YWs already cover these topics in some of their programmes. Given the vulnerability of the age groups below 18 years, there is a definite need for purposeful programmes, otherwise these children and youth can easily become bored and resign from such programmes.

CYCWs are trained to offer developmental programmes and are therefore better positioned to deal with a significant number of out-of school children. Amongst their responsibilities, CYCWs establish reasons for some of these youth to be out of school, then they “visit schools to negotiate school fee exemptions for children and assist with school enrolment” (Thurman, Yu & Taylor, 2009:13). In that way, these workers assist children and youth to break from the cycle of poverty and assist them to position themselves for better employment opportunities so that they can ultimately contribute meaningfully to the country’s economy. Without a solid educational foundation, poverty levels will rise whilst employment and economy levels decline.

Outlining the relationship between poverty and education, Stats SA (2014:30) reported that more than three-quarters (78,5%) of adults with no formal schooling were poor in 2006, as were seven out of every ten (70,5%) adults with some primary school education. These statistics show how difficult it will be for the majority of children and youth who drop out of school to break out of their poverty cycles. The

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2009:15) also presented figures showing that over 50% of young people who have less than matric are unemployed. The DHET (2009:15) however noted that possessing a matriculation certificate does not result in dramatically improved labour market outcomes, as just fewer than 50% of 20 to 24 year olds with matric are unemployed. It still makes sense that those who have completed formal schooling stand a better chance of securing employment. Those youth who are not necessarily poverty stricken by the time they drop out of school can be certain that their poverty level might increase as they grow older and are forced to fend for themselves. In the next section, the discussion will shift onto the area of poverty, employment and the economy of SA.

3.6 POVERTY, ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

In the previous section, the discussion touched on the link between non-formal schooling, poverty and employment. It is important that these areas be discussed in detail with the view of identifying the contribution that the CYC sector can make. One of the social ills that SA is still grappling with is a high level of poverty. It is worth pointing out that the effects of poverty can be felt at different levels, i.e. individual level and population level. Highlighting patterns of poverty at individual level, Stats SA (2014:26) reported that in 2006, more than half (57,2%) of the SA population were living in poverty. There was a decline by 2011 whereby less than half (45,5%) of all South Africans were living below the poverty line. Although the decline in poverty is commendable, the concern is that children and youth remain the most affected. According to Stats SA, (2014:26), in 2006 six out of every ten (59,7%) females were living in poverty, as were 54,6% of males, suggesting that children and youth may have been indirectly affected. It is however encouraging to notice that by 2011, the level of poverty had dropped to 47,1% for females and to 43,8% for males (Stats SA, 2014:26). Given that the majority of caregivers (parents) are female, this picture is still worrying. Therefore creative ways need to be found to ensure that this skewed picture changes for the benefit of the children. One such initiative could be to recruit as many people as possible into various types of income generating initiatives, such as CYC programmes.

Another area of significance is poverty and its impact on different population groups. According to Stats SA (2014:27), there are significant differences in poverty levels between the population groups in South Africa. In terms of poverty share, more than nine out of ten (94,2%) poor people in SA were black Africans in 2011. This proportion remained relatively unchanged in 2009 (66,9%), before declining to 54% in 2011 – this reflects a 19% decrease in the level of poverty amongst black Africans from 2006 to 2011. In 2006, two-fifths (41,6%) of coloureds were found to be poor, as were one in eight (13%) Indians/Asians, compared to 0,6% whites (Stats SA, 2014:27). From the statistics presented here, the residual effects of segregation laws are still evident. Poverty patterns are consistent even when it comes to different age groups.

3.6.1 Poverty and age

According to Stats SA (2014:29), in 2011 children constituted 37,6% of the total population and yet almost half (46%) of all poor people in South Africa were children. This presents a serious concern in a democratic country where Section 27 of the Constitution guarantees citizens a number of rights, including sufficient food and water. Levels of poverty were also very high amongst the youth aged 18 to 24. The majority (50,7%) of these population groups were still living in poverty in 2011. CYCWs work with children up to the age of 18 years and Youth Workers work with young people falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years (NYC, 2009:12). Given that approximately six-tenths (61,3%) of all poor people are under the age of 25 (Stats SA, 2014:29), desperate measures are needed for social service professionals such as Community Development Workers, CYCWs, Social Workers and Youth Workers to collaborate and ensure that combined efforts are put in place to assist these vulnerable groups to survive the adversities of poverty. Collaboration between these professionals will ensure that vulnerable young people (under 18 years) who have received the services of CYCWs continue to receive the services of Youth Workers (beyond 18 years) if they so desire. Without systematic collaborations young people who benefited from CYC services are likely to graduate into poverty. If properly recognised, youth development, community development and CYC could play an integral part in addressing the challenges of South Africa's development (NYC, 2009:7) relating to children and youth matters. These are some of the social service professions whose roles have long been marginalised when it

comes to broader developmental agendas. These professionals can play significant roles across different provinces, as poverty seems to have rooted itself more in some provinces than in others.

To eliminate poverty, SA has to raise employment levels as outlined in the NPD document. This can happen only if the economy grows faster and in ways that draw in the historically disadvantaged (NPC, 2011:110). Youth therefore have to be included in these initiatives. Their inclusion can only start when they are being provided with education and skills, and receiving assistance in finding work that is stimulating and through which they can fulfil their aspirations (NPC, 2011:28). It means initiatives to rope in youth to consider employment in the CYC sector should also be intensified.

3.6.2 Poverty at provincial level

Whilst it is clear that the majority of young people live in poverty, it will assist to identify the provinces within which poor people are located so that resources can be allocated accordingly. Stats SA (2014:32) presented a picture that in 2006, the majority of the population in seven out of the nine provinces in South Africa was living below the upper-bound poverty line. In 2011, more than a quarter (26,3%) of all poor people lived in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by the Eastern Cape (18,3%) and Limpopo (16,1%) (Stats SA, 2014:32). The highest poverty levels were found in Limpopo, where three-quarters (74,4%) of all residents were poor, followed closely by the Eastern Cape (69,5%) and KwaZulu-Natal (69,1%). The poor were only in the minority in two provinces, namely the Western Cape (36,9%) and Gauteng (32,4%) (Stats SA, 2014:31). This grim picture explains why people migrate to these two provinces in numbers. The CYC sector has taken a proactive role by identifying, training and deploying CYCWs to deal with children's issues in all provinces. Projects such as the Isibindi Project have consciously identified and targeted HIV and AIDS affected rural areas (Pillay & Twala, 2008:6), particularly where CYC services were non-existent in the past. In the process, this project had the liberty to be innovative and become more responsive to local needs, especially where there are gaps in government service delivery (Patel, 2009:32).

Stats SA (2014:31) further outlines that in 2011, more than two-thirds (68,8%) of rural dwellers were still living in poverty as compared to less than a third (30,9%) of residents in urban areas. From these statistics, it can be deduced that CYCWs based in poor rural provinces might be struggling with a range of poverty related issues. Some of these issues may be affecting the children and families that they work with. In some instances, CYCWs themselves may be bearing the brunt of poverty.

The poverty situation in SA is not a hopeless situation. According to Stats SA (2014:47), the proportion of households living in poverty has declined substantially from 42,2% in 2006 to 32,9% in 2011. The North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo are the only provinces that have seen an increase in their share of poor households from 2006 to 2011 (Stats SA, 2014:47). This means that children in those provinces are more likely to remain vulnerable than their counterparts from the other six provinces. As a response, the CYC sector needs to channel even more of their resources towards those provinces. As with everything else, the availability of resources depends on how the economy is doing. If the economy is performing poorly sectors such as CYC, which relies heavily on donor funding, will be restricted to fewer areas, leaving children from deserving provinces even more vulnerable. In the next section, a brief picture of SA's economy will be presented.

3.6.3 The economy

The economy is the engine of any country. Any noble social service programmes can be sustained only if the economy is thriving. Although SA's economy has improved significantly since 1994, there are areas that can still be improved. The NPC (2011:25) made a call that SA must find ways to urgently reduce alarming levels of youth unemployment and to provide young people with broader opportunities. The Isibindi Project is a typical example whereby predominantly unemployed young and female people are given an opportunity to receive training and earn an income whilst acquiring experience that will enable them to earn better salaries in future. By employing and training local people, Pillay and Twala (2008:6) argue that the Isibindi Project, as a community-based organisation, demonstrated that it has the best interests of the community at heart. This model proved itself to not only be efficient and effective in terms of providing services to vulnerable children

in impoverished communities, but also in making a difference in terms of tackling the high level of unemployment. According to Gouws (2012:96), “welfare provisioning is a core ingredient of equality and to a large extent determines the quality of poor women’s citizenship.” Similar initiatives that might be doing a good job need to be identified and supported as they contribute towards denting the levels of unemployment.

3.6.4 The level of unemployment

A lot of societal issues that SA is grappling with can be attributed to the apartheid legacy. The DHET (2009:15) noted that unequal educational opportunities and unequal employment opportunities contributed to the situation where the racial profiles of employment in SA still remain skewed. Unemployment is one of the main contributing factors of societal problems. When people are unemployed, they can become desperate and hungry, and therefore likely to revert to undesired actions. Given that a significantly higher burden of unemployment is borne by women and the youth in the labour market (DHET, 2009:15), some women and young people may resort to undesirable means of securing some kind of financial assistance. In the process, child neglect can also come as a result of unemployed parents not being able to provide for their children. All these issues need to be identified and tackled through adequate programmes. According to the DHET (2009:15), the problem of unemployment is particularly notable for the 20 to 24 year old age group. This age group comes immediately after the target age group serviced by CYCWs. Therefore, if a solid foundation can be laid before the age of 20 years, then the subsequent young adult stage can become better for the majority of people.

As already mentioned earlier in section 3.3.4 of this chapter, CYCWs also have a keen interest in young people’s schooling. By helping children to complete their schooling, CYCWs would be playing a significant role in ensuring that these young people’s employment prospects remain enhanced. The DHET (2009:15) highlights that while the unemployment figures for 20 to 24 year olds who have a diploma and degree are still high, they are considerably better than the rates for those whose highest qualification is matric or less. CYCWs can play a role in encouraging young people to focus on completing their formal schooling. At the same time, CYCWs themselves should aim to equip themselves by obtaining Further Education and

Training (FET) qualifications, diplomas and degrees in their chosen CYC field. In so doing, they will actively be contributing to the broader national agenda of ensuring that more people get sustainably employed.

It is within the context of these socio-economic challenges in SA that the complex roles of CYCWs need to be understood and their challenges highlighted. CYC should however not be viewed through a narrow lens within the social service professions. Instead, its contribution should be viewed within the broader socio-economic context in SA. As a result of being fully aware of the socio-economic challenges that the majority of people in SA still face, the Government came up with a variety of intervention strategies to try and minimise the effects of social ills such as poverty and unemployment. In the next section some of the specific intervention strategies will be discussed.

3.7 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

According to the DHET (2009:6-7), the peaceful transition to democracy was followed by rapid gains in key areas of development, including: a favourable trajectory of economic growth; dramatic improvements in the delivery of social services such as water and sanitation, housing and electricity; a dramatic increase in social grants; and a justifiable Bill of Rights. Despite the above-mentioned gains, as well as gains in many other areas that ensured deracialising public policy and delivery (Patel, 2009:14), many significant challenges still remain. According to the DHET (2009:6-7), some of the most intractable and urgent challenges that remain include: poverty; income inequality; threats to social cohesion; on-going demographic (race, gender, age, class and geographic) inequities; and the impact of globalisation.

All these challenges can truly be tackled if attention and support is given to all sectors to ensure that they perform to the maximum within their mandated areas. The social services sector is also a key role player in these endeavours and needs to be supported accordingly. The DHET (2009:7) asserted that “it is critical to mobilise the collective efforts to make credible interventions that will accelerate progress towards achieving SA’s development goals.” The NPC (2011:24) asserted that SA’s

principal challenge is to roll back poverty and inequality. As the socio economic challenges facing SA have been identified, various interventions to deal with such challenges continue to be explored and expanded. Amongst those being expanded are social protection programmes.

3.7.1 Social protection

The history of SA and the persistence of residual prejudices and inequalities compelled all the citizens to be vigilant on issues related to values, good citizenship and an explicit commitment to wider development objectives (DHET, 2009:10). The impact of past inequities is still prevalent in many areas such as education, health, access to basic services such as water and sanitation, and welfare provision amongst others. To address the remnants of the apartheid policies, the democratic Government adopted an integrated vision of social policy to promote human development, economic inclusion and social stability (NPC, 2011:356). One such programme is social protection. The five functions of social protection are as follows:

- **Protective** – Measures are introduced to save lives and reduce levels of deprivation.
- **Preventive** – Acts as an economic stabiliser that seeks to help people avoid falling into deeper poverty and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, crop failure, accidents and illness.
- **Promotive** – Aims to enhance the capabilities of individuals, communities and institutions to participate in all spheres of activity.
- **Transformative** – Tackles inequities and vulnerabilities through changes in policies, laws, budgetary allocations and redistributive measures.
- **Developmental and generative** – Increases consumption patterns of the poor, promoting local economic development and enabling poor people to access economic and social opportunities.

According to the NPC (2011:355), the five functions mentioned above reflect a conceptual approach to social protection that is appropriate for countries in Africa and responds to issues of chronic poverty, unemployment, risk and vulnerability. The measures are designed to lift recipients out of poverty, rather than providing passive

protection against contingencies and risk, and are a means to enable the most basic needs to be met and provide relief during crisis situations (NPC, 2011:355). CYC by its nature deals with children, young people and families who are either in crisis or have the potential to get into crisis. This field therefore is well positioned to play a key role in addressing chronic poverty and supporting the poor to develop the capacity to address the environmental, economic and social risks and causes of poverty (NPC, 2011:358). According to Patel (2009:14), social security and welfare services are intended to provide social protection for children, youth and families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with chronic illnesses, among others. One of the specific programmes that addresses the direct needs of vulnerable people is social security grants.

3.7.2 Social security grants

Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, states that all South Africans “have the right to social security if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants.” Section 27(2) goes further to state that “the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of access to social security and social assistance.” The DSD renders services through the three broad programmes; namely Social Security, Social Welfare and Community Development (DSD, 2005:05). One of the initiatives that the post-1994 Government came up with was the formation of an agency called the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). This agency is situated within the Department of Social Development with the main focus being to distribute a range of social grants to a variety of beneficiaries. The DSD expanded the existing social grants to the majority of people who did not qualify for such grants prior to 1994. The DSD further introduced and rolled out other forms of social grants, such as the Child Support Grant (Patel, 2009:14).

SASSA (2013) outlines the fact sheet in Table 3.5 below that provides a statistical summary of social grants as at 31 January 2013 in the nine provinces of SA which are: Eastern Cape (EC), Free State (FS), Gauteng (GP), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Limpopo (LP), Mpumalanga (MP), North West (NW), Northern Cape (NC) and Western Cape (WC). Social grants refer to the Old Age Grant (OAG), War Veteran’s

Grant (WVG), Disability Grant (DG), Grant in Aid (GIA), Child Support Grant (CSG), Foster Child Grant (FCG) and Care Dependency Grant (CDG).

Table 3.5: Total number of social grants by grant type and region as at 31 January 2013 (SASSA, 2013).

Province	Grant type							Total
	OAG	WVG	DG	GIA	CDG	FCG	CSG	
EC	505,423	76	185,328	9,063	18,440	111,387	1,850,667	2,680,384
FS	170,256	8	87,158	1,151	5,816	38,697	634,092	937,178
GP	418,859	149	123,242	1,565	15,664	56,970	1,567,206	2,183,655
KZN	587,704	86	315,387	28,871	36,058	133,249	2,767,011	3,868,366
LP	392,450	49	88,269	10,735	11,718	54,684	1,580,671	2,138,576
MP	225,577	28	81,199	2,761	8,549	33,956	1,051,418	1,403,488
NW	215,742	18	86,465	3,987	8,326	40,503	749,821	1,104,862
NC	74,276	17	48,681	4,166	4,437	13,480	275,538	420,595
WC	258,759	163	153,115	9,451	10,727	27,853	857,783	1,317,851
Total	2,849,046	594	1,168,844	71,750	119,735	510,779	11,334,207	16,054,955

From Table 3.5 above, it is clear that a significant number of people benefit from different social grants. Even more encouraging is the fact that grants such as FCG and CSG are meant specifically to benefit children and youth. What is disheartening though is that despite the availability of these grants, some people continue to live in abject poverty as a result of being unable to access the relevant grants. According to the NPC (2011:359), approximately 2.1 million eligible children are not receiving the child support grant. Reasons may vary from not having knowledge about the existence of these grants to not having the necessary documentation that will enable them to access these grants. The NPC (2011:359) conceded that various elements of the social protection system are not operating seamlessly.

Stats SA (2014:29) has profiled the significant increase in social grants over the last decade. SASSA (2013) confirmed that there was an increase from 16,054,955 in October 2012 to 16,079,635 in January 2013. While these grants have undoubtedly contributed to decreasing levels of poverty, Stats SA (2014:29) raised a relevant question as to whether social grants, particularly in the case of child support grants, are reaching their intended targets. Their question was arguably informed by the high levels of poverty amongst children despite the existence of various social grants. This is where CYCWs stepped in to play a significant role. Whilst carrying out their duties, CYCWs find themselves having to inform some people about these available grants (Thurman et al., 2009:13) and assisting some to obtain the necessary documentation to access the relevant grants. In some cases, they physically take children and adults to relevant offices for documents and grant application processes as attested by Thumbadoo (2011:194). This means that CYCWs find themselves filling the most significant gap in ensuring that children, youth and families do not live in abject poverty while there is state assistance available. Despite the expansion of social grants, the SA Government deemed it necessary to come up with a holistic National Development Plan (NDP) that seeks to tackle the persisting socio-economic issues.

3.7.3 The National Development Plan

In 2011, the President of SA, Jacob Zuma, appointed a National Planning Commission (NPC) after a realisation that 17 years into democracy, SA remained a highly unequal society where too many people live in poverty and with too few work opportunities. This commission was tasked with coming up with mechanisms that would stimulate economic activities. The NPC came up with a document called the National Development Plan 2030. The aim of this plan was to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (NPC, 2012:24). This plan envisioned a SA “where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work” (NPC, 2011:24). The NPC conceded that to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, the economy must grow faster and in ways that benefit all South Africans (NPC, 2011:24). It further highlighted that young people in particular deserve better educational and economic opportunities, and focused efforts are required to eliminate gender inequality (NPC, 2011:24).

According to the NPC (2011:61), the following are objectives of the NDP in terms of economy and employment:

- The unemployment rate should fall from 24.9% in June 2012, to 14% by 2020 and to 6% by 2030. This requires an additional 11 million jobs.
- Total employment should rise from 13 million to 24 million.
- The proportion of adults working should increase from 41% to 61%.
- The proportion of adults in rural areas working should rise from 29% to 40%.
- The labour force participation rate should rise from 54% to 65%.

World over, the majority of CYCWs are female. The situation is the same in SA whereby the majority of professionals, paraprofessionals and informal community carers and volunteers in the NPO sector are women engaged in either paid or unpaid work (Patel, 2009:7). According to Winfield (2007), men are being discouraged to pursue careers in the CYC field due to gender stereotypes. Recognising the field of CYC in itself will indirectly be contributing to the NDP in terms of addressing gender inequities. Gouws (2012:96), however, cautioned that substantive equality is hard to achieve in the absence of the extension of the socio-economic rights.

According to the DSD (2005:9), the social services sector has adopted a developmental approach to service delivery, integrating social interventions with economic development. Therefore as the majority of CYCWs feel empowered and advance economically, so will the objectives of the NDP be realised. The NPC (2011:27) identified the following three priorities that will lead to the achievement of the NDP's objectives: raising employment through faster economic growth; improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation; and building the capability of the state to play a developmental, transformative role.

The CYC sector is currently playing an active role by affording some people some form of employment. People who otherwise still would be unemployed get trained and placed to provide CYC services within their communities. These include people who were previously unemployed, but identified the role they can play in their respective communities to serve children and families in need. The idea that

business, labour, communities and government need to work together (NPC, 2011:27) is already put into action through the CYC programmes in all the provinces. However, the researcher senses that the CYC initiatives that are introduced throughout the provinces are not adequately supported to ensure long-term sustainability. By not supporting these initiatives, SA will be discouraging its citizens from being direct participants in their own development as purported by the NDP (NPC, 2011:37). The NPC (2011:37) acknowledges that to prevent the practice of discouraging citizens from taking initiatives, the state must actively support and incentivise citizen engagement, and citizens should:

- actively seek opportunities for advancement, learning, experience and opportunity; and
- work together with others in the community to advance development, resolve problems and raise the concerns of the voiceless and marginalised.

The above two suggestions made by the NPC are in line with the CYC sector initiatives. If indeed the economy needs to create jobs for unemployed South Africans, many of whom are young and low-skilled, while upgrading skills and knowledge for a different economy in future (NPC, 2011:40), the CYC sector should be strengthened as it plays a role in this regard. The NDP takes gender – along with race and geographic location – into account, proposing a range of measures to advance women's equality and recommends the following:

- Public employment should be expanded to provide work for the unemployed, with a specific focus on youth and women. The transformation of the economy should involve the active participation and empowerment of women.
- The role of women as leaders in all sectors of society should be actively supported.

One of the key targets of the NDP is to ensure that by 2030, people living in SA should feel safe and have no fear of crime. Women, children and vulnerable groups in particular should feel protected (NPC, 2011:53). One way of ensuring their protection is through involving them in meaningful activities such as employment. In order for young people and women to be included in terms of gainful employment, they must also be skilled in different areas of their choice. The National Skills

Development Strategy (NSDS) was introduced to address the skills shortage that existed in a number of occupations and economic sectors within SA (DHET, 2009:8). Of importance is that this programme was also meant to provide the majority of people with the relevant skills in their chosen areas of interest in line with the Skills Development Act of 1998.

All these objectives can be achieved if a holistic approach is adopted, including expanding the initiatives that are already underway with regards to the care of vulnerable children. The protection of children can be one of the strategic initiatives of stimulating economic growth and tackling poverty. If more people are employed in the CYC sector, they will address the social ills whilst earning income for themselves and contributing to the economy. The NDP further sought to give a subsidy to the placement sector to identify, prepare and place matric graduates into jobs (NPC, 2011:61). The CYC sector is already on the forefront in terms of identifying, training and placing suitable adults who have shown interest in caring for vulnerable children and youth within their own communities. It would therefore be beneficial if the Government could adequately subsidise those initiatives that are already underway.

3.7.4 Skills Development Amendment Act 31 of 2003

Amongst the policies introduced in SA post-1994 democratic dispensation is the Skills Development Amendment Act 31 of 2003. Section 2(1) outlines some of the purposes of this Act as: (a) to develop the skills of the South African workforce – (i) to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility; (iv) to improve the delivery of social services; and (e) to improve the employment prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education. The proposed career pathing for CYCWs (Jamieson, 2013:4) is in line with the objectives of the Skills Development Amendment Act 31 of 2003 in that the field of CYC offers a range of people who are interested in the field an opportunity to be trained in order to become gainfully employed. In order to achieve the objectives of the Skills Development Act, the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was devised.

3.7.4.1 The National Skills Development Strategy

The NSDS is the overarching strategic guide for skills development and provides direction to sector skills planning and implementation in the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). It provides a framework for the skills development levy resource utilisation of these institutions, as well the National Skills Fund, and sets out the linkages with and responsibilities of other education and training stakeholders (DHET, 2011:8).

According to Dr BE Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the third National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) was introduced, following the integration of higher and further education and skills development into a single Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2011:3). NSDS III sought to encourage and actively support the integration of workplace training with theoretical learning, and to facilitate the journey individuals make from school, college or university, or even from periods of unemployment, to sustained employment and in work progression (DHET, 2011:5). A closer inspection of Jamieson's (2013:4) recommended career pathing for CYCWs articulates directly to the NSD III, which seeks to respond to the pressing challenges that are impacting on the ability of SA's economy to expand and provide increased employment opportunities (DHET, 2011:5).

Some of the pillars of the NSD III incentives for training and skills development capacity in the cooperative and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sectors include community and worker education initiatives, which contribute to the effective training of youth and adults (DHET, 2011:9). An argument for the support and recognition of the CYC sector becomes even stronger. If a CYC sector has to make an impact, it has to be recognised by other sectors. One of the strategies introduced to ensure the recognition of different sectors as well as productivity is the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRDSSA).

3.7.5 Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRDSSA)

According to the DHET (2009:7), the first comprehensive countrywide Human Resources Development (HRD) strategy adopted by the cabinet was launched in 2001, while the new one was formulated in 2009. The primary goal of the HRDSSA

is to contribute to human development (DHET, 2009:10). The HRDSSA is explicitly intended to contribute to the attainment of the following national goals:

- to urgently and substantively reduce the scourges of poverty and unemployment in SA;
- to promote justice and social cohesion through improved equity in the provision and outcomes of education and skills development programmes; and
- to substantively improve national economic growth and development through improved competitiveness of the South African economy (DHET, 2009:18).

Within the SA context, HRD refers to formal and explicit activities that will enhance the ability of all individuals to reach their full potential. By enhancing the skills, knowledge and abilities of individuals, HRD serves to improve the productivity of people in their areas of work – whether these are in formal or informal settings. Increased productivity and improvements to the skills base in a country supports economic development, as well as social development (DHET, 2009:7). CYCWs can undoubtedly benefit from these developments as they fall within the parameters of social development. The central national concern of the HRDSSA is to accelerate development so that there is a match between supply and demand for human resources. As there are a huge number of children living in poverty in SA it renders them vulnerable in many respects, leading to a huge demand to develop the human resources that will match the needs of these children.

HRD on a national scale embraces the work of a number of line departments within all spheres of government, public entities, NGOs and a multitude of private enterprises. As almost the entire population is the target of HRD (DHET, 2009:12), CYCWs are also included in these broader initiatives. The CYC sector has already ensured that CYCWs are included in these initiatives. This study revealed the challenges and experiences of CYCWs in the context of these laudable national strategies that are meant to give the SA population opportunities to improve themselves whilst addressing the issues facing the country.

The developers of the HRDSSA recommended the need for various sectors to reflect the priorities of the HRDSSA through the lens of their local and sectoral conditions

(DHET, 2009:22). The NPC (2011:378) acknowledged that SA has an inadequate supply of social service professionals such as social workers, community development workers, and child and youth care workers. The estimated number of qualified social workers registered with the SACSSP was put at 15 000. Hence the NPC (2011:378) estimated that the country requires close to 55 000 social service professionals to respond to SA's social welfare needs. In acknowledgement of the need to address the skills deficit in the social welfare sector, the NPC (2011:378) recommended that the country needs to increase the supply of four categories of social service professionals to respond to the demand for appropriate basic social welfare services. These categories are social workers, auxiliary or assistant social workers, community development workers, and child and youth care workers. It would be inadequate to simply introduce and train these groups of professionals without providing the framework within which they must work. In acknowledgement of this situation, the DSD introduced the Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) in 2005.

3.7.6 The Integrated Service Delivery Model

The ISDM was introduced by the DSD to ensure efficient and coordinated service delivery within the envisaged developmental social services sector. Developmental social welfare services are classified in terms of levels of intervention which are divided into prevention; early intervention; statutory, residential and alternative care; and reconstruction and aftercare services (DSD, 2005:6). Although the continuum of social services provision is sound, many beneficiaries continue not to receive the earmarked services due to various factors, amongst which are inadequate numbers of social service practitioners to deal with high caseloads and deepening poverty (DSD, 2005:11). According to the DSD (2005:54), professional personnel who are required within the social services sector include: SWs, YWs, CDWs, CYCWs and probation officers. There is now an urgency to formally recognise these professionals in order to achieve the objectives of the developmental social welfare services. The above-mentioned professionals are recognised by the DSD to be reasonably capable of providing quality services at different levels. Given the varied needs of the recipients of social services, the following assistant personnel were also acknowledged: social auxiliary workers, assistant probation officers, auxiliary child and youth care workers, Early Childhood Development caregivers, home and

community-based caregivers, and sign language interpreters (DSD, 2005:54-55). It is against this background that Allsopp and Mahery (2010:26) advocated for an inclusive approach to all established, emerging and aspirant social service groupings.

The recognition of various professionals and assistants through the ISDM can be attributed to the DSD's acknowledgement that developmental services are the collective responsibility of various role players, including government entities, NGOs and the private sector (DSD, 2005:7). It therefore becomes important that each of the role players identified here understand their role as well as their scope in order to avoid undue challenges.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the legislative frameworks within which the SA population exists have been discussed. Throughout this chapter, it became evident that much as progress has been made in some areas, social ills still persist and therefore a lot still needs to be done in order to address the plight of the majority of the SA population. Categories such as black African people, children and youth, women, people with disabilities, and people from rural areas still clearly bear the brunt of a myriad of social ills. As the primary target groups of the DSD are the poor and vulnerable sectors of the community, people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, people with disabilities, and those who have other special needs (DSD, 2005:43), it makes sense that efforts to protect these categories need to be intensified.

Intervention strategies that have been put in place to mitigate the socio-economic challenges have also been discussed. The contribution of the CYC sector in tackling the socio-economic challenges in line with the various national strategies has also been presented. CYC as a field clearly has a significant role to play in the endeavours to provide the SA population a dignified life as enshrined by the Constitution. It is worth noting that although CYCWs are cited as being critical in addressing the socio-economic issues facing SA, this does not mean that they themselves are immune to these socio-economic challenges. Hence this study focused on the socio-economic challenges experienced by this category of social

service professionals. If all emerging social service professions such as CYC are supported to the maximum, the social ills affecting children and youth in particular can indeed be tackled. Given the complex nature of the social problems in SA (DSD, 2005:6), it makes sense that stakeholders should be increased and acknowledged in order for them to confidently play a significant role. Service integration across social service clusters to facilitate this integration of development efforts is critical. In the next chapter, the focus will be on the field of CYC, its brief history, the role of CYCWs as well as children and youth who are the recipients of CYCWs' services. The professional status of the field of CYC will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW: CHILD AND YOUTH CARE WORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this literature review chapter, the researcher will focus on historic as well as recent literature pertaining to the field of CYC. The inclusion of literature that may seem outdated is done with the sole purpose of trying to illustrate the consistency of thoughts from past decades up to the present. It is important that the work of the pioneers of the CYC field be included in this study. CYC is an emerging profession, therefore the seemingly outdated literature will assist to highlight those issues that have persisted in the past and in some cases still remain relevant to date. It is the researcher's intention to illustrate the struggles as well as the developments that have taken place in the field of CYC over the years. The researcher will also use literature from other countries extensively to bring the parallels of the CYC developments into perspective. Given that the CYC field is more developed in some countries than others, the on-going dialogue regarding the nature of CYC work, which includes various attempts made to explicate and legitimise the field's existence and activities (White, 2007:228), will also be included.

This chapter focuses on the following areas: historical background of CYC, CYC practice, the role of CYCWs, and recipients of CYC services. Furthermore, contexts and settings within which CYC is being practised will also be discussed, and areas of challenges faced by CYCWs will be highlighted.

4.2 Historical background of Child and Youth Care

Smith's (2009:1) view on the importance of an understanding of wider macro-systemic influences is vital. Therefore historical, cultural, political and professional contexts should always be borne in mind (Smith, 2009:1) when discussing the background of a field such as CYC. The CYC field has been in existence for many decades and has taken different forms. According to Gharabaghi and Krueger (2010:32), in the US and Canada, the professionalisation of the field started in the 1960s as a grass roots movement whereby direct-line workers in residential and group care created federations of state and provincial associations. According to

Kendrick, Steckley and McPheat (2011:86), in many countries CYC was carried out by different stakeholders, with religious organisations taking the lead in the development of residential care. Smith (2009:20) noted that although the history of care is in many respects a religious one, such long roots have only been loosened in recent decades. This has resulted in other stakeholders taking even greater interest in this kind of work. In the process of entering the CYC space, there is no doubt that in some instances the interests of some stakeholders have taken priority, perhaps even over the interests of those who were supposed to receive CYC services.

CYC as a field may also have been referred to by different names. The role of caregivers was also different from that of the current CYCWs. It would seem these roles differed from one country to another as well as from one setting to another. What is clear is that in the distant past, many caregivers never received adequate training to do a 'caring' job. Hence they were not considered to be professionals (Smith, 2009:159).

From the 1950s, practice-based literature began to emerge which allocated the therapeutic task to those involved in caring for children (Smith, 2009:159). The therapeutic focus suggests that these caregivers had to begin to work with a specific purpose in mind. Smith (2009:26) gave an overview that over the course of the 1960s residential care in the US and Canada moved from a primary role in containment to one of treatment. He goes further to clarify that historically, treatment was conceived as being distinct from care and was viewed as the domain of outside experts such as psychologists or medical social workers whereby the job of residential care workers was to provide daily care, a task with little professional value attached to it (Smith, 2009:26). This must have been viewed negatively by those caregivers committed to the field. CYC pioneers such as Bruno Bettelheim (1950) challenged this separation of treatment from care, arguing that disturbed children needed a round-the-clock psychotherapeutic milieu in which CYCWs were responsible for the bulk of any therapeutic work with children in the course of their everyday interactions with them (Smith, 2009:26).

Although social welfare in SA began in 1657 with the distribution of relief to poor white farmers, the majority, namely the black population, was not catered for (Stout,

2009:105). Hence the residential CYC system had historically been inaccessible to the majority of children and young people in SA (DSD, 2010:33). It is against this background that Stout (2009:105) came to the conclusion that any discussion of the SA history of provision of residential care for children will be difficult due to an absence of both academic writing and official figures for the black population. Apartheid laws that were subsequently introduced by the National Party Government since its term in office in 1948 did not make the situation any better. It is against this background that throughout the entire period of apartheid, discriminatory policies were opposed by a resistance movement led by the African National Congress (ANC) (Stout, 2009:107). By the early 1990s a crisis situation linked to the lack of adequate facilities for black African children had developed within the CYC system. Poor salaries for CYCWs, lack of adequately trained managers and staff in many facilities, the inadequate subsidisation of non-government facilities, and the high ratio of children to staff were amongst the contributors to that crisis (DSD, 2010:33).

In 1994 the Government of National Unity, led by the ANC, came into power and one of its first actions was to draft legislations aimed at preventing inadequate provision of care and protection for all children. According to Patel (2009:6), various public policies have been adopted and implemented over the past two decades. New legislative policies, particularly those that are meant to deal with and protect vulnerable children such as the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 and the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008, are commendable. The formation of such policies resulted from work by the Government with inputs from relevant stakeholders, such as activists in the children's rights and CYC fields. According to Patel (2009:30), NPOs also participated in consultations in the development and review of policy and legislation.

Amongst other concerns was the fact that many children were held in police cells (DSD, 2010:33). The ANC has since championed the introduction of a number of new laws to correct those deemed to be unjust, non-inclusive and reflective of the colonial and apartheid agenda. Stout (2009:105) highlighted the fact that the apartheid legislation has been amended and reinterpreted in light of the new dispensation, and the Children's Act 38 of 2005 has since been enacted in 2008. In that process, within the social services sector, the Government has adopted a

transformative, developmental framework and aimed at moving towards becoming a developmental state (DSD, 2005:7). The Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 was introduced to address the protection and developmental needs of all the children irrespective of race, ethnicity or cultural background. The South African social welfare policy has since changed from a racially segregated residual approach to a developmental one (Green, 2012:227).

Stout (2009:105) commented that care for children is one of the aspects of social policy that has been significantly affected by the most prominent aspects of the country's recent history: the transition from apartheid to a democratic state and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. It would therefore be inadequate to write about the development of CYC without taking these two major influences into consideration. The researcher will therefore base his work mostly within the post-apartheid South African context. Stout (2009:105) noted that the democratic SA shifted its social care emphasis from social welfare to social development, a move that has had an effect on the place of residential care within the system. Hence the focus on community care has been amplified.

In 1995 an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC) was set up to develop a policy framework which would lead to the transformation of the entire CYC system. The findings of this committee exposed very disturbing situations in terms of conditions under which children were 'cared for', as well as the practices of those who were supposed to care for them. Amongst the findings were that services were being offered by different government departments, unavoidably in a fragmented manner. Facilities that accommodated vulnerable children were also called by different names, such as children's homes, places of safety, secure care facilities, schools of industry, and reform schools. Services in these different centres were also being offered by personnel obviously using different methods and approaches.

Specifically, the IMC findings revealed that children of different ages and with different needs were being accommodated together; some children were placed far away from their families; children were being cared for by untrained staff; and that children were being assaulted and abused. In some instances, it was found that far too many children were admitted into residential care, resulting in overcrowding.

Recommendations were subsequently made with the main purpose of ensuring the best interest of children as provided for in the Constitution and other pieces of legislation (DSD, 2010:69).

The IMC process, in the researcher's view, ushered in the new chapter of the SA CYC system. Chapter 4, section 25(e) of the White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 considers CYCWs to be central to the provision of care for vulnerable children and emphasises the importance of their training and development (Department of Social Welfare, 1997). Resulting from the IMC recommendations, the focus of Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC) was revisited in order to bring about uniformity and coordination. In the researcher's view, the term Child and Youth Care Centre is a well thought through name as it embraces institutions caring for all the children without stigmatising them based on their needs. Section 191 (1) of the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 defines a Child and Youth Care Centre as "a facility for the provision of residential care to more than six children outside the child's family environment in accordance with a residential care programme suited for the children in the facility." Children's homes, places of safety, secure care facilities, schools of industry and reform schools have all been re-designated as Child and Youth Care Centres (Stout, 2009:116). According to Sloth-Nielsen (2006:24), the schools of industry and reform schools were changed because firstly, they were part of an ineffective system and secondly, they were grossly uneconomical to run. These Child and Youth Care Centres were required to provide therapeutic programmes that were appropriate for the children's developmental needs as stipulated in Section 191 (2) of the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007. In terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, a CYCC is a facility for the provision of residential care to six or more children outside the child's family environment. These centres were expected to cater for a specific group of children with specific needs that cannot be met within normal family or community settings. The nature of these centres requires highly trained staff whose focus is to provide for specialised needs. Given their nature, residential child care centres were deemed to be expensive and hence the international child welfare sector is united in advocating its use only as a temporary 'last resort' for children (Meintjes, Moses, Berry & Mampane, 2007:i).

The historical backlogs in the delivery of health and welfare services coupled with pressures to respond to the care needs arising from the HIV and AIDS pandemic resulted to some extent in the adoption and implementation of community-based care strategies by voluntary organisations, including community-based organisations (CBOs) (Patel, 2009:7). Residential care offerings were financially sustainable in pre-apartheid SA, because services offered targeted the minority of children. After the needs of all children became a priority post-1994, residential arrangements were understandably going to be expensive to sustain. Hence other forms of care had to be explored and expanded. It is against this background that organisations such as NACCW championed innovative models which aimed at caring for the majority of children who were affected by the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

The challenge facing the ANC-led Government now is to ensure the implementation of policies that were developed post-1994. Areas such as monitoring all provisions and registering, rewarding and replicating best practices (Stout, 2009:117) remain the greatest challenge for the government. However, the responsibility of effective implementation of policies cannot be placed on the government alone. According to the DSD (2005:2), others stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs and faith-based organisations (FBOs) need to continue playing a significant role to bring these policies into fruition. In the preceding section, a brief history of the social welfare developments, particularly CYC services, was presented. It should be borne in mind that this history never claims to be complete (Smith, 2009:21). In the next section, the definition of CYC will be presented in order to bring more clarity to what this field entails.

4.3 Definition of Child and Youth Care

It has become increasingly difficult to find a common understanding of what CYC is precisely. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that CYCWs are now working in more service sectors than ever before (Gharabaghi, 2010:2). The pioneers of the CYC field, such as Maier (1991a:394), defined CYC work as a collective term for “looking after young people while they are away from home.” In its current form, Maier’s (1991a:394) definition has got a strong connotation to residential CYC work and assumes that care can only commence or be offered to children once ‘removed’ from their homes. This definition can therefore no longer remain relevant given the

evolution that has taken place within the CYC field. Without denying its roots in residential settings (Smith, 2009:159), CYC should be defined in such a way that it encompasses the focus of the majority of CYCWs who are now deployed in different settings to serve different children, youth, families and communities.

Smith's (2009:159) definition that CYC is "the discipline involved in direct care practice with children" is simple, basic, and yet critical. It lays the foundation for the focus of CYC field. The simple nature of Smith's definition above should not be confused with the nature of CYC work as also being simple. Authors such as White (2007) and Modlin (2013) have clearly argued that every day CYC practice is complex, unpredictable, and value-laden. The term "caring" has always been at the core of the CYC profession (Gharabaghi, 2010:141). Smith's (2009:159) definition seems to be "acceptable in North America and increasingly in developing countries such as South Africa". It also resonates with CYC work within a variety of contexts. Smith's definition is also in line with that of Maier (1991a:394) who asserted that "Care practice is the heart of the workers' activities and the most significant component." Gharabaghi (2010:142) noted that although physically caring for others forms part of CYCWs' duties, in other settings such as schools, group homes, recreational centres, group homes, and shelters for youth, these physical care activities are not typically part of their daily task. He further clarifies that 'caring' rather means caring for emotional needs, educational needs, health and nutrition needs, or their mental needs, or any other needs (Gharabaghi, 2010:142). Gharabaghi's notion implies that the duties of CYCWs may seem endless, which can be problematic for both those in the field as well as those outside the field.

In order to clarify the limits as well as the focus of CYC, White (2007:227) describes CYC as "broadly concerned with promoting and supporting the optimal development and well-being of infants, children, youth and families in specific contexts through approaches that focus on individuals and their social circumstances and environments." Although White's (2007:227) definition expands from children and youth to families, the word development remains the focus of what CYCWs do. In all CYC work, direct or indirect, preventive or therapeutic, the emphasis is on helping children to reach the optimal development of all facets of their being (Helmet & Griff, 1977:146). Phelan (2005:351) has eloquently put it that "the focus is not on a

specific aspect of a person's functioning, for example, math skills, depression, a broken arm, but on the overall ability to live well." The holistic development of children and youth has always been at the centre of CYC. Hence Maier (1983:17) held the view that CYCWs are expected to be well-grounded in understanding children's development and in the use of such knowledge in order to help children to live competently within their cultural life spheres.

Gharabaghi's (2010:141) analysis that *caring about* someone has a significant emotional connotation, which linguistically prompts terms such as empathy, pity, feelings and love, is a significant one. Gharabaghi (2010:141) also looked at the idea of *caring for* someone, which in contrast to *caring about* someone is very much an action oriented idea. He argues that linguistically, terms such as caretaking, providing for basic needs, and health care come to mind when we talk about *caring for* someone. The distinction made by Gharabaghi is a valuable one as *caring for* someone is hardly considered a professional activity. This may be the reason why so many people in society struggle to recognise CYC as a distinct profession, arguing that "many professionals in the social and human services presumably care about their clients" (Gharabaghi, 2010:141). White (2007:227) seems to be in agreement with Gharabaghi in that she describes CYC as "an active and diverse, relatively new field of professional practice."

CYC has reached a point where it can now be comprehensively defined. The following is a paraphrased version of the international definition of child and youth care work: "Professional child and youth care practice focuses on children and youth within the context of the family, the community and the life-span" (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:29). Arrival at this definition came after many years of CYC practice, research and writings. Obviously building on the contributions made by many other authors in the field, Gharabaghi (2010:137) articulated the following definition which covers the scope, orientations and contexts of this field:

- a) CYC is primarily focussed on the *growth and development of children and youth*.
- b) CYC is concerned with the *totality of a child's functioning*.

- c) CYC has developed a *social competence perspective* rather than a pathology-based orientation to child development.
- d) CYC is based on (but not restricted to) *direct, day-to-day work with children and youth in their environment*.
- e) CYC involves the *development of therapeutic relationships* – with children, their families, and other informal and formal helpers.

Now that CYC practice has been described, it is important to zoom in on its key concepts in order to bring about even more clarity. It must however be mentioned that as an endeavour to build on this new profession, not all key concepts will be included here. Many others are still likely to emerge as the discipline continues to evolve (Garfat, 2003:1) in search of its true identity.

4.3.1 Key concepts of Child and Youth Care

CYC has identified the following concepts as the cornerstone concepts of this field: relationship, engagement, life-space work and therapeutic work. Each of these key concepts will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

4.3.1.1 Relationship

Kendrick et al. (2011:11) made a strong claim that since its inception CYC has located relationships with children and their families at the centre of practice. Gharabaghi (2010:144) explains that the term “relationship” has been adopted as a way of thinking about involvement with children and youth. Long (2008:57) clarifies that it is not just any relationship that we are talking about here, but “a professional relationship which is therapeutic without being personal – a healthy, helping alliance with clear boundaries. It is a caring relationship which is responsive to the needs of the other whereby CYCWs respond to them with appropriate professional rigour (Smith, 2009:122).

The embracing of *relationship* as a medium for practising CYC seems to be an acknowledgement that the majority of children and youth receiving CYC services have had their relationships with their significant others interrupted in one way or another. Marlowe (2012:105) reminds us about research in psychology and socio-biology that “we are a social species and are primed biologically to have

relationships from birth.” Hence all people, including vulnerable children, will continue to seek meaningful relationships for their development and growth. According to Curry et al. (2011:4), it has been demonstrated through research that “developing a close relationship with a mother or other caregiver is an urgent, and necessary, survival mechanism for all children.”

In his study with young people who were going through intense personal struggles in residential care, Anglin (2004:185) found that these young people expressed appreciation for “caring relationships that came without the expectation of close or on-going intimacy.” The nature of relationship per se is reciprocal. When children in care expect a relationship with CYCWs that is not reciprocal, some CYCWs may interpret such an expression as rejection or non-appreciation of what they do. Such CYCWs will thus need to be challenged to move to a point where they do not regard “a one-way relationship and not reciprocal altruism” (Long, 2008:57) as rejection. It takes reflection and maturity from CYCWs to get to that point. Therefore despite gestures of rejection from the children and youth, Long (2008:57) has strongly advised that CYCWs should persist without taking issues personally. Such reflection can only come from the understanding that children who experienced significant rejection are just as likely to feel and express ever-increasing anger and pain towards those closest to them. Their behaviour must be viewed as their way of suppressing these painful emotions in an effort to protect themselves from hurt of further rejection (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:11). In so doing they often have problems knowing how to give or even accepting these positive emotions from others (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:11). This is likely to present the greatest challenge for CYCWs. If relationships are the cornerstone of their work, how can CYCWs be expected to work with children who display rejection towards those who are meant to consistently relate with them? This means CYCWs need to get to terms with the fact that their work involves giving without expecting anything from the children and youth in return. Such workers must however be comforted by the fact that deep inside, those children might be experiencing care, even though they may not have learned a better way of expressing such appreciation. Marlowe (2012:95) made a strong claim that “initiating and sustaining a relationship with a child is the only context in which other interventions can succeed.” Long (2008:57) added that all interpersonal change with troubled children and youth evolves and revolves around an adult

relationship. This statement suggests that relationship building cannot just be an option; it is one of the key components of CYC.

According to Curry et al. (2011:6), in a relational CYC model the actual child-professional caregiver relationships may be the key to successful interventions with a child who has experienced severe early relationship disruptions. It therefore becomes important that CYCWs attempt to understand children and youth's behaviour within the contexts of such disrupted relationships. Children who have suffered isolation and abandonment will project their desperate feelings onto the workers, making them feel isolated, useless and worthless (Best, 2009:8). It is understandable that many children and youth will continue to long for relationships with others. Hence some of them will even go to an extent of, unbeknown to them, 'behaving inappropriately' with the hope of securing some kind of relationships from their CYCWs. In the process, they jeopardise even those smallest chances of establishing healthy relationships. Everything these children and youth do, no matter how misguided, is done with the hope that it will lead to them being accepted and subsequently feeling happier (Marlowe, 2012:98). Little do they realise that this will put strain on CYCWs who are expected to establish relationships with them. These children and youth need to be assisted to reclaim a host of 'issues'. Amongst those issues, Thumbadoo (2013:56) refers to reclaiming hopes and dreams, a way of life, memories, extended family, an adult figure and a child rights culture.

In some instances, their behaviour may result in CYCWs adopting counter-productive reactions like punishment, exclusion and coercion (Pfeifer, 2011:30). Establishing and maintaining relationships with "disturbed" children and youth is not an easy task for many of the CYCWs (Hodas, 2005; VanderVen, 2009). Building a relationship is the unequivocal commitment of one individual to another that evokes positive change (Marlowe, 2012:95). This commitment can bring about challenges to CYCWs. To try and mitigate this difficulty, Hodas (2005:3) puts forward suggestions that relationship building requires time, patience, use of relevant individualised information, and readiness to follow the lead of the child, as well as the ability to listen and withhold judgment. This once again is not an easy task, especially given the 24 hour nature of CYC work. Gharabaghi (2010:147) warned that relationships do not just unfold through the actions that go into them, but also through the

imagination that carries them. The kind of relationship referred to is a person-to-person kind of relationship and not just worker-to-client which regards the child first as a human being, and only then as someone with identified problems or challenges (Hodas, 2005:3).

In terms of sound and good CYC practice, CYCWs are expected to understand that care recipients will long for positive recognition, from self and others (Maier, 1991a:405) despite their inappropriate behaviours. Marlowe (2012:98) observed that children engaging in difficult or destructive behaviour do so in the erroneous belief that this will relieve their unhappiness. It therefore becomes important that CYCWs remember that most of these children have had “considerable familiarity with dysfunctional adults and dysfunctional relationships” (Marlowe, 2012:98). This realisation should serve as the basis for understanding and accommodating such children. According to Curry et al. (2011:5) the relationship disruptions experienced by children in care should therefore be the focal point of CYC work.

CYC is about ‘being with’ the children and developing relationships with them (Gharabaghi, 2010:2). Gharabaghi’s statement confirms that building relationship is no longer a means to achieving objectives, but instead built into the nature of CYC work itself. From a CYC perspective, “relational practice is more than a worker simply having a good relationship with a child or family member; it involves the joint, explicit focus on the experience and maintenance of that relationship” (Garfat, 2008:9). It would therefore be inconceivable to talk about CYC without incorporating a relationship. White (2007:225) explained that CYC is highly relational work that is deeply embedded within very specific local contexts.

In the preceding paragraph, an argument about the centrality of relationship in CYC has been presented. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:86) reported that all the focus groups with which they have conducted one of their studies with residential CYCWs, relationships were rarely mentioned as an integral part of the work. These authors, however, observed that relationships were front and centre when a staff member spoke about a specific child or youth. This pattern suggests that CYCWs may be aware of the significance of relationships in doing their work. However, when communicating with others, those workers may not have arrived at a point of

expressing or mentioning the importance of relationship as a key aspect of CYC. This boils back to the point that many CYCWs cannot satisfactorily articulate their work. Gharabaghi (2010:106) advised that “any professional is judged not only by what she or he does but also by how she or he articulates what she or he does.” Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:86) further reported an observation that while teams acknowledged the importance of relationships, they did so primarily as a vehicle to enforce compliance on the part of the child or youth.

Curry et al. (2011:6) argued that CYCWs’ own relationship histories and capacities to commit emotionally to interactions with a child would be critical components of therapeutic care. Those workers who did not resolve their own relationship issues may therefore struggle to form healthy relationships with children and youth in their care. Such workers might also struggle to appreciate it when children and youth attempt to deal with their own relationship issues, mostly inappropriately. Relationship by its nature is a give and take affair. Within the CYC context, it means a process by which the child increases his or her ability to receive something on the one hand, and on the other the process of CYCWs giving something (Gharabaghi, 2010:144). The reciprocal nature of this relationship requires the participation of both the children and CYCWs. It is when CYCWs are getting to the point of being demoralised that they need to remember that “some relationships bring us joy and happiness while others bring us down and feel like a burden” (Gharabaghi, 2010:71).

CYC authors often talk about 'engagement' and 'relationship-building' as the necessary first steps in the treatment of young people. Such authors base their argument on the belief that if CYCWs do not connect with the young person and/or family right from the beginning they are not going to be effective (Garfat, 2003a:6). Hence *engagement* is a critical and important concept that needs in-depth discussion.

4.3.1.2 Engagement

Throughout much of CYC literature, *care* has been envisaged as involving reciprocal interaction between the child and the caregiver (Maier, 1991a:405). The notion that CYCWs’ job involves *hanging out* with children also became another CYC characteristic. ‘Hanging out’ means that CYCWs have to be fully present and pay

attention to everything that is taking place in and around children's lives. According to Krueger (1997:411), it is expected of these CYCWs to "bring themselves to the moment and use their experiences, self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to form empowering interactions and help children learn new skills and ways of interacting with others" in order to be truly engaged. This does not mean that CYCWs should get consumed and get lost in the events. Engagement is not a random process but, instead, it should be one that is strategic and targeted (Gharabaghi, 2010:150). Therefore CYCWs need the ability to get enmeshed in interaction moments, step back, reflect, record, and get enmeshed again (Krueger, 1997:414). To clarify the concept of engagement, Gharabaghi (2010:154) made the following points:

- CYCWs use a variety of engagement strategies as a way of ensuring that children and youth are able to find opportunities to speak their mind, do activities that interest them, and explore those that might turn out to be relevant to them.
- Engagement is one of the core activities of CYC and is designed to deepen the connection between worker and child so as to facilitate on-going exploration of the child's strengths and competencies.

It is through engaging children and youth that CYCWs can get some immediate feedback about the approaches they are taking to connect with children. Without engagement, CYCWs are simply imposing their way of thinking, which may end up contributing to the child's view of him or herself as marginal, irrelevant or incompetent.

Gharabaghi's (2010:154) description of this engagement concept suggests the full and voluntary participation of children and youth in the process. It also requires that CYCWs remain attentive and guide processes which promote children and youth's growth and positive experiences. Throughout engagement, CYCWs need to continue to reflect on what is going on. Hence White's (2007:238) call for "qualities of discernment, engagement, and imaginative reflection; reflecting an overall stance of 'being with'."

Gharabaghi (2010:149) clarified that engagement is not a one-sided initiative, but instead requires the voluntary participation of all parties. As CYCWs are doomed to work tirelessly towards engaging, young people are likely to apply the same force

and effort to disengage. This is clearly a demanding task that can lead to exhaustion for CYCWs. When fully mastered, engagement can create a platform for unexpected developmental work. The role of CYCWs is therefore that of inviting children and youth into participating (Maier, 1991a:394). In order for the maximum benefit to be achieved from this concept of engagement, there is an expectation that those receiving care should co-operate with the CYCWs. Gharabaghi (2010:150) suggested that for children or youth, engagement should be an opportunity to voice their thoughts about whatever it is they wish to voice their thoughts on. But children and youth are not readily committed to using this opportunity productively. As a result, CYCWs remain stretched as they are the ones who find themselves playing a bigger part in this engagement process. Children and youth's unwillingness to engage in a constructive manner will make it difficult for CYCWs to carry out another important task, which is therapeutic care.

4.3.1.3 Therapeutic care

Gharabaghi (2010:144) suggested that the term 'therapeutic' means "to have a relationship that promotes healing and growth." Stokoe (2003:83) concurred that the principle of therapeutic work takes place "in a relationship within a setting, the assumption being that the unconscious minds of each participant attempt to distort the relationship to fit the inner world expectation of what relationships are like." He further clarified that therapeutic work involves the business of actually living with the young person so that it becomes possible to see clearly where there are deficits and therefore how to encourage the development of the resources (Stokoe, 2003:83). Therapeutic work involves a certain way of being with children and youth. It is focused and purposeful. What used to be called "hanging out with kids" is now referred to as developing therapeutic relationships with children, youth and sometimes families (Gharabaghi, 2010:144). Professional CYCWs who are charged with the responsibility of caring for children and youth need to be taught what therapeutic work involves. They need to realise that their work involves the ability to cultivate and maintain therapeutic relationships with children and represents a set of values and skills that can be taught (Hodas, 2005:4).

Therapeutic work in the context of CYC is completely different from therapy work that is carried out by other professionals. Fulcher, Garfat and Digney (2013:4-5) clarify

that the therapeutic use of daily life events invites CYCWs to use a different way of thinking about how they engage and connect with young people. Phelan (2005:351) argued that the professional distance required by office-based therapy approaches is actually detrimental to effective CYC work. Authors such as Helmet and Griff (1977:146) have since made the assertion that CYC has both *preventive* and *therapeutic* dimensions. They explained that CYCWs have therapeutic or remedial care focus to help the children achieve normal developmental levels and pursue age-appropriate developmental tasks (Helmet & Griff, 1977:146). It however seems that there is confusion in terms of what it is that CYCWs are doing exactly in terms of therapeutic work. Hence Phelan (2005:349) cautioned against CYC practitioners who use the language of therapy to sound more professional. Indeed unthoughtful use of therapy language will border on the boundaries of other disciplines. To clarify this confusion, Garfat (2003:13) has noted that CYCWs do not do therapy, but therapeutic work. Garfat and Fulcher (2011:7) further argued that CYCWs are among the most influential of healers and helpers in a person or family's life.

In CYC, the children needing support are not likely to have received responsive caregiving. In fact, their care may have been frightening, abusive, or thoroughly absent (Curry et al., 2011:4). Hence every encounter with them should serve as an opportunity to allow these children experience themselves and situations differently. These little experiences should accumulate in order to give them new hope and new meanings about their lives. From a CYC perspective, there is no specific moment to bring about such experiences. Every moment is an opportunity to bring about healing. Hence CYC work is done within the life-space of these children and youth as it is difficult to predict the perfect moment which can make an everlasting impact. For that reason, CYCWs work within the life space of these children and youth, with the aim of making some therapeutic impacts during those life-space encounters.

4.3.1.4 Life-space

Life-space work is one of the defining features of what CYC is about. The term 'life-space' has a similar meaning to living environment, situation or context and there are many elements in young people's environments which impact on their lives in one way or another (DSD, 2010:29). Eisikovits and Beker (2002:429) explain that being practical emerges as the dominant orientation of CYCWs doing concrete activities to

help the client. Barford and Whelton (2010:273) explain that CYCWs are front-line human service professionals who work in constant contact with children and youth and who are responsible for their daily living needs. According to Ward (2004:119), therapeutic work is therefore potentially on-going in all the other times and contexts in which the young person is involved, and especially in the course of the everyday life and the social and other interactions which this entails. DSD (2010:29) recognises that “every event, object or person within the home environment, child and youth care programme, school or community can affect a young person’s daily living and constitutes part of her/his ‘life-space.’”

Although Keenan in Smith (2005) argued that life-space work is a “therapeutic discipline of its own”, it seems as if this concepts remains popular and expands itself within the CYC field. CYC practitioners such as Phelan (2005:349) note that life-space work is “using everydayness to create hope and competence, an enormous task that can appear too trivial to the untrained eye.” Krueger (1997:411) also emphasised the complexity of the nature of CYC work as it occurs with children in a myriad of interactions throughout the course of a day. The real therapeutic work takes place as CYCWs interact with children in a myriad of interactions throughout the course of a day (Krueger, 1997:441). This work mostly comes as a result of conscious efforts on the part of CYCWs and, at times, it will come about spontaneously without the worker even being aware of the gains made through such daily interactions. CYCWs’ presence and undivided attention is then critical in every situation. As they engage, sometimes passively and sometimes actively, CYCWs create a way of providing a relational opportunity for the client to “reconstitute his Self through new experiences, remodelled memories of past experiences, and reconstitute aspirations and expectations for the future” (Gharabaghi, 2010:29).

Curry et al. (2011:13) gave an illustration of life-space work which results from a variety of activities, such as cooking, playing, traveling, doing chores, engaging in some hobbies, and engaging in the community, which serve as a means to an end. These authors clarified that CYCWs and children capitalise on “the situational experiences that may come to teach life lessons, counsel, and heal.” It must be remembered that all these activities take place within the context of a relationship. In other words, activities situate and mediate relationships; relationships support new

interests and skill development, and together these comprise programming (VanderVen, 2009:10). Furthermore, emphasis should be on the fact that all interactions are done with a purpose in mind; the main one being that of bringing about change and growth in the lives of these children. It must also be noted that the kind of change aimed for “is not directed at either environment or the client, but rather at the manner in which the client relates to his or her life-spaces” (Gharabaghi, 2010:29).

Krueger and Stuart (1999:203), however, presented what may seem like a different view when they stated that “one of the factors that distinguishes CYC as a profession is the ability of workers to respond to, create, and change contexts.” The statement should not be viewed as a contradiction to what Gharabaghi (2010:29) said earlier. What these authors are doing instead is to emphasise the relevance of experiences in the context of an environment that facilitates change, learning and growth. Marlowe (2012: 96) has put these views into perspective by stating that CYCWs “work with the environment, modifying what is happening ‘right now’ by means of relationship skills, intuition and social milieu, all of which exist only in the present.” The present moment is crucial in CYC. Hence Krueger (1994:223) noted that CYC “takes place in the ‘here and now’ as workers weave care, learning, and counseling into daily interactions.” In other words, although CYCWs may have long-term objectives with specific children, they use their daily interactions as a means to achieving those individual objectives. Life-space work is also not easy. It requires that CYCWs pay attention to most of the events taking place in daily living with the children and youth. This may bring about exhaustion and, if not properly managed, even burnout. As CYCWs strive to create comfortable and homely places to receive and interact with children, such attempt to provide care is constantly being attacked (Best, 2009:3) by the very children they are striving to accommodate.

CYC practice is holistic – not fragmented – and occurs in the life-space of the child (Phelan, 2005:351). CYCWs therefore find themselves having to be engaged in various activities, paying attention to a variety of situations without losing the individual children. VanderVen (2009:11) clarified that within the CYC context, “practices take individuality and context into consideration, rather than using a ‘one size fits all’ approach.” It is this expectation that CYCWs should not lose the

individual child that can also be challenging. It is one thing to take care of a group of children, but attempting to guarantee that individual needs are continuously being met through individualised attention can be a daunting task. According to Beker (2009:6), in order to successfully achieve that, CYCWs need to use an active repertoire of tactics and techniques for responding to a wide variety of difficult behaviour, as well as using spontaneous events in their life-spaces.

The challenge about life-space work is that results are not immediately observable. In trying to address this concern, Gharabaghi (2010:43) argued that “in-the-moment interventions are very specific to the circumstances and can only minimally be related to a concrete evidence base.” Lack of immediate evidence can dampen the morale of many CYCWs, especially newly appointed ones. They may not realise that this work is like a marathon whereby what is important is to simply take part and have fun without expecting any win. This statement should not be construed as meaning that CYCWs must not have the aim to succeed with individual children. Although success is desired, the process and experiences are regarded as being equally important. Otherwise those who fail to adopt this approach run the risk of dropping out of this marathon-like job. A reminder from Curry et al. (2011:13) that “those who attempt to approach the care of troubled, traumatized, defiant, vulnerable children, presenting client service as *only* science lose credibility quickly” is very valuable. The sharing of experiences and being with the other in an open manner (Phelan, 2005:351) is the foundation of CYC.

Within the life-space, CYCWs get involved in different activities with children and youth. However, in order for them to be effective, they need the kind of information that can be applied “variously” to different children in different situations. In other words, sound therapeutic principles that underlie application, but that also demand innovation and creativity (Curry et al., 2011:13). When applying life-space work, CYCWs are always on the lookout for opportunities to teach. Some of these opportunities are created, others come by themselves. Ward (2004:119) presents an example of incidents or moments in everyday interactions which affect the young person in unexpected ways. According to him, these opportunities open up the possibility of communication and insight, perhaps triggering memories of earlier events and feelings, or maybe giving some hint of underlying anxieties or fears about

current or future events in their lives (Ward, 2004:119). These are the opportunities that seasoned CYCWs grab with ease to facilitate growth and healing.

The researcher is aware that life-space work is not an easy task for many CYCWs. Even when the life-space work has been effectively carried out, it is not easy for those who are not directly involved to appreciate what is going on. Allsopp (2009) summarised it so eloquently by stating that “witnessing good child and youth care is like looking at art – you can go only as deep as your perception and knowledge will allow.” According to Garfat and Fulcher (2011:8), life-space work involves allowing the individual to experiment with new ways of acting and experiencing – a task that can prove to be difficult. This is due to the fact that ‘acting’ outside societal norms can be viewed as being troublesome. Therefore allowing children to experiment demands extra resources on the part of CYCWs. Garfat and Fulcher (2011:8) however argue that life-space work “allows for the individual to learn and practice new thoughts, feelings and actions.” It is therefore worthwhile for CYCWs to get engaged with young people in this way, as this might bear ultimate results.

Clearly there is no one singular or final view of CYC practice. White (2007:228) posited that it is the embracing of multiple perspectives, openness to critique and serious, respectful engagement with each other’s ideas that lends the field its richness. As the field continues to evolve in its continued search for its true identity, there is greater likelihood that the definition might change and new concepts added. In the next section the focus will shift towards describing the recipients of the CYC services.

4.4 RECIPIENTS OF CYC SERVICES

The majority of children who are taken into care are there involuntarily and “through no fault of their own” (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:3). Although the phrase *into care* has a residential care connotation, it should be understood broadly to mean those children receiving CYC services – both inside and outside residential settings. There are a number of factors that have contributed to these children receiving social services in general and CYC services in particular. In most cases, such factors involve traumatic experiences, as the majority of them lost their familiar places and

relatives in the process. As a result, they find themselves in unfamiliar environments and being cared for by unfamiliar adults. To expect these children and youth to proceed with their lives as normally as possible would be equated with not appreciating the disruptions that have taken place in their lives. Disruptions that have been experienced will certainly be expressed differently by children and youth. CYCWs are therefore expected to comprehend the meaning of the youngsters' interactions and to resist the comfort of "standard" responses (Maier, 1991a:400). Maier's call for non-standardised responses implies that CYCWs should embrace individualised work as a result of young persons' unique needs. This is another factor that will present challenges for CYCWs. In situations where there are more than one child to be cared for by more than one CYCW, the appropriate care from the appropriate professional at the appropriate time is always sought (Gharabaghi, 2010:142). This is an ideal CYC practice – something that requires commitment from all involved.

Cameron and Maginn (2009:5) cite "illness and disease, economic adversity, exposure to violence, living in a drug and crime context, social and emotional deprivation, maltreatment at the hands of adults and other children, poor parenting" among the most common factors that force children and youth to end up receiving some sort of care. Other factors may include the cognitive domain, whereby these children are being described as having considerably lower intellectual and scholastic abilities than their peers (Arieli, 1997:11). Children who are perceived as being physically different and disabled may also require CYC services. Arieli (1997:33) observed that it is mainly in the affective domain that these children are seen as different, "maladjusted, disturbed, disruptive, and sometimes delinquent and violent." These factors are an overview of why many children end up in these difficult situations. Although CYC services strive to meet the needs of such children and youth, these children and youth, especially those who have been failed by adults elsewhere (Guthrie, 2014), do not automatically view these interventions in a positive light. These children and youth do not see how CYCWs can be any different. CYCWs are therefore expected to be reflective in order to understand children's behaviour and misbehaviour within a specific context. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:83) caution that failure to make a reflective judgement can result in poor interventions. Children and youth in care have experienced pain generating

experiences, resulting in them behaving in a 'socially unacceptable manner' most of the time. As trained personnel, CYCWs are expected to see beyond obvious surface behaviours (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:83) in order to respond empathetically to their pain and pain-based behaviour (Anglin, 2004:178).

Although some children who receive CYC services continue to present behaviours that are 'difficult to manage', some seem committed to change their behaviour. Though on their own, it seems they find it difficult to behave in accordance with the social norms. Hence they continue to rely on the guidance of CYCWs. Most of the young people in Anglin's (2004:187) study indicated that they required a high level of supervision for a significant period of time, while they struggled with their problems and the pain and anger associated with them. These are the young people who had benefited from residential care. Providing high level supervision puts a lot of demands on CYCWS. It should be the aim of CYCWs to make children realise that their pain-based outbursts seriously interfere with their ability to interact with others (Anglin, 2004:187). This realisation is a great step towards self-control and development.

Given the difficult circumstances under which many children and youth who receive CYC services find themselves, CYCWs should move from the premise that these children's misbehaviour is 'justified'. This does not mean condoning unacceptable behaviour, but making it clear that the child himself/herself is acceptable (Marlowe, 2012:96). This premise will assist CYCWs to view children's inappropriate behaviour with empathy (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:88) and endeavour to assist them in managing their behaviour. In the next section the focus will be on managing children and youth's difficult behaviour.

4.4.1 Managing difficult behaviours

According to Gannon (1990), few children decide to be "bad" or "difficult", but behave inappropriately as a result of many factors. It is upon the adults to appreciate these factors, including systemic factors, whilst engaging in various endeavours to assist these young people to behave in a socially acceptable manner. Vanderwoerd (2006) contends that children's emotional disturbance and history of neglect and abuse make them all "the more difficult to manage." When children's behaviour

deviates from the social norms, many adults find it difficult to manage such behaviour. That is the reason some children find themselves having to be cared for by CYCWs. It means CYCWs find themselves having to deal with all sorts of anti-social behaviours, such as swearing and fighting on a constant basis. In dealing with these behaviours, CYCWs have to be guided by core principles such as safety, consistency, control and compliance (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:78).

The task of managing any behaviour cannot be achieved if the person who presents such behaviour is not committed to becoming a part of that process. Hodas (2005:3) advocated for the approach that says “we need to work together to understand what is going on.” This approach will certainly make a meaningful impact as far as managing behaviour is concerned. One of the most important steps in assisting children and youth is to understand the reasons for their behaviour. Cameron and Maginn (2009:101) expressed the view that “children will often let adults know how they are feeling in a variety of non-verbal ways, often forcefully by evoking powerful and sometimes overwhelming emotions in significant adults.” It is therefore always important that CYCWs strive to understand where inappropriate behaviour emanates from. Even more important is to come to the full realisation that a misbehaving child/youth genuinely hasn’t come up with a more effective way of living with others (Marlowe, 2012:98).

Brendtro (2004:8) argued that problems should be seen as resulting from obstruction of basic physical, social and growth needs. The main responsibilities of CYCWs are therefore to meet these needs. This will certainly minimise the amount of challenging behaviours that children are likely to present. Brendtro (2004:1) cautions that if children’s needs are not met, they can show a range of emotional and behavioural problems. This notion requires CYCWs to appreciate the children’s situation (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:89). Failure to appreciate these situations will result in CYCWs not knowing how to respond, especially in these “pressure cooker” environments (Anglin, 2004:187).

Despite their ‘difficult to manage behaviours’, children need CYCWs who are knowledgeable, skilful, sensitive and capable of fostering fundamental changes in their lives (Anglin, 1999:148). Without such knowledge and skills, CYCWs run the

risk of becoming rule-enforcement agents in their attempts to handle difficult behaviours. In their endeavour to manage these behaviours, core concepts which include “safety, consistency, control, and compliance, all of which are operationalized through systematic approaches” (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:78) remain the guiding pillars. For clarity purposes, a brief explanation of these concepts will be outlined:

- **Safety** focuses on the protection of the individual child concerned and other children in the programme, as well as all other people around that child. In other words, safety involves an environment where there is no threatening staff and other children and no destroying of property (Vanderwoerd, 2006).
- **Consistency** refers to the degree to which the same set of values, principles, processes or actions are demonstrated in practice over time and within and across the various dimensions, levels and domains of programme operation (Anglin, 2013:9-10).
- **Control** means making sure that there is order in the programme. According to Vanderwoerd (2006), the goal of control in behaviour management should be to gradually turn the reins over to the children, so that they may eventually control themselves.
- **Compliance** is about ensuring that the rules of the profession as well as those of the specific programmes are followed.

From the brief description of the concepts above, it is evident that behaviour management cannot be successful if it is considered as an isolated task. Effective behaviour management requires a holistic approach by all stakeholders involved, i.e. the children, the professionals and any other people in the life of the children concerned. The whole ecological system within which children find themselves should be conducive and contribute to behaviour management.

Over the years CYCWs have used a variety of techniques to manage difficult behaviours. Some CYCWs adopted approaches such as allocating rewards for behaviours and performance deemed positive. The reward system is one of the ancient CYC techniques. According to Marlowe (2012:101), the reward system was used to promote approximations of the desired behaviour as one goes along. When

applying this system, children would earn different points which entitle them to certain privileges. There are CYC practitioners who are against this reward system citing that “it only focuses on short term gains” (Marlowe, 2012:101). Although this system seems to be less harmful in comparison to others, it is not encouraged if true objectives of behaviour management are to be achieved. The condemnation of the reward system left many CYCWs with little options.

The opposite of the reward system is the punishment system. Those who use this system mete out consequences or punishments for behaviours and performances deemed negative or insufficient (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:78). This is done with the aim of assisting young people to produce behaviour that is not only tolerable, but also acceptable in the eyes of others. According to Leddy (2010), the use of corporal punishment is associated with significant increases in physical abuse, with long-term aggression and other antisocial behaviour. Both the reward system and the punishment system are not supported as effective behaviour management strategies, at least from a CYC perspective. One can only imagine that many untrained people who work as ‘CYCWs’ will be left with little options as far as managing difficult behaviour is concerned.

All that seems to matter to the majority of people who are not directly involved with young people is the evidence of socially acceptable behaviour. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:86) argue against specific evidence-based interventions. Instead, these authors support how the everyday experiences of young persons affect their worldview. The nature of many techniques meant for behaviour management fostered external control. Various authors, such as Vanderven (2009) and Phelan (2005), have spoken out against external control measures in that although these techniques may create safety for the worker as well as the youth or family, “they hinder connecting.” The moment CYCWs heavily adopt external controls as a measure for managing children’s behaviour, such workers run the risk of not practising CYC as we know it. Instead, they might be perceived as prison wardens – something Marlowe (2012:96) reminded CYCWs that they are not. CYCWs need to continue working with the aim of shielding the child from further pain (Pooley, 2003:187), without having external control as their primary objective. Given the nature of direct CYC work, the researcher is aware that this suggestion is easier said

than done. CYCWs need to be comfortable assuming the role of a responsible adult without becoming authoritarian or controlling (Modlin, 2013:5).

When specific coercive methods of discipline are outlawed, other forms of coercion are introduced. For example, when spanking was banned in schools educators switched to suspension, and physical punishment was traded for physical restraint (Brendtro, 2004:3). Physical restraint is defined as “an intervention in which staff hold a child to restrict his or her movement and which should only be used to prevent harm” (Davidson, McCullough, Steckley & Warren, 2005:viii). Brendtro (2004:7) further described physical restraint as “a felony to strike, hold, or confine a person without consent.” Some CYCWs readily and prematurely resort to ‘restraint’ as a preferred method of managing difficult behaviour. This they do despite Oliver’s (2012:7) caution that CYCWs “must exercise their own authority skilfully, calmly, quietly and transparently.” The researcher senses that transparent behaviour management can be difficult for many untrained CYCWs, especially when confronted with challenging behaviour. Trained workers on the contrary can adopt a strengths-based approach when dealing with difficult behaviour. Strengths-based work requires the CYCWs to hold on to a genuine faith in the client's potential to change and to continually instil this hope and optimism in the face of disappointments (Oliver, 2012:9).

There seem to be different views on the benefits of physical restraint. According to Brendtro (2004:5), some children seem to seek restraint to gain intimate contact with adults – the view that is advanced in support of physical restraint. The opponents of physical restraint however warn that “restraint and seclusion usually occur outside of the view of the public” (Brendtro, 2004:3). This means that physical restraint can be used excessively, resulting in abuse. Concerns related to the use of physical restraint revolve around issues of abuse, poor practice, violation of children's rights and restraint related deaths on the one hand, and the intensity of violence, aggression and challenging behaviour that occurs in some residential units on the other (Steckley, 2010:120). In addition to the risk of physical harm (including death) resulting from physical restraint, emotional harm is also of significant concern (Steckley, 2010:120). All these raised concerns challenge CYCWs and managers to be on the lookout for potential abusive practices that might be carried out under the

disguise of physical restraint. Brendtro (2004:5) argues that even “if data were to show that provocative restraint modifies behaviour, this seems to be the ethical equivalent of strapping kids to restraint boards until they become subservient to authority.” It is the researcher’s view that there are more convincing arguments against physical restraint than there are for it. The scrutiny on physical restraint will therefore limit the options that CYCWs have in terms of behaviour management of some ‘difficult to manage’ children and youth. In all their behaviour management endeavours, CYCWs’ aim should be to support children by contributing to their resilience and competence and reclaiming their sense of value of self (Thumbadoo, 2013:30).

Other forms of interventions therefore need to be continuously sought after. In CYC a ‘quick-fix’ to problematic behaviours is not recommended. CYCWs are expected to have a basic understanding of how children and youth grow in order to appreciate every stage of their development without being frustrated too much. One model that can assist CYCWs to get to this understanding is the Life Cycle Approach.

4.4.2 Life Cycle Approach

According to Elder (1998:7), all epochs of social change call for approaches to child development that view children in their changing ecologies. This view acknowledges the fact that from the moment a baby is born, growth takes place. In the process of growing, children will at times engage in behaviours that stretch their parents and other adult caregivers to the limits. The adolescent stage in particular is a stage that many adults find even more difficult when raising their children. Fischer (2014:2) cited a reminder that the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood is a time for exploration and for seeking independence. It is these endeavours towards independence that will result in some children and youth overstepping the boundaries set by the adults. Life cycle theory helps to contextualise people’s lives by emphasising the social dynamic of “linked lives” (Elder, 1998:7). In an ideal world, children are supposed to grow up under the care of adults, preferably biological parents whereby nutrition, protection and guidance can be provided. But due to many social ills that have been discussed in chapter 3, many children and youth find themselves having to navigate towards adulthood without the necessary care, support and guidance. Elder (1998:7) warns that early transitions can have enduring

consequences by affecting subsequent transitions, even after many years and decades have passed. Indeed, behaviours of children and youth in care are evidence of the hardships that they have endured along the journey of their lives. Therefore all caregivers and CYCWs in particular need to appreciate the difficult past of children and youth in their care.

According to Elder (1998:7), “life cycle” is a sequence of social roles that bear upon stages of parenthood, from the birth of children to their departure from the household and their eventual transition to the role of parent, setting in motion another life cycle. Many adults can find raising adolescents a daunting task. Fischer (2014:2) conceded that while exciting and challenging, adolescence can also be marked by experimentation and risk-taking. Proper guidance is therefore required from the responsible adults who are in the lives of those adolescents. In order for one to effectively manage children’s behaviour, one needs to be acquainted with the developmental stages of the children. It is therefore important that adults acquaint themselves with the way children think, feel and behave (Elder, 1998:7). Beyond this background of the Life Cycle approach, adults need to be aware that they need to deal with children and youth within the confines of the rights-based agenda.

4.4.3 Rights based agenda

SA has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (DSD, 2010:4) and other international conventions as outlined in section 3.2 of this study. In addition, the South African Constitution (1996) guarantees the rights of children and young people. Relevant to this study, Section 28 of the Constitution includes the right:

- (b) to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;
- (c) to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services; to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;
- (e) to be protected from exploitative labour practices;
- (f) not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that-
 - (i) are inappropriate for a person of that child’s age; or
 - (ii) place at risk the child’s well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;

- (g) not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the, shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be -
 - (i) kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and
 - (ii) treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age;
- (h) to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result;

Ensuring all of the above rights as mentioned in the Constitution form the cornerstone of the CYCWs' duties. CYCWs carry out their responsibilities to ensure that these rights, as well as many others, are not violated. It is against the background of the constitutional framework that CYC practice is carried out in order to protect children from any form of harm. Working with children and youth as recipients of CYC services should be based on a rights-based agenda to safeguard a 'new morality' that ensures that children's rights are fully realised in SA (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002).

SA has adopted some international law standards to the welfare system, including prohibition of corporal punishment in children's facilities (Sloth-Nielson, 2003b in Stout, 2009:111). This makes it necessary for all those who work with vulnerable children and youth to respect and promote the rights of young people. Within this rights-based framework, those who work with young people are urged to adopt a holistic approach to the protection of children in care, as children are also being made aware of their rights and responsibilities (Stout, 2009:114). Although the initial emphasis was on children increasingly being presented with statements of rights (and entitlements) as noted by Fulcher and Aintsworth in Smith (2009:11), there was a subsequent introduction of responsibilities on the part of children. This came after the realisation that many children abused the arrangements and adults felt powerless in the process.

Adult-imposed discipline and controls have been rejected many decades ago. Instead, the focus has shifted towards "the uniqueness of each child and the centrality of care and nurture in their service delivery" (Gharabaghi & Phelan,

2011:77). Unconditional nurturance, care and acceptance are expected of CYCWs irrespective of the kind of behaviour any child may be presenting. The South African Government has outlawed the corporal punishment of children in different institutions of care. Regulations under the Children's Act explicitly prohibit corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment in foster care (article 65), cluster foster care schemes (article 69) and child and youth care centres (articles 73 and 76). The National Norms and Standards for Drop-In Centres state that corporal punishment should not be used (sub-section 1), as do the National Norms and Standards for Early Childhood Development Programmes (sub-section 3). It must however be noted that corporal punishment is lawful in the home under Common Law (Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment, 2010:2). Stein (2005) defines punishment as "something that someone in authority imposes on someone else as a penalty for a misdeed." Brendtro (2004:3) argued that punitive climates are self-sustaining instead of serving the needs of the children and therefore should be discouraged.

According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment (2010:2), the Children's Act was under review (in 2012) with the proposal to include explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in SA homes. Once passed, this law is likely to frustrate even some CYCWs who have already come to terms with the "no physical punishment policy" within institutions of care. As a profession, however, CYC practice does not accept the value system endorsing corporal punishment in all settings (Gharabaghi, 2010:42). This will be a challenge for those CYCWs who have not embraced and internalised this value system.

Many organisations are obliged to comply with the rights-based agenda in service delivery to children. Smith (2009:11) suspected that in some instances, compliance is mainly "for the purpose of protecting agencies from liability than they are meaningful affirmations of their hopes for children." In such environments, some of the individual staff members may battle to embrace the rights culture. This is something that may actually hinder healthy ways of negotiating differences and resolving conflicts between CYCWs and children (Smith, 2009:11).

According to Vanderwoerd (2006), behaviour management techniques must allow children to experience external controls and limits as fair and respectful. Brendtro (2004:1) added that genuine CYC requires the creation of respectful relationships. It is these kinds of relationships that will go a long way in terms of alleviating and minimising undesired behaviours. Krueger and Stuart (1999:201) propose an environment whereby CYCWs consider their feelings and the youth's feelings, the space in which they are interacting, and how a variety of other factors contribute to the context within which they are interacting. If misbehaviour is to be perceived from this angle, the chances of inappropriate behaviours being handled without harm to children and youth are increased. Instead of external controls and other coercive measures of discipline, Gharabaghi (2010:42) argues for the habitual application of the 'in-the-moment' interventions that form the basis of the rules and behaviour management approaches.

There is no simple formula for managing children's difficult behaviours. One technique might work for one child, but not for another. Although at times simple techniques might work, such techniques need to be embedded within the complexity of the CYC contexts. Such contexts may involve, among others, CYCWs, the children themselves, as well as the environments. Principle based approaches seem to be the way to go. Hodas (2005:3) presents a principle that a child learns respect not through lectures, but through repeated experiences of being respected. Maier (1991a:400) also cited CYCWs' personal approach, not their techniques per se, as being critical to such success. CYCWs who believe that every child they see has an unvoiced desire to tell his or her story, to be treated fairly, and to have a happier life (Long, 2008:57) stand a better chance of succeeding with these children. Such CYCWs will strive to forge relationships that invite children and youth to work towards improving their behaviours. This requires a culture of respect for human rights, including those of adult carers (Smith, 2009:13). According to Steckley (2010:121), the sole purpose of CYCWs should be to help children and young people "make sense of their feelings and experiences, to talk it out rather than act it out."

The entire CYC philosophy has to be evoked for effective CYC practice to prevail. To attempt some of the specific approaches, Brendtro (2004:7) suggests that

children should be treated in a manner consistent with the principles of democratic society, and as individuals of dignity and worth. Gratification for CYCWs should come from helping children and not controlling or using them (Hodas, 2005:7). Hodas' suggestion rings true particularly in the SA context, which is respected worldwide for its Constitution that promotes human rights. According to section 10 of the Constitution, "everyone has the inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected." These rights include children and youth in care. Smith (2009:15) argues that the upshot of all this is that the wider conditions for caring for children should be conducive. A policy of welcome requires that care staff members are *there* for the youngsters, fully available in smooth times as well as at moments of tension (Maier, 1991a:398).

In concluding this section, it is worth noting Smith's (2009:13) call for CYC thinking that moves beyond current rights discourses. The challenge is for CYCWs to use skills that result from their knowledge and experience acquired during the years of training and practice. Good CYC practice involves using the life-space of children to create self-control, hope, competence, and the willingness to face challenges (Phelan, 2005:349). These form part of the roles of CYCWs. In the next section, the definition of CYCWs, their motivations and their roles will be discussed.

4.5 DEFINITION, MOTIVATIONS AND ROLES OF CYCWs

Ellett (2009:79) describes 'caring' as follows:

...a complex psychological variable believed to be important in framing sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs and feelings of others, personal and professional commitment, and ethical/moral behaviour reflected in actions taken by child welfare professionals as they interact with the clients they serve.

Given that many children and youth in care present behaviours that many adults will find difficult to manage, not many people would truly choose to work with such young people if they knew about these behaviours in advance. Those who remain within the field of CYC for prolonged periods should therefore possess strong persuasions to do so. Marlowe (2012:95) expressed the notion that troubled children need to

know that others care and value them sufficiently to commit to them. For one to join-in and ultimately remain a CYCW requires commitment.

In acknowledgement of the nature of children in care, Helmet and Griff (1977:144) have since called for sophisticated people who can work directly with these children and youth. These authors further recommended that such workers should be knowledgeable about children's behaviour and skilled in their management. Hence in the next section, the focus of the discussion will be on those who are charged with the responsibility of taking care of these children. The focus will be on definitions of CYCWs, reasons for choosing CYC work, and their roles as CYCWs.

4.5.1 Definitions of Child and Youth Care Workers

Gharabaghi (2010:141) presented an argument that in order for *caring for* someone to be considered a professional activity, it will depend on who is doing it. It is against this background that the title "Child and Youth Care Worker" needs to be carefully and clearly defined. A common and consistent definition is useful in that it will clarify who exactly we are referring to when talking about CYCWs. The title will also stick in people's minds, resulting in both professionals and non-professionals knowing about the existence of such a category of professionals.

It has already been mentioned in the previous section that CYC recipients do have various needs. Gharabaghi (2010:141) reminds us that children with special needs and developmental problems, as well as normal youngsters, are cared for in a variety of agencies and programmes. Those who do not understand who CYCWs are and what they do may be tempted to categorise these workers as subcategories of existing professions. This view is supported by Gharabaghi (2010:2) who indicated that historically, in North America CYCWs were seen as the extension of the "real" professions. Helmet and Griff (1977:145) have since refuted such an approach, stating that CYCWs "are different from social workers, child psychologists, and child psychiatrists."

Helmet and Griff (1977) define the persons who work directly with children in different programmes as "child care workers." It is worth noting that the word "care" appears to be quite prevalent in the various professional titles for the CYC discipline

(Gharabaghi, 2010:141). Upon closer scrutiny, this definition suggests that child care workers work with children, leaving out youth. It therefore becomes imperative that we understand CYCWs' clientele before we move onto other areas of their work. The South African Children's Act (38 of 2005) defines a "child" as any person under the age of 18 years. According to this definition, child care workers are supposed to work with children up to the age of 18. Section 176 (a) and (b) of the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 makes provision for some children who have been deemed in need of care to remain in alternative care up until the age of 21. Therefore Helmet and Griff's definition was restrictive in a sense.

Gharabaghi (2010:14) contends that there are at least six common titles that are given to CYC practitioners in North America alone (child and youth worker, child care worker, child and youth counsellor, youth worker, youth development worker, and direct services worker). It is critical that titles should be clarified to avoid confusion and clarify boundaries among social service professionals. The official DSD documents, such as the Integrated Service Delivery model, refer to this category of professional personnel as 'Child and Youth Care Workers' (DSD, 2006:54). This is the title the researcher finds suitable to refer to direct CYCWs. In the researcher's view, this title is inclusive of the different types of clientele most CYCWs deal with, particularly within the South African context, namely children from birth to the age of 21 within their families, communities, and alternative care programmes.

The researcher must also acknowledge a shift being made from using the term 'CYCW' to the term child and youth care practitioner (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011:8). According to Garfat and Fulcher (2011:8), the title child and youth care practitioner includes many professionals who assume various roles within the CYC fraternity as well as those who use CYC approaches in relating to others. This title refers to "a diverse group of people, working in a very diverse range of settings, and responding to the expectations of a wide range of employers, bureaucrats, policy makers, and legislative imperatives" (Gharabaghi & Krueger, 2010:27). This definition is broad and inclusive. It can however cause confusion in some contexts. In SA, all practitioners are called CYCWs and there is no distinction between learners, auxiliary CYCWs and professional CYCWs (Jamieson, 2013:4). However, this situation is soon to change once the recommendations about differentiated titles get

implemented when the registration of CYCWs commence. According to these recommendations, there will be a distinction of titles starting with learner CYCW which refers to someone with 10 years of schooling; Auxiliary CYCW, with a Further Education and Training Certificate; CYCW, with a degree; and Specialist CYCW, with a Masters or PhD (Jamieson, 2013:4).

The researcher would therefore stick with the “child and youth care worker” definition as it is mostly used in SA’s legal documents, such as The Children’s Act. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 also uses the term “child and youth care worker” to refer to these practitioners among the social service professionals. Hence this title is preferred and used in the context of this study.

According to Krueger (1991:380), the research and study committee of The National Organization of Child Care Worker Associations (NOCCWA) defined child and youth care workers as “individuals who work with troubled or handicapped children and youth in the daily living environment of group care facilities such as residential treatment centers, group homes, psychiatric hospitals, correctional facilities, temporary shelter care, and community based program.” Given that CYCWs usually work with the ‘troubled’ children, it is imperative to understand what motivates them to pursue jobs or even careers in this CYC field.

4.5.2 Motivations for joining Child and Youth Care Work

Now that the term CYCW has been defined, it is important to look into their motivations for getting into this demanding field. Moses (2000:115) describes motivation as “the subjectively held reasons for seeking employment as a CYCW.” He further argued that motivation has a strong potential to directly influence overall job performance and job longevity, and to indirectly influence children’s outcomes. Authors such as Best (2009) and Hodas (2005) agree that CYCWs join the field in the hope of making a difference to the lives of ‘troubled’ children. The researcher believes that this observation can be generalised to CYCWs in various contexts. Curry et al. (2011:19), however, presented a different view that many CYCWs “are drawn to work with hurt and vulnerable children and teens due to similarities in their own childhood histories.” In that instance, it is imperative that CYCWs have reached a point where they have thoroughly dealt with and are comfortable with their past.

Otherwise a lot of what they would express as challenges presented by children and youth might purely be the transference of their own unresolved issues.

Best (2009:12) contends that choosing to do CYC work is a way of looking after ourselves in order to make sense of our lives and get to know who we are. He warns that this motivation should be viewed as the starting point of a professional journey for which training is essential. Maier (1991a:394) concurred that the vocational endeavours of CYCWs are rooted in both professional *and* personal strivings. The relevance of training in the CYC professional journey will be discussed later in this chapter. Whether CYCWs are driven by personal or professional motivations, Hodas (2005:7) warns that it is important that individuals seeking to work with children and youth in care be motivated by appropriate reasons. Failure to clarify such reasons for oneself can only lead to challenges, frustrations and undue burnout.

Taking cognisance of all possible motivations, Hodas (2005:7) generated the following partial list of therapeutically based rationales for an individual seeking employment as a CYCW: (a) a desire to help children, not control or exploit them, (b) a desire to “give back” to the community and to others, (c) a desire to provide children the positive experiences they deserve, and (d) a desire to learn and grow as a professional and not just ‘pass through’. All reasons mentioned above are noble and well-meaning. In the next section the focus will thus shift to the roles of CYCWs.

4.5.3 Roles of Child and Youth Care Workers

CYC requires CYCWs to be involved in a wide range of activities (Gharabaghi, 2010:2) which vary from one context to another. Trying to list all the duties and activities that CYCWs are involved in will undermine the complexities of this field. The extent of CYCWs’ authority in terms of what they are allowed to do and what they are forbidden to do with regard to their charges has always been somewhat vague (Arieli, 1997:17). However, as an attempt to present an overview of what CYCWs do, Helmet and Griff (1977:144) explain that at a basic level CYCWs are “entrusted with giving nurturance and guidance in daily living and recreational activities, as well as having responsibility for the physical care of children.” Maier (1991a:392) also attempted to list some of the duties by citing “first aid, meal serving

(or even the preparation of meals), housekeeping, recording, on-the-spot counseling, unit maintenance, staff conferences, supervision of school work.”

Those outside the field may argue that anyone, even without CYC training, can perform some of these tasks mentioned above. They may further argue that some of the categories mentioned fall under the umbrella of some existing professions, understandably raising questions around professional boundaries. People who adopt such a stance cannot be blamed for their “seemingly simplistic view” of what a CYCW’s role consists of. Especially given that even most CYCWs themselves are “unsure about what it is they do, but they are busy doing a lot” (Gharabaghi, 2010:2). Considering the difficulty of the clientele, it is important that CYCWs possess the needed skills, commitment and knowledge to work with this vulnerable population of young people who are dependent on the capability of staff members (Mattingly in Barford & Whelton, 2010:273). According to Righton (2005), such skills may include making a warm and responsive environment for the child, and constantly renewing and reviewing intimate knowledge of each child. CYCWs bring themselves to the moment and use their experiences, self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to form empowering interactions and help children learn new skills and ways of interacting with others (Krueger, 1997:412). This is the nature of CYC with its hidden complexities. During CYC interactions, factors such as CYCWs and youths’ identities, as well as interactions within a context, play a critical role (Krueger, 1997:413).

White (2007:242) called for more approaches and conceptual tools that can accommodate the dilemmas, uncertainties, and paradoxes of practice, while also supporting the development of reflexive, critically conscious, praxis-oriented practitioners. It is against this background that the focus in the next section will shift to the contexts within which CYCWs find themselves. An understanding of contexts can move us closer to the roles of CYCWs.

4.6 CONTEXTS AND SETTINGS OF CYC PRACTICE

Before elaborating on different contexts within which CYC operates, it has to be reiterated that CYC has mainly originated in residential settings. However, other

forms of programmes emerged as a result of constant evolution within the CYC field (Gharabaghi & Krueger, 2010). CYCWs are therefore also expected to constantly review their roles in order to remain relevant. According to White (2007:236), CYC involves intervening with individual children, youth and families and their social environments. Given that the CYC field has expanded beyond its origins to encompass youth work and a wide range of practices within CYC services (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011: 15), it is vital that CYCWs become flexible whilst at the same time being mindful of their boundaries. In other words, CYCWs need to take cognisance of the existence of other professions such as Youth Work and Community Work.

Garfat and Fulcher (2011:16) posit that the CYC approach represents a way of being and working in the world. They further clarified that “it is about how one does what they do, not a question of what one is called or where they are located.” Flexibility within boundaries is imperative in order to minimise resistance and promote collaboration with other professions. For those who fully understand the nature of CYC work, the question of boundaries should not be worrisome, mainly due to the fact that CYCWs have the child’s holistic needs at the centre of everything they do. It is therefore safe to conclude that CYCWs work wherever there are children and youth with needs.

The evolution of CYC referred to earlier is similarly taking place in SA. Hence CYC practitioners are now in the practice of facilitating and supporting change in individuals, families and communities (Radmilovic, 2005:127). It is important to start by explaining the residential care setting, its origin, form and purpose, before one can move onto other types of settings. This must be done with the view in mind that the majority of CYCWs are still employed in residential care facilities, although many are now active in a host of other programmes and sectors (Gharabaghi, 2010:69). Once residential care has been described, the focus will then shift to secure care, family-based CYC, and community-based CYC.

4.6.1 Residential care

Courtney and Iwaniec, in Kendrick et al. (2011:82), commented that “the nature and availability of historical and empirical literature on residential care varies considerably from country to country.” Therefore the descriptions and discussions to follow in this section

may be true for some countries and not for others. Consideration must therefore be given to the fact that populations of children and young people in different countries all use residential care differently (Kendrick et al., 2011:83).

Arieli (1997:11) defines residential settings as “places where young people spend all or most of their time, often for several years of their lives, in varying degrees of organized separation both from their original community and from the social environment around the settings.” In his definition, Arieli did not list specific places but opted for a broad definition perhaps due to the fact that the definition of residential child care is problematic in itself (Kendrick et al., 2011:83). Therefore the term residential care should be inclusive as an attempt to describe different programmes. Section 1.1 of the Child Care Act of 1983 sub-divided the broad category of residential or ‘institutional’ care into a set of different kinds of facilities, on the basis of the function they fulfil and the needs of the children they serve. These are as follows: *Children’s Home, Institution, Place of Care, Place of Safety, Reform School and Shelter* (Meintjes et al., 2007:12). The current classification of residential facilities aggregates the range of types of residential care settings under the single title of “Child and Youth Care Centres.” It defines a *child and youth care centre* as follows (Children’s Amendment Act 41 of 2007):

...a facility for the provision of residential care to more than six children outside the child’s family environment in accordance with a residential care programme or programmes suited for the children in the facility, but excludes (a) a partial care facility; (b) a drop-in centre; (c) a boarding school; (d) a school hostel or other residential facility attached to a school; or (e) any other establishment which is maintained mainly for the tuition or training of children other than an establishment which is maintained for children ordered by a court to receive tuition or training.

Attempts have been made to define those who find themselves in residential care. Arieli (1997:12) presented an generic view that “care and education in residential settings is made available for various age groups (young children, adolescents, the old) and for people with other special social identities, often deviant (handicapped, sick, or delinquent, as opposed to regular adolescents).” Although the latter part of his description is not developmental in nature – something which is not in line with the CYC approach – it serves as a good attempt to describe those who receive

services within the residential contexts. For the purposes of this study, the clientele of residential CYC services will be restricted to children and youth.

Gharabaghi (2010:69) mentions that other forms of CYC programmes came as a result of frustration with the outcomes of residential treatment services and perhaps with shifting ideological perspectives related primarily to the enormous public funding requirements. Those programmes that rely heavily on governments for funding tend to be obliged to align their programmes with the policies and priorities of the ruling party. Political influences therefore seem to be the dominant determining factor as to how residential CYC programmes should be structured in order to meet the stipulated funding requirements of either the government or any other funding donor (Patel, 2009:30).

The conceptualisation and constantly changing form and structure of CYC in terms of the location of service and the models of practice (Garfat, 2003b:1) will certainly result in some challenges for the residential programmes per se and CYCWs working in these programmes in particular. This is in line with the ecological systems theory which posits that one change in one area will affect all other areas. On the one hand, Wright and Richardson (2004:245) argue that residential treatments are potentially powerful interventions. On the other hand, institutions are noted as impacting negatively on children and being disproportionately costly (Meintjes et al., 2007:i). As a result, policy makers tend to prefer other CYC programmes over residential care programmes. It is this on-going scrutiny that presents challenges for residential programmes. Kendrick et al. (2011:83) hold the view of the ideal residential care as being the one that embraces “the move from large institutional residential settings to new models of ‘community’ residential care which are treatment-oriented, interdisciplinary, and interacting more positively with parents, social networks, neighbourhood and community.” Both traditional and new models of residential care are bound to present some kind of challenges for CYCWs involved.

4.6.1.1 Challenges and limitations of residential care

Over the past years, many countries have adopted the move from residential care to other forms of care for children and youth. According to Steckley (2010:121), in countries such as Scotland (and the United Kingdom more broadly), residential care

has been profoundly affected by inquiries into allegations of abuse. Funding models were also adopted in ways that forced residential care programmes to cap their residential focused programmes. Anglin (2004:181) added that a tendency developed to promote the thinking that relegated residential care to “last resort status resulting in several unfortunate consequences.” Concerns that arose from reports of institutional abuse in countries around the world resulted in a bleak picture being painted about residential care services (Kendrick et al., 2011:81). Some of the concerns raised revolved around “poor outcomes for children across a range of measures and low levels of qualifications and morale among staff” (Smith, 2009:1). According to Meintjes et al. (2007:ii), other concerns include “children’s routine dislocation from family, community, and cultural background; their marginalisation from everyday society; and the absence of opportunities to develop secure, long-lasting attachments.”

To ensure survival in the midst of these negative perceptions, many residential programmes went with the flow to introduce other alternative programmes. In some cases, such moves came at the expense of even the well-functioning residential programmes. Kendrick et al. (2011:82) observed that models of care differ widely, from large scale institutions providing basic care and education for children, to specialist small scale provision offering therapeutic services. These authors further mentioned that standards and quality of residential provision are at different stages of development, as are the education and training of residential CYCWs.

The critics continue to question the effectiveness of residential care in comparison with other alternative services (Kendrick et al, 2011:81). Anglin (2004:178) gives examples of such questions as follows: “how can an ‘abnormal’ (or ‘artificial’) living environment such as a staffed group home foster the development of normality? Won’t the residents simply become institutionalised in such an extra-familial context?” These are some the questions that have been around for a while and serve as the argument for removing children from institutional care into more open and community-based settings. Some further arguments stated that children in state care, which may include other residential care programmes, are rarely provided with access to the kind of life and experiences one would wish for one’s own children (Smith, 2009:16).

Wright and Richardson (2004:244) highlighted the approach of evidence-based practice occupying a central role in public policymaking. This may be as a result of other concerns raised. Although such an approach is necessary, a realisation that residential care programmes are being evaluated through the use of different criteria such as academic performance of the residents should also be scrutinised. Moses (2000:114) noted that the vast majority of available studies involving residential care utilise pre-test/post-test designs. Evidence-based approach is inadequate as children should be evaluated based on the reasons that led them into residential care in the first place. Cameron and Maginn (2009:6) call for the appreciation that “children being placed in care were troubled and troublesome before they came through the door.” Gharabaghi (2010:138-139) challenged the opponents of residential care programmes by raising the following questions when talking about success: What criteria are we using? Are we talking about success through the eyes of child or youth, or are we measuring success based on criteria deemed important by us or by some articulation of societal norms?

Within the multi-disciplinary team context for example, teachers are likely to emphasise academic achievement more than anything else. Their view might be that as long as the children pass and do well at various stages of their academic work, then such a residential programme is effective. Such an approach is limited due to various reasons. Cameron and Maginn (2009:6) argued that providing an academic learning environment, reading materials and opportunities for doing homework may often seem like secondary priorities when compared to challenges such as temper tantrums, systematic destruction, anger, violence and extreme unhappiness that CYCWs have to deal with. Marlowe (2012:96) warns that people who focus on goals tend to be judgmental. They judge the programme, sometimes without considering the complex needs of the children and youth who are accommodated in such programmes. In other words, they are judging the child against the final product (Marlowe, 2012:96), an approach which leads to “management by targets born of a culture of chasing quick fixes and easy solutions” (Wright & Richardson, 2004:245).

There are other factors that are often ignored when evaluating residential programmes. Kendrick et al. (2011:83) reiterated the caution that residential care programmes cannot be considered in isolation from other factors, which range from

the nature of the children themselves, the CYCWs and the organisational structure, to the broader policy matters. At the children's level, it must be noted that residential care services cater primarily for the children who are hard to place (Smith, 2009:89). Therefore it will be difficult to obtain success, as many of those children will struggle to be integrated into the residential programmes.

At an organisational level, residential programmes are structured in accordance with required staffing ratios (Gharabaghi, 2010:166). It is seldom that recommended ratios are adhered to. This makes the job of CYCWs even more difficult. If residential settings are to be effective, adequate staffing ratios should be seriously considered. This will ensure that CYCWs employed in such settings are able to perform to their maximum abilities. Although ratios can be attended to, there is no guarantee for significant evidence in terms of success with children and youth. Marlowe (2012:100) cautions that the increments of change can be "very, very small and the more entrenched the behaviour, the smaller they usually have to be for success to be maintained." He further argues that the black-and-white thinker looks only for evidence that reinforces categorisation and ignores evidence of change (Marlowe, 2012:102). These are some of the subtle dynamics that affect CYCWs with such a huge possible consequence.

Despite many years of opposition, it seems as if there are new emerging voices calling for the reconsideration of residential programmes being relegated to the 'last resort' position. Proponents of residential care such as Anglin (2004) and Smith (2009) are calling for a fresh look at the benefits of residential programmes. The increasing levels of behavioural disturbance amongst some children in 'out-of-home' care, together with the decreasing availability and retention of foster carers, have led to a renewed interest in residential care as a therapeutic option for children (McLean, 2013:1). Such authors do not necessarily reject the flaws that have been identified within residential care settings. Those who are making new calls join others such as Frensch and Cameron (2002:337) who have since asked the following critical questions in support of residential care services: "Are there particular groups of children and youth for whom residential treatment should be a first rather than last resort?" Instead of adopting a blanket rule about the usefulness of residential care services, these authors called for clearer guidelines to make decisions about who

should be placed where. The proposed guidelines will avoid undue harm that may result from some children being misplaced despite needing residential care. Attempts to place children appropriately should be sought with diligence from the onset. Anglin (2004:181-182) argues that unnecessary misplacements result in children being labelled as showing “serious problems with attachment.”

Anglin (2004:184) further makes a strong argument that “for some young people, at certain times in their lives, a group home can be the preferred setting.” Given the challenging behavioural patterns of some children, it may be necessary that they be accommodated in settings that guarantee constant monitoring. This is done not only to promote their development, but also for their safety as well as that of others. The needs of children who present challenging behaviours seem to give the opponents of residential care ammunition to criticise without making any effort to see the benefits of such programmes. Frensch and Cameron (2002:335) added that residential services improve functioning for some children, although gains made by children and youth during treatment are not easily maintained. This can be attributed to other factors such as lack of support from family and/or community. According to Racco (2009), organisations often have limited or no family links, social support systems, access to community resources, or spiritual connections.

Garfat (2003a:8) observed that residential care has typically been an isolated service, hidden away. This means that children were “treated” separately from their community with the hope that once treatment is complete, such children could then easily be integrated into their families and communities. Residential programmes that regard community networks as optional in terms of their programming are doomed to fail, because parental involvement and community networks are success determinant factors. Rather than working in isolation, residential care services and Child and Youth Care Centres should ideally network to provide community-based services (Meintjes et al., 2007:13).

In closing his argument for residential care programmes despite the opposition and challenges, Anglin (2004:188) summarised that “what a well-functioning group home can offer is an intense, supervised, staffed, structured, less emotionally charged and more consistently responsive environment for promoting the personal growth and

development of youth who require such intensive care and support.” Allsopp (2009) also added her voice against a narrow view of residential CYC work. She raised the challenge that decision-makers need to appreciate “the intentionality of the tone, structure, flow and texture that makes up good practice; to move beyond seeing only outcome and not process in CYC work.”

Beyond organisational factors there are broader factors that also need to be taken into consideration. The decision to place a child in residential care is often rooted in crisis; the choice of residential treatment is often based on availability rather than on an appropriate match of its programme to the recipient (Frensch & Cameron, 2002:337). This is thus another factor that may result in some children being placed with CYCWs who are not adequately trained or prepared to deal with them. Some children may require to be placed in more restrictive settings, such as secure care facilities. Hence in the next section, the focus will be on secure care facilities.

4.6.2 Secure care

The DSD (2010:3) defines ‘secure care’ as “a residential facility and/or programme of intervention which ensures the appropriate physical, behavioural and emotional containment of young people who are charged with crimes and who are awaiting trial or sentenced.” According to the Children’s Amendment Act of 2007, the aim is to ensure “the physical containment in a safe and healthy environment— (a) of children with behavioural and emotional difficulties; and (b) of children in conflict with the law.” Although secure care is part of residential care facilities, it will be discussed separately in order to highlight its specific nature and role. Harder, Knorth and Kalverboer (2013:305) further define secure residential care as “a type of service in which young people receive mandated care and treatment in a locked facility.” There seems to be a clear objective for secure care facilities. Such facilities are meant to provide an environment, milieu and programme conducive to the care, safety and healthy development of each young person, while at the same time ensuring the protection of communities (DSD, 2010:3).

According to O’Neil (2001:23), the concepts of ‘welfare’ and ‘justice’ underpin legislation, policies and practice with children. Until recently, these concepts could be seen to be linked to the approaches adopted by the different political parties. Within

the apartheid era SA, many young people were deemed to be in trouble with the law without taking broader political events into consideration. Some of these young people were therefore arrested and sentenced for minor offences. According to the DSD (2010:29), in the 1970s and 1980s children were detained without trial. Towards the end of the 1980s political detention of children drew to an end, but large numbers of children continued to be held in custody awaiting trial (DSD, 2010:29). Although the National Party Government seemed to use criminal justice to condemn and punish young people who were deemed to have violated the laws, the ANC Government shifted the emphasis to a welfare approach of understanding and treating the underlying causes of these young people's behaviours. This approach is consistent with the ecological systems theory. With the growing number of young people in trouble with the law, the transformation policy supported the establishment of secure care programmes and facilities. Such facilities are meant to provide for the care, assessment and development of young people in trouble with the law and awaiting trial (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002).

Anglin (2004:188) noted that the most common characteristics of children and youth that residential treatment CYCWs are likely to encounter include chaotic behaviour, poor impulse control and physical threats; which make them prone to harming others and causing destruction to property. It is such children and youth who are likely to end up in secure care facilities. According to Harder et al. (2013:305), children who end up in secure residential care contexts, mostly adolescents, are usually placed under coercion. This is because some of them trashed rooms and broke windows whilst in residential facilities. Hence CYCWs working with this category of children and youth constantly find themselves in chaotic and frightening places (Best, 2009:3). According to Brendtro (2004:8), CYCWs remain responsible for protecting such children from their own self-destructive acts. It is difficult to place children who display violent behaviours in mainstream residential care settings, hence authorities have little option but to place them in secure care settings. Such children are regarded as 'troubled' or 'troublesome' and as a result they can even find themselves in a social and political climate that is hostile and punitive (O'Neil, 2001:23).

The South African CYC system has outlawed hostilities such as physical punishment for all children in care. Whether physical punishment and other hostilities have been terminated in practice, only those closest to the secure care environments are better placed to tell. To avoid a situation whereby those working with children and youth in secure care rely on hostile interventions, the DSD has generated minimum norms and standards. These are meant to put forward ways by which different sectors of society can work together effectively to uphold the principles of child justice and a restorative justice system (DSD, 2010:3). These minimum standards are informed by the Children's Act 35 of 2005 which emphasises that a secure care facility should provide programmes for the children awaiting trial. These programmes must include: therapeutic programmes, developmental programmes, care programmes, spiritual/religious programmes, cultural programmes and recreational programmes (DSD, 2010:32).

Kendrick et al. (2011:87) reported that the sector in England and Wales has seen a marked increase in private provision, so that in 2004 almost two thirds of residential establishments were owned privately. They further reported that in contrast, there were no privately owned establishments in Northern Ireland and few in Scotland. In SA, the management of secure care programmes has traditionally been one of the functions performed by the state only. However, since 1995 some services have been out-sourced to privately run secure care facilities (DSD, 2010:69). In one of its investigations into the quality of services in secure care facilities, the DSD (2010:35) reported a vast improvement in terms of quality of care in privately run secure care facilities as compared to state run facilities. If positive perceptions in terms of quality services in privately run facilities persist, chances are that more and more secure care services will be outsourced to private providers in SA.

There seems to be little known about those who are employed to care for children in secure care facilities. Smith (2009:88) has however made an observation that staff have become more fearful and less confident in working with such groups of children, often considering them as a threat to their own safety. Steckley (2010:120) conceded that responding to destructive behaviour of children in secure care in a manner that keeps them safe and promotes their healing and development is challenging. Within secure care settings the focus on safety is paramount. CYCWs

need to stay safe by keeping the balance between being too punitive or too lenient, and demonstrating that they attempted to control all unsafe behaviours (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:76). This is undoubtedly an extremely demanding responsibility for CYCWs working in secure care facilities. It must be remembered that children and youth do not just end up in secure care facilities. In most cases, their behaviour emanated from problems that started in families. Hence CYCWs find themselves having to work with families in order to prevent children from landing in residential and secure care facilities.

4.6.3 Working with families

There are many definitions of what a family is. Garfat (2003a:1) however contends that a clear, singular definition is neither available nor desired, as it would be limiting and restrictive. He however acknowledged that a family might be defined in line with the “traditional related group of people, non-biologically related group of individuals living together in a systematically related commitment and lastly individuals that are attached to each, holding a place of primary importance but not necessarily living together.” According to Patel (2009:9), the White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 defined ‘family’ as “individuals who either by contract or [informal] agreement choose to live together intimately and function as a unit in a social and economic system.” In the researcher’s view, a self-defined family is better in that the traditionally defined one is at times the main source of children’s problems. In some instances, children have been rejected, neglected and/or abused by the members of the traditional family. Cameron and Maginn (2009:48) argue that “although personal, school, and community factors are likely to be important influences, it is family and home influences, which have been shown to be most closely and directly associated with the emergence of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.” The self-defined family can therefore serve as a source of support within the therapeutic contexts in that children will identify and relate to those who show genuine care, nurturance and protection as their family.

Some children who find themselves in residential care services do not need to be there. At times, they are there because of poor quality, incomplete or non-existent assessments (Turney, Platt, Selwyn & Farmer, 2011). Others can do well within the family settings with the necessary support. Cameron and Maginn (2009:8) have

alluded to the complexity of becoming a successful parent. They noted that successful parenting is “influenced by a number of interacting factors including the natural skills and experiences of the carer themselves, the characteristics of children, the availability of an extended family, neighbourhood characteristics and the support of society.” In fast-paced modern societies, the availability of extended family and neighbourhood support is no longer a norm. This leaves some parents alone when it comes to raising their children.

CYC has championed the course to support children and parents within their own families and communities. According to Thumbadoo (2013:25), “family work is a critical area of competency for community-based child and youth care workers.” It is against this background that CYCWs have expanded their scope of care to working with families (Kelly, 2004). According to Greenwood (2009), the focus of CYC services within the family is “to improve the functioning of the family unit by increasing family problem-solving skills, enhancing emotional connections, and strengthening parents’ ability to provide appropriate structure, guidance, and limits for their children.” CYCWs ideally recognise the many challenges that families face in trying to raise a child, particularly those with special needs, and step in to assist. Whilst CYCWs’ main focus within the family setting is to address the basic and developmental needs of children and youth, they are also challenged to work with parents in creating conducive environments within which children can grow. White (2007:225) posits that “engaging with youth and families in collaborative and respectful ways; taking practical actions to create the conditions for young people to experience meaning, worth and connection; supporting them to imagine hopeful futures for themselves; and bringing oneself fully to the therapeutic relationship” are all hallmark characteristics of CYC practice.

As CYCWs work from a strengths-based approach whilst working within the families, they also work hard to identify the resources that can be roped in to support these children. Hodas (2005:6) further proposes the following list of therapeutic values and beliefs which should guide how the families should be viewed:

- (a) Caring and competent; (b) experts in relation to their child – and therefore key sources of information; (c) partners in treatment, not individuals to be blamed; and (d) allies to professional staff.

Should all CYCWs embrace these values, they will be a step ahead in terms of doing meaningful work with children within their family settings. Embracing the mentioned principles does not mean that CYCWs will not face challenges. Some of the challenges will come from the children themselves, others from the parents and at times from both. Working with families without taking into consideration the events and dynamics around communities is doomed to yield minimum results, because it is important that parents be directed towards the local services and support that are available to them (VanderVen & Stuck, [sa]). When families are aware of community resources, more children can be reached through community CYC services.

4.6.4 Community-based child and youth care

The definition of community varies, depending on the purpose for such a definition. Gharabaghi (2010:116) suggested that a particular part of a town might be referred to as a community, in which case all the residents, the businesses and the social and cultural services and activities are included as forming part of that community. Some such geographic communities may be characterised by a high concentration of particular social identities, such as an ethnic group or commonalities of economic status, he added. Others might be characterised by very high levels of diversity with many ethnicities, a wide range of economic statuses, and multiple other social identities all living together in a particular geographic space (Gharabaghi, 2010:116). Whatever definition one chooses to adopt, from a CYC perspective, the researcher would propose a definition that allows children to remain at the heart of what constitutes their community.

According to Arieli (1997:33), children who are not considered “problematic” are no longer referred to residential settings merely because they come from broken or poverty-stricken families. Instead, efforts are being made to support such children with minimal disruptions to their family and community lives. Gharabaghi (2010:117) contends that CYCWs’ involvement in the community and neighbourhood is an essential component of CYC practice. This approach supports social science research and a common understanding of human development and behaviour that “humans thrive in communities and in relationships” (Curry et al., 2011:4). CYCWs placed in communities therefore are ideally positioned to provide the much needed

relationships which many of the vulnerable children desire. In the context of this study, it is therefore important to capture their challenges as well as their coping strategies in order to highlight the support that they need.

The DSD (2010:29) defines a community-based programme as “a programme which allows a child to remain in the community whilst attending the programme.” There are various reasons for community interventions. Kendrick et al. (2011:82) noted that in certain countries, residential provision was developed in response to problems such as disaster relief, caring for the orphans of AIDS, and addressing widespread poverty and deprivation. In other countries such as SA, intervention strategies to address similar issues as mentioned above have taken a community approach (Allsopp, 2009). The focus is supporting and protecting children within their own communities. Whatever the approach, resources also seem to be the main dictator in terms of how best to care for children and youth in desperate situations. While the context of community engagement is very complex, the motivation for engaging communities is often much simpler and based on immediate needs (Gharabaghi, 2010:123).

Kasinski (2004:43) made an observation that although therapeutic community work with children and young people goes back at least 150 years; it is only over the last 40 years that it has acquired its present name and identity. CYCWs within community contexts serve in a variety of roles. According to Krueger (1991:380), such roles include community support, working with teachers in schools, helping children with school and recreational programmes, providing daily care in the absence of working parents, teaching parenting skills, counselling families in crisis, facilitating connections between relatives and non-relatives for homeless or abandoned children, and helping families solve emotional problems. The list is endless and therefore care has to be taken so that professional boundary issues are not violated.

White (2007:236) noted that community-based CYC in some contexts meant “the operation of a group home in neighbourhood instead of on campus-like grounds or inside of larger institutional buildings.” Gharabaghi (2010:115) made an observation that for many CYCWs, the concept of community is often equated with the concept

of neighbourhood, “probably because of the long standing association between the discipline of CYC and residential care.” Garfat (2003a:9) cited an expectation that young people living in residential care centres will be involved as much as possible in the community that surrounds them and in more advanced programmes, as well as in the community to which they will be discharged. This has given rise to different connotations for community CYC work. Some programmes were deemed ‘community-based’ by virtue of their physical appearance as “normal” family homes and their physical location in “normal” neighbourhoods (Gharabaghi, 2010:115).

Today community CYC programmes refer to those programmes which have had nothing to do with group homes. Often such programmes have been started by community members themselves without the involvement of the government. The main criterion for identifying such a community is the self-identification membership (Gharabaghi, 2010:116). In some instances NGOs and CBOs have come on board to support such initiatives and linked the initiators with relevant stakeholders to ensure access to resources. Furthermore, some programmes that have proven to be effective elsewhere have been replicated to some communities where services for children were clearly needed. In such instances CYCWs have been identified, trained and deployed in isolated, impoverished rural communities to work with children in their homes (Allsopp, 2009). Such CYCWs continue to be mentored and supervised to deliver effective CYC services. Gharabaghi (2010:118) proposes the following three scenarios for CYCWs forming relationships with the community: (a) CYCWs seeking to find service for a specific client or client group; (b) CYCWs responding to community complaints about a specific client or client group; and (c) CYCWs participating in a community capacity building process. Whatever the approach for getting involved with community CYC, children’s needs remain the main motivating factor.

According to Gharabaghi (2010:127), there are two approaches to community CYC work. The first one is a reactive approach to community engagement which is based on having identified specific needs of clients and therefore seeking out appropriate services, or responding to community complaints and concerns. This approach requires CYCWs to utilise the CYC skills already acquired. In other words, to intervene, CYCWs identify the needs that are in line with their abilities. The second

approach is a proactive approach which involves a situation whereby practitioners are finding ways of not only being relationally engaged with a community, but also enhancing what is possible within the community (Gharabaghi, 2010:127). This type of approach requires CYCWs to have skills beyond their existing CYC specific skills. The approach calls for CYCWs to develop and harness new skills in order to address identified needs which fall outside CYCWs' obvious area of expertise. This places an onus on CYCWs to be knowledgeable of other systems and to maintain extraordinarily high standards with respect to professional communication across sectors and service providers (Gharabaghi, 2010:8). Working in communities puts CYCWs at the junction of all community events. Community CYCWs will have to deal with neighbourhood concerns as well as patterns of violence and crime in spaces where they work (Gharabaghi, 2010:6). It must therefore be acknowledged that CYCWs will not be immune to social ills that are prevalent in the communities within which they operate. Community-based CYCWs' roles can no longer be underestimated.

The researcher would like to conclude this section by noting that all the CYC settings mentioned above may be relevant today. Some settings may well lose their relevance in future, especially if they maintain their format without adjusting to the changing needs of children, youth and their families. Each setting has its own benefits and achievements. Smith's (2009:33) assertion that 'best practice' cannot be divorced from dominant ideologies is profound. Aspects of today's 'best practice' may well be regarded as abuse in future. CYC practitioners therefore need not hesitate to constantly review their practices in order to remain relevant to the children and youth that they serve. It must be noted that the three settings discussed above are not an exhaustive list of settings in which CYCWs operate. There are school-based CYCWs, CYCWs based in hospitals, etc. However, these three settings discussed above are the predominant settings within which the majority of SA CYCWs operate at the moment. Hence even the NACCW's call for conference presentation presenters to focus on service provision in a range of child and youth care settings, "including (amongst others) the community, residential care environments, schools and hospitals" (Bedford, 2012:33). Irrespective of the setting within which CYCWs operate, there are generic challenges that all CYCWs face. In the next section, such challenges will be highlighted.

4.7 CHALLENGES FACING CYCWs

Each CYC setting presents its own unique challenges for CYCWs. In this section, the focus will be on generic challenges instead of setting-specific challenges. It is therefore critical that when one considers the challenges facing CYCWs, one becomes conscious of “the broader social, political and cultural dynamics unfolding locally, nationally, and even globally” (Gharabaghi, 2010:7). Political influences include government legislation and policies; funding decisions; discourses of professionalism and practice; post-secondary training and professional associations; and regulatory bodies (White, 2007:241). All these factors link well with the ecological systems theory as the identified theoretical framework of this study.

There are also challenges that emanate from interpersonal interactions. According to White (2007:241), such interactions recognise the relational character of everyday CYC practice. White clarifies that they include relationships with and expectations of children, youth and families; relationships with peers, colleagues, mentors and supervisors; and relationships with community members and other service providers. White (2007:241) further identified organisational influences which refer to local workplace norms, policies and resources, agency mandates and professional routines.

All the above-mentioned factors are bound to affect CYCWs in many ways and therefore need to be given the necessary attention. Individual CYCWs’ needs also differ. What is regarded as a challenge by one group of CYCWs may not be regarded as such by another group. Interpretations of challenges will depend on where individual CYCWs are, personally and professionally. It will also depend on where they are headed in terms of their career aspirations. For example, the priorities of young, single CYCWs will differ from those of older CYCWs who might be married and have children of their own (Smith, 2009:98). In the next section, practice-based challenges and socio-economic challenges experienced by CYCWs will be discussed.

4.7.1 Practice-based challenges

Working with troubled and troubling youth is a challenging job (Pfeifer, 2011:33). Gharabaghi (2010:4) added that the everyday experience of CYCWs is not quite as clean, controlled and simple as it is presented in many academic discussions. Cameron and Maginn (2009:1) agree that for CYCWs, “good days are special but infrequent, and emotionally draining days are all too common as carers have to face the daily evidence of children’s pain through their temper tantrums, withdrawal, insensitivity, and lack of trust in adults.” There should not be any surprise as to why CYC is such a demanding job, as CYCWs are confronted with a myriad of challenges. This is because CYCWs are often working with children and young people who have had extremely damaging life experiences (Steckley, 2010:120).

In daily CYC practice, CYCWs are subjected to verbal abuse. Some children work hard to sabotage all attempts CYCWs make to engage with them. These children and youth constantly find new and painful ways of inflicting insult or hurt on themselves and on others (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:66). All these behaviours form part of CYCWs’ daily working environments. CYCWs deal with pains which manifest themselves in different behaviours. The compounding factor is that CYCWs are expected to treat these children as individuals and not as a group or class (Phelan, 2005:354). For most CYCWs, practice related challenges are the norm. In addition to practice related challenges, CYCWs are also faced with socio-economic challenges.

4.7.2 Socio-economic challenges

According to Jones, Landsverk and Roberts (2007:102), CYC has always been known for low pay and a lack of career ladders – something which may discourage workers from making a long-term commitment to the CYC field. Gharabaghi and Krueger (2010:33) lamented that “most workers are still near the bottom of the economic ladder.” This situation probably resulted from tendencies of many governments to cut on social spending every time they find themselves with tight budgets. The trend of a greater number of CYCWs being hired ‘on contract’ or in the form of casual or relief-based employment is becoming the norm in some countries (Gharabaghi, 2010:9). Although the situation of contract CYCWs is not yet rife in SA, it is something that cannot be ruled out in the near future. For now, CYCWs in SA seem to be mainly grappling with low salaries which are nevertheless guaranteed on

a monthly basis. Such workers are sure to continue earning for as long as the income streams of their employers remain intact.

Although socio-economic challenges will always remain, Gharabaghi (2010:8) expressed the view that CYCWs now have choices and opportunities that simply were not available before. The prospects of low pay, difficult schedules and often turbulent day-to-day work experiences are now juxtaposed with the possibilities of steady schedules, better pay, and greater professional recognition in sectors such as education, health care and clinical intervention settings specialising in group work or treatment approaches to specific conditions or disorders (Gharabaghi, 2010:6). Some sectors are now competing for competent CYC professionals. This has resulted in a number of job functions and employment settings often being sorted based on perceived prestige and sometimes real differences in compensation with increasing frequency (Gharabaghi, 2010:95). Although this may sound like good news for CYCWs, the concern is that the majority of CYCWs may flock into those sectors that promise lucrative salaries and better working conditions. With CYC professionals now being employed in hospitals, schools and other settings that are non-residential in nature, the temptation for CYCWs to explore some positions that were unfamiliar to the profession in the past can become greater. Gharabaghi (2010:95) highlighted that CYCWs “no longer have to accept jobs that require evening and weekend work; they can work nine-to-five jobs, Monday through Friday in schools.” As a result, sectors that deal with the ‘difficult to manage children’ may be left with untrained and unskilled CYCWs who are not adequately equipped to deal with the demands of their specific settings.

In the context of low salaries, some CYCWs will be tempted to venture into other ways of generating income for themselves. Krueger (2006) tossed in the notion that the most successful CYCWs are more or less radical entrepreneurs. Although Krueger (2006) clarified that many CYCWs do not enter the field to make money, some may be prompted to explore other avenues that guarantee them quick and lucrative incomes. If such avenues are legal and benefit children and young people, perhaps that is the way to consider. The concern though should be about those CYCWs who are going to explore self-enriching initiatives that compromise the quality of care for vulnerable children and youth. Krueger (2006) advocates noble

ways for CYCWs to make a living by being creative, getting educated and making careers for themselves.

Socio-economic challenges can be minimised through empowerment, which comes from within. Krueger (2006) holds the view that CYCWs are not empowered by others but rather empower themselves by working with others to advance their cause to improve care for children. He however acknowledges that CYCWs have to survive by advocating for themselves and their work. Socio-economic challenges should not be the main determining factor that leads to those committed to children's causes quitting the field. For those who are really committed, there seems to be hope. There are other benefits such as personal fulfilment that can be accrued from this work. Arieli (1997:3) cites the encounter between CYCWs and the children which in itself is leading to satisfying experiences. Moses (2000:115-118) also cited some people who left their high-paying jobs in pursuit of work that is more challenging and rewarding, knowing that they will have to bear the price of a salary cut or a decline in working conditions for the sake of personal gratification. The majority of CYCWs who remain committed in CYC often cite personal gratification as their reason for staying in the field. It is therefore important for CYCWs to ascertain their motives for joining and remaining within the CYC sector in order to avoid undue psycho-social challenges.

Back in 1991, Krueger (1991:380) cited the NOCCWA survey which reported CYCWs who have also moved into top and middle management, supervisory, and educational roles, marking another important step in legitimising the profession as one in which members teach, administer, and supervise one another. Each individual CYCW needs to have an aspiration to move to the setting, sector or level whereby they can practice their passion for CYC without being frustrated by the socio-economic constraints. Failure to do so will result in them experiencing a myriad of psycho-social challenges.

4.7.3 Psycho-social challenges

The nature of CYC work is such that CYCWs will experience psycho-social challenges at some point. Some CYCWs will find themselves experiencing psycho-social challenges as a result of their personality and personal approach to situations.

An example might be those CYCWs who are not able to ensure that their needs, desires and goals are met within the CYC field. This may result in them experiencing some level of stress and burnout.

4.7.3.1 Stress

Stress can be defined as a reaction to a stimulus that disturbs the physical or mental equilibrium (Psychology Today, 2014). There are various reasons why people in general experience stress. Some experience stress due to environmental factors that are beyond their control. Arieli (1997:3) recorded his impression that all CYCWs have experienced discontent in varying degrees in the course of their careers. The stress of direct care, the results of child abuse and neglect, and the immediate need to address symptomatic behaviour is real for the majority of CYCWs (Curry et al., 2011:13). This may be due to various reasons. One such reason might be that CYCWs might be product oriented. Given that CYC does not readily yield immediate and tangible outcomes, those CYCWs who adopt product orientation might experience burnout. Marlowe (2012:96) recommended that CYCWs need to be taught to become process-oriented as opposed to being goal or product oriented personnel. The nature of CYC is process oriented.

The concept of stress usually relates to personal responses. Arieli (1997:4) argues that “stress affects the worker from within as a result of personality weaknesses, or from outside as a result of the circumstances of his or her work.” In order to assist, CYCWs continue to bring about change and new understanding in the child’s network (Pooley, 2004:187). Their personal responses to stressful situations need to be brought to the fore. CYCWs need to adopt productive coping strategies that suit their individual characters as well as match their specific settings. Barford and Whelton (2010:273) argued that due to the challenging and distinctive nature of the field, too often CYCWs find themselves depressed and on the verge of burnout (Beker, 2009:7).

4.7.3.2 Burnout

Colman (2006:108) defines ‘burnout’ as “an acute stress disorder or reaction characterized by exhaustion resulting from overwork, with anxiety, fatigue, insomnia, depression, and impairment in work performance.” According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001:397), burnout is a major concern in human service occupations.

Barford and Whelton (2010:271) noted that CYCWs are especially susceptible to burnout as part of the inherent challenges of working within the life-space of high-risk children and youth who display a range of antisocial behaviours. Behaviours that children and youth display may include, amongst other, being verbally and physically aggressive, engaging in self-harming behaviours, acting-out sexually, and resisting treatment from CYCWs (Ryan, Marshall, Herz & Hernandez, 2008). It is these varied inappropriate behaviour that CYCWs are exposed to on a prolonged basis that can contribute to them being burnt out. Compounding the situation is that some of the children and youth that CYCWs work with “often have significant psychological, behavioural, and emotional problems and it is the job of CYCWs to guide them through their daily routines” (Barford & Whelton, 2010:271-272). The psychological and emotional demands of the job make CYC work an exceedingly demanding profession and this has caused tremendous turnover within the field (Barford & Whelton, 2010:284). It is against this background that CYCWs should be given the necessary support that they deserve. Otherwise they would find themselves engaging in negative workplace behaviours (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010:499).

It is important to locate the source of burnout for CYCWs. According to Maslach et al. (2001:397), antecedents of job burnout are multidimensional and frequently grouped into three distinct levels: organisational, occupational and individual. According to Barford and Whelton (2010:272), although the bulk of the burnout research has focused on the role of organisational characteristics in the development of burnout, individual characteristics and social support have also demonstrated unique predictive value. Therefore failure to accurately locate the source of burnout can only lead to a situation whereby the affected stakeholders deal with the symptoms of burnout instead of the source. Employers in particular may find themselves being faced with issues relating to turnover, absenteeism, a reduction in the quality of services, numerous physical and psychological disorders, and a disruption in interpersonal relations (Maslach et al., 2001:397).

CYC environment is often an unpredictable, both in terms of the impulsive nature of the service recipients and the constantly changing policies and procedures from administrators. It is when the affected CYCWs feel that they are overwhelmed that they will adopt various coping strategies. Some of these coping strategies might be

beneficial whilst others may be detrimental to their well-being. The ideal situation is for employers to come up with support mechanisms that will enable CYCWs to stay within the CYC field for long periods, whilst making significant impact in children and youth's lives.

4.8 COPING STRATEGIES OF CYCWS

Best (2009:3) made a profound statement that “if we are to ‘make all the difference’, we need to discover and keep alive an awareness of ‘who we are.’” There might be a variety of coping strategies out there for CYCWs to choose from. Individual CYCWs are however challenged to identify the ones that will work for them. The ‘one size fits all’ philosophy has never worked for children in care and will never work for CYCWs either. Marlowe (2012:96) presents the contention that “coping must first come from the mind – the beliefs and about the orientation CYCWs adopt about working with young people.” Coping can first and foremost come from being aware and recognising that one is dealing with ever-demanding situations. Given the intensity of the CYC work, the trick is “to admit the feelings of being overwhelmed, helpless and hopeless” (Best, 2009:7).

Some CYCWs protect themselves from the pain and anxiety generated by the job by employing a range of psychological defence mechanisms (Smith, 2009:95). This view is supported by Best (2009:11) who highlighted that “there will always be a pull towards defensive practice which may deaden the pain of the work.” Arieli (1997:97) cites two coping mechanisms that appear to be prevalent for CYCWs. The first one is that of replacing the primary commitment to one's work with a secondary commitment. The second one is imputing youth's acting out against them to transference, that is, development of a belief that disruption, hurtful, and similar behaviours of the youth are often acts that are not really directed against the worker but against the parental figure whom he represents or symbolises in the depths of their being. Although a particular coping mechanism might be relevant in some instances, what is important is for CYCWs to ascertain which one they have adopted or tend to adopt from time to time. At this point, the researcher believes that there is no need to focus on which strategy is correct or not. What is important is for the

creative worker is to be aware of the personal and professional aspects of self in selecting best coping strategies when carrying out the task (Best, 2009:3).

Coping can come from a range of sources. Best (2009:3) suggests sources such as learning from literature, training, own experience and the experience of colleagues. He further mentions that CYCWs can learn from the children themselves if they are ready to listen. CYCWS should be encouraged to explore and pursue with diligence whatever sources have the possibility of working as a coping strategy. However, some coping strategies may need to be scrutinised as they are likely to yield short-term positive results with detrimental long-term effects. Each CYCW needs to strive towards emotional maturity that supports their long-term survival within the field.

CYCWs should therefore be assisted to become emotionally competent. It is those CYCWs who are emotionally intelligent that stand a better chance of distinguishing their own issues from those of the children and youth. Cameron and Maginn (2009:41) define emotional competence as “the ability to manage feelings and behaviour in a variety of interpersonal encounters.” CYCWs need to understand that, for the most part, what children do and say is observable evidence of the extreme level of emotional pain in their lives (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:67). To get to this level of awareness requires CYCWs to reflect and constantly seek to understand. At times it might be difficult for CYCWs to get to this point alone. The supervisors can play an important role in ensuring that CYCWs have an opportunity to step back from day-to-day reality, thinking in less concrete terms and taking the time to reflect on meanings as much as they reflect on action (Gharabaghi, 2010:198). According to Pfeifer (2011:31), engaging in self-reflection can keep CYCWs from being complacent, leading them to being better problem solvers when faced with challenges.

CYCWs need safe spaces where they can freely and genuinely express feelings provoked by the work, including those which may appear critical, destructive or otherwise unprofessional (Steckley, 2010:121). This space can only emanate from an environment of trust and unconditional acceptance. An opportunity for expression alone is not enough; CYCWs also need to be supported to make sense of their feelings in a way that gives insight to the young people, their ‘selves’ and their

practice (Steckley, 2010:122). One such a space is supervision, which will be discussed as a coping strategy in the next section.

4.8.1 Supervision

Anglin (2004:187) argued that effective supervision allows for an intensity of interaction and offers some protection against abusive or excessive reactions. Supervision is a commonly used word in different contexts and industries. Wilson (2004:220) notes that supervision exists within mainstream organisations as an integral part of effective management. He goes further to state that “all organisations need a clear structure, a comprehensible framework in which staff knows more or less where they stand and what they are required to do.” Cearley (2004:315) concurs by adding education and administration as delineated functions of supervision.

Within the broader context, employers would want to use supervision for their own gain, such as enabling the organisation to monitor the work (Best, 2009:9). Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:86) also noted that employers tend to tie supervision to performance management. Performance and monitoring expectations as objectives are understandable and to an extent fair. However, to limit supervision to a mere monitoring tool will be short-sighted. Best (2009:9) made a contribution that supervision offers wider and deeper possibilities such as presenting “valuable opportunity for supporting workers and extending their understanding, for encouraging good reflective practice environments.” This is the approach that the researcher believes can be adopted by both the supervisor and the supervisee. The approach guarantees quality standards as required by the employer, as well as support as needed by the CYC supervisee. As far as the researcher is concerned, the approach has got a win-win focus embedded in it. It must however be noted that as a principle, it looks good and should be sold to all involved. The challenge though is the application of this principle in real practice. Ideally, the form that supervision takes should depend on the context, the design of the programme and the services offered in the programme (Scott, 2009:3).

The researcher would go along with Best’s (2009:9) description of supervision as “a reliable space for receiving support and consultation.” Although it is generic, this definition seems to be in line with the CYC field. Within the CYC context, a goal in

clinical supervision is to help staff gain a clearer understanding of the function and purpose of the youth's behaviour and to determine the needs of the child (Pfeifer, 2011:32). It is important that from the onset, both the supervisor and the supervisee should share the same meaning of what supervision is, otherwise at best the likelihood that the benefits of supervision will not be fully realised becomes greater. At worst, there can be a seriously strained relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. Michael (2005) suggested that it is imperative that there is clarity as to what supervision is, who will supervise who, and what the objectives will be. The structure, content and purpose of supervision should also be agreed upon. Although not everything can be discussed and finalised during the first supervision encounters, at least there should be an understanding that the supervision process is open for review if it is to remain a beneficial and effective coping strategy for CYCWs. Pfeifer (2011:33) recommends that the clinical supervisor focus on connecting with the CYCWs who need to be able to trust their supervisor and feel comfortable during the first supervision encounter. Indeed connecting will lay a good foundation for future supervision processes.

Supervision within CYC contexts has not been without problems. There are several factors that contributed to difficulties in introducing and implementing effective supervision. One of the challenges around supervision is that in the past, CYCWs often worked under the supervision of other professionals such as social workers, psychologists or teachers (Helmet & Griff, 1977:144). Michael (2005) observed that this arrangement continued to exist up until recently, particular in SA. This arrangement clearly had the potential to bring about misunderstanding between the supervisor and the supervisee, as different professions are likely to have a different understanding, orientation and priorities in terms of how supervision should unfold. The ideal situation is the one whereby the supervisor is readily available "to model the actions, orientation and attitude they wish to see workers adopt with children, youth and their families" (Michael, 2005). This suggests that CYCWs should be supervised by CYC practitioners.

Barford and Whelton (2010:285) hold the view that "younger employees need to be mentored by older, more experienced employees." The immediate availability and proximity of experienced CYC practitioners to the children they serve translates to

life-space supervision that can help new workers to make the transition and see how theory can be practically applied (Michael, 2005). This will alleviate a situation whereby new CYCWs are supervised by other professionals. Having experienced CYCWs as supervisors will ensure that “processes of self-reflection, critical thinking, and exploration of the values that guide our work do not get lost” (Gharabaghi, 2010:197).

Even where CYCWs are supervised by ‘suitable supervisors’, Curry et al. (2011:16) reported that CYCWs tend to want a manual for the mind. This is clearly an expectation that needs to be addressed much earlier within the supervision relationship. It is against the background that “there isn’t any manual and there can never be one”, as argued by Curry et al. (2011:16), that clarity must be sought rather earlier than later.

Some CYCWs may have a different view as to what the goal of supervision should be. When one works directly with children and youth, it is understandable that one is likely to expect immediate and practical tools to deal with their issues of concern. But such an approach would equally be seen as dealing with crisis. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:86) propose a supervision process that is “about exploring ways of thinking.” If supervision is going to require a way of thinking, then it makes sense that the calibre of the supervisee also becomes a critical factor. CYC supervisees would be required to reflect about themselves in the context of interactions with youth in order to gain new insight into their work (Pfeifer, 2011:30). Training, education, in-service training and continuous professional development can play a significant role in this regard. These areas will be discussed later in this chapter as they equally contribute to professionalisation and determine the type of supervision required. The assumption made here therefore is that supervision should be a key factor to support the professional foundations already laid down through other processes such as training.

Pfeifer (2011:31) raises a concern about the misconception that clinical supervision is only needed for newer staff. Although it makes sense that newer workers might need intensive supervision more regularly, this misconception needs to be clarified. Wilson (2004:220) mentioned that supervision is beneficial to all those who are

concerned with the well-being of children and youth, citing senior and junior staff. Pfeifer (2011:31) advances the view that experienced staff should also be engaged in clinical supervision so as to provide wisdom from their own experience to newer colleagues and be a front-line support to professional growth. Supervision provided to newer staff will assist them to make sense of unconscious processes that can be bewildering and disabling when they are first experienced (Collie, 2004:235).

Experienced CYCWs should also be prepared to continuously engage in supervision as supervisees. Although their supervision will certainly differ from that of new CYCWs in terms of frequency and content, it may still benefit them a great deal. The experienced CYCWs' level of development (Phelan, [sa]) will certainly have to be taken into consideration in determining the type of supervision required. One of the immediate benefits of having experienced supervisors receiving supervision is that they will not fall into the trap of complacency. Pfeifer (2011:31) warned that people who claim to 'know it all' run the risk of failing to see the fresh challenge in each unique individual that they serve.

In CYC settings, the reality is that there may be situations where experienced CYC practitioners hold senior positions and therefore don't have someone readily available within the organisation to serve as their supervisor. In such situations, Wilson (2004:221) suggests that they can explore consultation that exists outside or on the edge of an organisation. It must be noted that consultation takes on a different tone, which holds "a connotation of heightened esteem, superior knowledge, and mysterious power and a promise of bringing about rapid change and remedy" (Wilson, 2004:221). Consultation as described here may be in contradiction to the CYC approach – which does not advocate for rushed and immediate results, but rather for an incremental growth process. Hence experienced CYCWs should rather adopt what Anglin (2004:187) has termed "co-vision" by a co-worker working on the same shift. Co-vision allows the supervisor not to wait for the worker to come to him or her, but rather to take responsibility for initiating the supervisory interaction (Michael, 2005). The arrangement where both supervisor and supervisee are involved on a more equal footing with each other in a process of learning (Wilson, 2004:222) seems to be more appropriate than consultation. This arrangement can certainly also bring about additional benefits in terms of coping strategies.

CYCWs interact daily with children, fellow CYCWs and other colleagues, parents, community members, and other stakeholders. Therefore they need the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to work with each of those systems – something that can easily be obtained from the healthy supervisory relationships. A healthy supervisory relationship will not only benefit CYCWs but ultimately children and youth who are under the supervisees' care. Thoughtful planning and supervision can help children and CYCWs to manage their feelings and interactions in relation to the emotional and practical issues (Best, 2009:13). According to Michael (2005), “being supportive, sharing knowledge, processing the experience, demonstrating empathy, being accountable and offering leadership all seem like essential characteristics in supervision.”

Supervision can support workers to develop strategies to maintain positive relationships while enforcing limitations (McLean, 2013:8). However, at times, regular scheduled supervision is not practical. In such cases, Best (2009:11) suggests reliable multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral meetings that can help CYCWs to function effectively, with benefit to both the CYCW and children. In other words, multi-disciplinary team work in itself can also serve as a coping strategy for CYCWs.

4.8.2 Multi-disciplinary team work

The *Oxford Dictionaries* (2014) define *multi-disciplinary* as “combining or involving several academic disciplines or professional specializations in an approach to a topic or problem.” The CYC field has developed as a team-based approach to engaging with children and youth (Gharabaghi, 2010:83). This approach has been in existence for several years as indicated by authors such as Anglin (1999:145), who conceded that CYCWs need to work closely as part of a team with a variety of other professionals. The multi-disciplinary approach came as an acknowledgement that “each discipline alone is not capable of addressing challenges related to the whole individual, complex families, and communities” (Nicholson, Artz, Armitage & Fagan, 2000:41).

Teamwork by its nature is beneficial in that it brings about multiple perspectives. According to Cameron and Maginn (2009:104), within the multi-disciplinary approach, “everyone has important things to say about every aspect of a child’s

development.” CYCWs recognise that the experiences of children and youth in the context of therapy sessions and their involvement with other professionals outside of the residential living and other CYC programme contexts are of great importance (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:87-88). Given the amount of time CYCWs spent with children and youth, they can exchange their observations with other team members, thus contributing to relevant and holistic treatment plans. According to Murphy, in Nicholson et al. (2000:41), multi-disciplinary and collaborative practice is likely to be strongly characterised by embracing and utilising individual differences and cooperation and coordination of efforts.

Although there is evidence of the benefits of multi-disciplinary teams, this does not mean that there are no challenges associated with the composition and functioning of these teams. Some of the challenges may result from a “clash of cultures” characterised by differences in values, language, problem-solving strategies, and other elements of professional behaviour (Sheehan in Nicholson et al., 2000:41). For example, Frost and Robinson (2007:185) noted that multi-disciplinary working with families is a complex and demanding process, but that it can be successfully managed if clear support and guidance is provided. In order for multi-disciplinary teams to function effectively, Nicholson et al. (2000:41) suggested that “a shared understanding of aims, objectives, and of what constitutes good practice” is required. These authors further outline the following components of multi-disciplinary collaborative practice: organisational structure, cooperation, roles, communication, leadership, decision-making, conflict, and attention to collaborative process.

Now that the benefits as well as the challenges that may result from working within multi-disciplinary teams have been discussed, the specific focus of the next section will be on relationships with other professionals. The researcher’s view is that a healthy working relationship with other professionals in itself can also serve as a coping strategy for CYCWs.

4.8.3 Relationship with other professionals

It has already been stated in chapter two that when talking about CYC in relation to other professions, it is important that clear boundaries and responsibilities get outlined in order to avoid confusion as well as unnecessary confrontation.

Gharabaghi, (2010:137) cites the following example to illustrate how CYCWs work with other professionals:

Physiotherapists and physicians are primarily concerned with physical health, psychiatrists and psychologists with mental health, probation officers with criminal behaviour, teachers with cognitive learning. Only the field of gerontology appears to share child and youth care's concern with a portion of the life cycle as a totality. With such a holistic perspective, CYCWs specialize in being child-focused generalists.

In most cases, the task of the teacher, psychologist, social worker, and educational counsellor are relatively clear and well-defined (Arieli, 1997:11). This is the case with the task of many other professionals. The task of CYCWs is however never as clear due to the holistic focus of CYC (Newbury, 2004). CYCWs are therefore 'generalists' in that they get involved in a range of activities through which they might engage with young people, making their duties virtually limitless: from disciplining to game-playing, and from nursing an illness, to comforting after a nightmare in the middle of the night – all are within the professional purview of the CYCWs (Linton & Foster, 2003). Gharabaghi (2010:137) clarified the roles of different stakeholders within the multi-disciplinary team in order to emphasise the point that CYCWs cannot work alone. Salmon (2004:156) rightfully argues that working within a multi-disciplinary team reflects the demands of managing the ever-increasing complexity of society and the recognition that no profession can be expected to single-handedly address every aspect of children's needs.

The status afforded to CYCWs working within the multi-disciplinary team settings has also remained a bone of contention. This was due to the fact that for some professionals, caring for someone was hardly considered a professional activity (Gharabaghi, 2010:141). This has resulted in those doing the caring job not being regarded as professionals and created a rift within multi-disciplinary teams where CYCWs needed to be represented. Krueger (1991:380) lamented that historically, clinical discussions were held outside of the residential centre and the outcomes of meetings were conveyed to the residential staff with the expectation that they would follow the intervention plans. This was clearly based on the misconception that CYCWs were considered to be unskilled paraprofessionals (Helmet & Griff, 1977:144). Perhaps this was due to the fact that CYCWs were not as trained and

qualifications not as developed as they are today. It seems as if CYCWs still maintain marginal status in relation to the psychologists, social workers and other members of the multi-disciplinary team (Winfield, 2009; Gharabaghi, 2010). If the status quo remains, we cannot continue to talk about effective multi-disciplinary teams. Within the CYC context, the researcher's view is that true multi-disciplinary teams should consist of team members who enjoy at least equality in terms of the contributions they can make on matters affecting children and youth. It seems as if there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in order to achieve this equality. Hence Hoffman's (1999) warning to CYCWs that "recognition of a profession is won only when its members assert their rightful place among other professionals, and when they can sustain that place" remains valid even today. This warning must be viewed against the background that CYCWs themselves "have not always done particularly well in articulating what it is they do and how it relates to what others are doing" (Gharabaghi, 2010:100).

It seems as if the marginalisation of CYCWs did not come out of nowhere. There are contributing factors; some from the CYC field itself, others from outside of the field. Within the field, Gharabaghi (2010:10) cites the deeply-held anxieties and vulnerabilities that come with working in a field that has not yet been fully recognised as a professional field. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:76) also cited different opinions and understanding between CYCWs themselves. Curry et al. (2011:16) added that at times there is no agreement amongst CYC professionals about how to approach many of the challenging situations that confront CYCWs. Best (2009:12) suggested that coherent team work can make all the difference to workers and children alike. At the same time Gharabaghi and Phelan, (2011:76) added that inconsistencies in terms of dealing with the children, and articulating what the field is about can result in team discord. These are some of the areas that must receive attention if CYC is to receive the desired recognition from other professionals.

Factors emanating outside the field include the reality that CYC practice is almost never a mandated service in many countries. Gharabaghi (2010:11) lamented that this is in contrast to the status afforded to police officers, judges, lawyers, teachers, and even social workers. This means that while CYCWs may participate in case conferences and case planning activities, they are almost never the decision-makers

within these processes (Gharabaghi, 2010:11). This is clearly posing some challenges, especially to those CYCWs who have been in the field for a long time. Some CYCWs have indeed gathered ample knowledge and skills in terms of what works for which children under different circumstances. Not being allowed to be a decision-maker can undoubtedly result in many frustrations for such CYCWs. Michael (2005) argued that CYCWs need to become fully involved in meetings, share ideas, and learn from other team members.

There are many avenues whereby multi-disciplinary team members can contribute to the functioning of children and youth. The most common place of making such a contribution is within the context of multi-disciplinary team meetings. Such meetings take different forms, duration and frequencies. Some meetings include children and at times their families as well. Curry et al. (2011:13) cites “daily and monthly team meetings”, “case conferences”, and “circle ups” as examples of such meetings. Other meetings exclude children and consist of professionals only. Even more interestingly is that some meetings go further to exclude even other professionals such as CYCWs. This is despite the fact that CYCWs often spend more time in direct contact with children than other professionals (Jones et al., 2007:100). When CYCWs are invited and given an opportunity to participate in meetings, they really need to capitalise on such platforms not only to represent children and themselves, but also their field. Gharabaghi’s (2010:106) notion that “the ability to convey useful information is critical for successfully engaging with bureaucracies anywhere” remains critical for the advancement of the CYC field. Being a responsible multi-disciplinary team member includes fostering, generating and participating in teamwork and co-operation, developing an active commitment to the child care profession and being loyal and responsible (Michael, 2005).

Full participation in multi-disciplinary teamwork can only take place within an environment that is conducive and open. This refers to an environment whereby members of the multi-disciplinary teams are “prepared to recognise and value those distinctive perspectives which different professionals bring with them” (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:104). Hoffman (1999) advanced the view that when CYCWs can share opinions informed by theory and experience, their colleagues will readily accept them as valuable members of a treatment team. This can be done within a respectful

relationship which is “collaborative rather than primarily hierarchical in nature” (Hodas, 2005:3).

Multi-disciplinary teamwork requires each team member to know his role and play it with confidence. Cameron and Maginn (2009:104) recorded their experiences of collaborative practice turning into confrontational exchanges as a result of team members trying to play a role that is clearly not theirs. Often this happens when people are pursuing professional self-interest instead of advancing the interest of children and youth. CYCWs need to appreciate that other professionals are equally trained to identify and deal with some issues affecting children and youth. Other professional team members also cannot underestimate the fact that CYCWs can, and often do, have the greatest influence on children and youth (Hodas, 2005:1). It will therefore be beneficial if CYCWs could partner with other team members within the confined boundaries of team loyalty, accountability and transparency. Issues of team support and guidance can only manifest themselves within a healthy relationship between practitioners (Gharabaghi, 2010:11). True partnership is likely to materialise when CYCWs have the professional status that matches that of other professionals. The spirit of partnership can also be sustained if the entire CYC field has developed to the professional status that it deserves.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the following areas have been covered: the history of CYC, the definition, roles and motivations of CYCWs as well as the recipients of CYC services. From the literature used in this chapter, it is clear that CYC comes a long way in terms of establishing itself as a profession. Despite these attempts, as well as the progress made, there seems to be a number of challenges that continue to impact on the development of this field and by extension CYCWs. Areas of education, training and development seem to hold the key for the advancement of the CYC field. Hence in the next chapter attention will be drawn to how CYC has fared in these areas.

CHAPTER 5

LITERATURE REVIEW: PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

An exhaustive literature study about the history, nature and contexts of CYC has been shared in the preceding chapter. Challenges that face CYCWs were also highlighted. Upon closer scrutiny, some of these challenges revolve around the professional status of this field. In this chapter, the professional status and development of CYC will be discussed in detail. Special focus will be on the following areas: education and training, registration and regulations, in-service training and continued professional development, and professional boards and associations.

5.2 RATIONALE FOR PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT

Shim (2010:847) argued that the ability of child welfare agencies to meet the needs of children and families they serve depends on a competent and stable workforce. In support of Shim's (2010) view, Pfeifer (2011:29) added that "the limits on how much young people can grow are often set by the abilities of the staff who serve them." These authors' views raise a critical point about the importance of the calibre of CYCWs who are charged with the responsibility of promoting vulnerable children's growth and development. Curry et al. (2011:3) cited research studies that identified the unavailability of competent, well-prepared CYC practitioners to staff programmes as being one of the most significant factors limiting CYC services. From this citation, it means that no country can claim to be aiming for quality CYC services whilst ignoring the status and development of CYCWs. There have been studies carried out that indicate that many who deal with troubled behaviour lack the training to respond to the pain and needs of the youth (Brendtro, 2004:5), and this situation needs to be changed. Hence the DSD (2005:55) cited the significance of education, training and development which must occur at the following levels: professional education, continuous professional development, skills training for the implementation of the Service Delivery model, and on-going in-service training.

There is no doubt that children and youth in care need to be cared for by competent CYCWs who know what they are doing. Given their difficult past, this is a way of ensuring that children and youth receive relevant CYC services that address their individual needs. Effective interventions require CYCWs who are sensitive about the children and youths' difficult past and therefore strive to give them hope for their future. Any arrangement that allows these children to be cared for by ill-prepared CYCWs can only promote the risk for secondary abuse and neglect. It is clear that CYCWs' development needs to be taken seriously for the advancement of the CYC field as well as the provision of quality services to children and youth. Collie (2004:233) argues that staff development plays an essential role in helping staff "to gain an understanding of the complex conscious and unconscious processes inherent in therapeutic work."

Although the move towards professionalisation of the CYC field seems to be a logical thing to do, Fusco and Baizerman (2013:85) warned that there has been opponents of such a move, both within and outside the CYC field. As a result, much effort has been devoted by those in the field to the task of assessing the position of CYC in areas of professional status (Eisikovits & Beker, 2002:416). Those who advocate for the professionalisation of the field have since argued that professionally trained workers would give better services to children (Helmet & Griff, 1977:144). In SA, the aspiration towards professionalisation of CYC has been in existence for some decades. Back in 2000, Du Toit (2000) assured the SA CYCWs that "a new CYC system which gives full recognition to the role which CYCWs can play in a variety of settings, including schools and community is being introduced." Despite Du Toit's assurance, aspiration to professional recognition is still not fully realised as "the SACSSP and the DSD are still drafting new legislation and policy to allow for the recognition of different cadres in the social service workforce" (Jamieson, 2013:8).

Krueger (1991:371) highlights the importance of professional groups to define themselves, form associations, develop a knowledge base and educational programmes, set standards for practice, follow a code of ethics, and self-regulate if they are to move towards professionalisation. Eisikovits and Beker (2002:416) advised that "when faced with a discrepancy between aspiration and recognition, most occupational groups in the human services have responded with efforts to

establish their status, credibility, and autonomy as those of a profession in accordance with generally accepted criteria.” In SA, for instance, the majority of those who are in the CYC field have always supported its professionalisation (Allsopp, 2002). Those professionals outside the CYC field might not see the immediate gains that can be accrued from the professionalisation of this field. Garfat (2003a:7) has presented a picture that numerous educational programmes for CYC are springing up. All these endeavours seem to suggest the desire of many committed CYCWs world over to move toward acquiring the relevant education and training that will render them effective within their chosen field.

5.3 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Collins, Amodeo and Clay (2007:1487) noted that training is often used in child welfare as an intervention to promote effective performance. The notion of effective, relevant staff development and training programmes for CYCWs is strongly supported by authors such as Collie (2004) and Hodas (2005). Therefore for the CYC fraternity to convincingly do professional work, CYCWs’ education and training need to be embraced by all stakeholders as the cornerstone of the field. Training and development of CYCWs will promote reflective practice in which CYCWs are helped to make the necessary links between what they have learned and how they make use of that learning in practice (Collie, 2004:233).

Weighing in about the significance of training, Fewster (2008) argued that trained CYCWs will be able to “get involved, become vulnerable, sense their own fear, feel their own pain, stay curious about the experience of the other person and, no matter what, hang-in there.” In order for training to make a real impact, both CYCWs and their supervisors must value training. Antle, Barbee and Van Zyl (2008:1076) held the view that a supervisor who viewed learning as more important was more likely to use and reinforce the practical skills from this training. In other words, training should not only be valued by the concerned CYCWs; the organisation as a whole should embrace the benefits that can be accrued from training. In their study, Antle et al. (2008:1077) found that organisational support of training predicts more learning and a transfer of these new skills to the workplace.

Collie (2004:233) argues that training gives CYCWs the opportunity to experience a process that allows them gain a degree of ego mastery over potentially overwhelming experiences. It is a known fact that almost everyone hired to work in CYC starts off overwhelmed by the demands of the job (Modlin, 2013:7). Education and training can therefore be regarded as contributing towards coping mechanism for CYCWs. Trained CYCWs will undoubtedly experience situations differently from untrained ones. To cope with the emotional demands of the job, CYCWs are often provided with specific skills training, educated on the importance of self-awareness, and coached on the need to identify their "triggers" – primarily so that they will not get drawn into power struggles with the young people or engage in counter-aggression (Modlin, 2013:8).

5.3.1 The flaws of training

Although training in different forms has benefits, it does not mean that it does not have its flaws. Authors such as Michael (2005), Winfield (2009), and Gharabaghi and Krueger (2010) expressed concern that many trained and qualified CYCWs struggle to transfer the knowledge acquired into practice. This tendency seems not to be confined to one country. Gharabaghi (2010:3) also reported the tendency of new staff to quickly abandon all theoretical concepts as soon as they enter the real CYC settings. According to Curry et al. (2011:7), this concern should not be regarded as being pertinent to CYC only, but something that happens in a variety of fields. Gharabaghi (2010:3) further reported that there is often a lot of support from less skilled staff to abandon their knowledge and to start using 'common sense approaches'. This can really be prevalent where supervision systems by trained and experienced CYCWs are non-existent. According to Best (2009:12-13), the ideal CYC setting is the one whereby CYCWs are using their personal resources and awareness of self in order to make the connections between theory, practice and experiential understanding.

The inability to demonstrate the relevance of knowledge acquired from training will make others continue to question and doubt the value of education and training, resulting in complaints that the training is "useless" (Curry et al., 2011:16). Cameron and Maginn (2009:9) painted a picture that in case of residential care settings, much of the good practice appears to result from the unspoken or tacit knowledge

possessed by care staff, rather than from their more formal, in-service training programmes. This picture strengthens the argument against structured training and education. Efforts should therefore be made to curb this misconception.

Furthermore, this inability by some CYCWs to transfer knowledge into practice might be linked to the type of content materials used. The question of the appropriate body of knowledge and content of training for CYC has been around for a while (Eisikovits & Beker, 2002:431). Hence even Phelan (2005:348) raised a concern about CYC post-secondary programmes often using books and materials from allied professions. This is the practice he argued that needed to stop, as there is a lot of literature written by CYC practitioners. Phelan's view was supported by Modlin (2013:6) who observed that an abundance of theoretical knowledge generated within the CYC field in the last few decades does not always seem to make its way to the front-line in practice. Curry et al. (2011:13) seem to hold a different view in terms of the availability of literature. They stated that the CYC field has "only recently begun to fully write things down for the purposes of teaching and transfer of learning." These authors' views seem to be contradictory to Phelan's (2005:348) view:

...there are more than enough journals from both North America and the rest of the English speaking world to create course packages for our curriculum, and there are books being published every month by CYC practitioners that are relevant, useful, and available.

He further cites the www.cyc-net.org website and other internet sources as a "gold mine of the CYC tradition of oral stories to illustrate competent practice". It is clear from the two opposing views in terms of the availability of CYC literature that CYCWs are challenged not only to read and practice in accordance with the available CYC literature, but also to research and write about their practice in order to increase what is already available.

5.3.2 Institutions offering accredited Child and Youth Care programmes

It would seem that the physical institutions of learning where people could study CYC were limited at one point. Garfat (2003a:6) reported the existence of growing interest in academic environments which provides education specific to the CYC field. He added that "the developing set of opportunities is more evident in Canada

than in the United States, although there is growing evidence of an increase there as well.” There seem to be other factors that do not entice people to obtain CYC qualifications even in areas where there are institutions that provide for such qualifications, and such factors warrant an investigation. In Canada for example, about 50% of practicing residential CYCWs do not have a CYC diploma or degree (Stuart & Sanders in Gharabaghi, 2010:158). This is despite these CYCWs being based in a geographic jurisdiction that has a greater concentration of post-secondary CYC diploma and degree granting institutions (Gharabaghi, 2010:158). This pattern calls for an investigation as the situation is different in other countries.

Although there have been limited institutions that offered CYC qualifications over the years in SA, the situation is changing for the better. Jamieson (2013:14) presents an account showing that training courses in CYC were first introduced in the 1980s in SA by the NACCW. The Basic Qualification in Child Care (BQCC) became a popular offering despite it not being accredited. This qualification prepared many SA CYCWs to offer quality care to children and youth. Jamieson (2013:15) further outlined that the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) in CYC, which is recognised under the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as a Level 4 qualification (that is the equivalent of graduating from high school), was introduced just after 2002. The NACCW and three other training bodies offer this accredited course.

At a tertiary level, there are four institutions of higher learning that offer CYC programmes. According to Jamieson (2013:15), Monash SA offers CYC degrees up to honours level and DUT offers CYC qualifications from diploma up to BTech level. However, with effect from 2014, DUT will be offering Master's and PhD degrees. UP only accommodates students who want to register for CYC degrees at a PhD level. From the account above, it is clear that the number of organisations and institutions that are interested in offering CYC programmes in SA are on the increase although each one of them seems to be restricted in terms of the number of students it can accommodate, as well as the level of education and training it can offer.

4.3.3 Levels of education and training

The level at which CYC qualification requirements are pitched vary from country to country. In some countries, progress to set high qualification requirements has been

made some decades ago already. Anglin (1999:146) reported that in British Columbia, the Bachelor's degree in CYC has been recognised within the Ministry for Children and Families as appropriate preparation for all child welfare positions, including child protection work. According to Boddy et al., in Smith (2009:157), across Northern Europe pedagogues undertake a professional diploma pitched at a degree level and others go on to complete a Master's qualification. In Denmark 94% of pedagogues are educated at degree level and in England 57% of workers in residential child care have qualifications at upper secondary school level. Kendrick et al. (2011:7) also shared that in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the minimum qualification for care workers is the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) 3 in caring for children and young people. In Scotland care workers need to hold a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) or NVQ, or the equivalent.

The educational developments and progress made in the above-mentioned countries should serve as a motivation for many other countries. Based on the researcher's professional experience and observation from the CYC field, in SA there are CYCWs who have not completed grade 12. Some of these workers have worked in the field for many years, and thus acquired relevant experience in the process. There is a significant number of CYCWs who have obtained basic qualifications and FET certificates in CYC, followed closely in number by those who have obtained Diplomas in this field. A reasonable number of CYCWs have Bachelor of Technologiae (BTech) qualifications, the majority of whom still work within CYC institutions and programmes that deal directly with young people. There are also CYC practitioners who have obtained Masters and Magister of Technologiae (MTech) qualifications specifically in CYC. Such practitioners are working in programmes that directly or indirectly support the CYC field. According to the researcher's estimation, SA has fewer than five practitioners who have reached Doctoral level in CYC.

The situation of qualifications must be viewed in the context of the SA's historical past, whereby the majority of black people were denied the relevant education (Winfield, 2013:70). Now that opportunities to pursue studies in the field of CYC exist, CYCWs at individual level need to aspire to be maximally qualified. The more CYCWs get qualified at the highest levels in this specific field, the faster the field of

CYC will become acknowledged as a profession. Hoffman (1999) has since challenged CYCWs, stating that they can only continue to grow and develop as professionals if they are not frightened to change within themselves. In order for CYCWs to take up the challenge, the broader context should also be conducive for them to get the necessary education. Best (2009:4) argued that until there is better public and political recognition of the demands of CYC work and the need for professional training and support of CYCWs, the level of skill required will remain the exception. However, education alone is insufficient; other systems such as registration and regulations also need to be put in place.

5.4 REGISTRATION AND REGULATIONS

Concepts of registration and regulation are amongst the ideals that can move CYC towards professional recognition. It must be noted that recognition can mean different things to different people. Stuart (2010:48) categorises recognition into two categories. The first being formal recognition of professional status which means that the government and/or employers have CYC recognised through pay or legislation. The second recognition is described as informal recognition, which means that the work is valued and visible and that people feel good about themselves and the work they do. It would be better if all CYCWs could gain both categories of recognition.

The focus here though will be on legislated recognition. Kendrick et al. (2011:87) made a call that the workforce has to be registered in order for them to adhere to the standards of conduct and codes of practice. This is done with the aim of empowering the councils to discipline individuals and, ultimately, remove them from the register if they are found to have violated the professional code of conduct (Kendrick et al., 2009:7). Within the SA context, CYCWs have been engaged in a process of professionalisation for over 30 years. Individual CYCWs are on the verge of being officially branded 'professional' (Winfield, 2009) through registration with the SACSSP. The registration process is still at an advanced stage, awaiting the regulations to be promulgated in the Government Gazette before CYCWs can be registered with the SACSSP (Lodge, 2014/01/13). NACCW made strong recommendations that allowance must be made for registration options within any one social service sector: (a) students, (b) auxiliary level workers, and (c)

professional level workers (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:29). Referring to both emerging and established social services professions, Allsopp and Mahery (2010:27) clarified that differentiated levels of registration that encapsulate categorisation – such as ‘professions’ and ‘occupations’ – can support the growth and development of the different groups. However, with regard to the CYC field, NACCW’s position was that CYC has already been established as a profession in terms of the current Social Service Professions Act (110 of 1978 as amended), and that being categorised as an ‘occupation’ will thus be a retrogressive step which will disadvantage the sector (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010: 27).

Once registered, CYCWs will be expected to engage in different types of training to maintain their registration status. These requirements may include in-service training and continued professional development.

5.5 IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gharabaghi (2010:158) describes pre-service as “the formal educational programs that a practitioner completes before entering the field.” Those CYCWs who have completed pre-service training join the field with concepts and theories that will hopefully explain situations that they have to deal with. These concepts and theories hopefully enable these CYCWs to consider their actions carefully and thoughtfully when confronted with overwhelming situations. Gharabaghi (2010:147) highlighted that many individuals serving the functions of CYC have never completed pre-service training. Such CYCWs find themselves having to work without theoretical information that may be critical for their jobs. Some CYCWs who have long been in the CYC field can dismiss the relevance of pre-service qualifications, pointing out that some of their members who had pre-service qualifications know very little in terms of how the actual job is done (Gharabaghi & Phelan, 2011:84). Such opponents of pre-service qualifications may have a valid point, as it has already been mentioned in section 5.3.1 of chapter 5 that some CYCWs find it difficult to translate what they have learnt from pre-service studies into real CYC practice. It is the researcher’s view that pre-service training is essential for one to be acknowledged as a professional.

Although experienced CYCWs without pre-service qualifications may have acquired valuable experience that enables them to deal with the children and youth in their care, they can still benefit by improving their knowledge base through available educational platforms. Such platforms include in-service training and continued professional development. Dictionary.com (2014) states that the word *in-service* denotes “training that is given to employees during the course of employment.” In-service training is the most used mechanism for those who have already entered any employment with or without pre-service training. It must be noted, however, that the provision of in-service training varies considerably amongst employers (Gharabaghi, 2010:158). According to Collie (2004:235), the primary purpose of internal development programmes for residential and therapeutic community CYCWs is to transmit the culture, values and working practices of the organisation.

At times there might be a need to consider external training. According to Collie (2004:239), external training assists to transmit meaning through a process of linkage between theory and practice. Collie (2004:239) further argues that it is only through external input that organisations and individual workers can fully appreciate that the unconscious processes that engage them within the organisational frame are knowable, and known about, outside the organisational frame. This method of acquiring knowledge can be associated with *continuing professional development* (CPD). Craft (2000:6) argues that CPD is formerly known as in-service education and training. Therefore chances are that in-service training and CPD may still be confusing to many professionals. According Allen (2014), CPD refers to the process of tracking and documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that one gains both formally and informally as one works beyond any initial training. Allen (2014) argues that the key features of the CPD process are that it needs to: (a) be a documented process, (b) be self-directed, (c) focus on learning from experience, reflective learning and review, (d) help employees set development goals and objectives, and (e) include both formal and informal learning.

In one of their studies, Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:85) found that teams did acknowledge the importance of professional development and in-service training. Gharabaghi (2010:165) recorded an observation that there has been some recognition in the past 5 – 10 years that there is indeed a need to ensure on-going

professional development for CYCWs beyond the completion of their pre-service training. Within the SA context the NPC (2011:138), on the one hand, lamented that South African employers spend too little on training their staff and in investing in their long-term potential. On the other hand, the DHET (2009:14) argues that the cost of training in SA is relatively high, while the quality and outcomes of training do not always justify the level of costs. A balance between increasing the funds towards the training of staff and the return of investment made in training needs to be found. Although it is a known fact that training budgets are often the first to be cut in tight budget times (Curry et al., 2011:19), there is consensus that the benefits of training far outweigh the financial training costs in the long haul.

Training has the advantage of indirectly contributing to the long-term sustainability of organisations which provide quality services to children and youth (Coiton & Roberts, 2007:133). The NPC (2011:138) also asserts that staff training, career-pathing and mobility in the workplace will grow both the person and the organisation. According to Hoffman (2013:15), building staff capacities could benefit organisations through “more satisfied employees, improved youth outcomes, reduced turnover, and an overall improved proactive and developmental approach to children in care.” Without continued training and development, CYCWs run the risk of reverting to their own common strategies of working with children and youth. When that is done, it will erode all the professional gains made. The challenge therefore is for every CYCW to continue to maintain their professional status and also to build it further (Hoffman, 1999). This will incite the majority of the public and politicians who do not understand and/or sufficiently value the role CYCWs play with children, youth and families (Gharabaghi & Krueger, 2010:33) to continue discrediting this field. When CYCWs’ practice is questioned and discredited, the job of professional boards and associations will not be easier.

5.6 PROFESSIONAL BOARDS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Social Services Professions Act 110 of 1978 is the main legislation that governs social services professions, including the professional boards. According to the DSD (2005:56), social service professionals are governed by a legislated code of conduct. This means that the contravention of this code can result in disciplinary measures

being instituted against the professionals concerned. The code covers all professional services and includes the maintenance of confidentiality, the frequency of contact with clients based on an intervention programme as agreed with clients, the keeping of acceptable records of all their interaction with clients, etc. (DSD, 2005:56). The NACCW has recommended that the SACSSP, as the umbrella body of the social services professions, should determine the standard of professional conduct in consultation with the professional groupings (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010: 28).

5.6.1 Professional board

It is always beneficial to benchmark with international countries in areas such as the formation of professional boards. Gharabaghi (2010:165) lamented that the vast majority of CYCWs currently active in every jurisdiction in North America and countries around the world are not members of any regulating body or association, and therefore would not be monitored by these in terms of their on-going professional development. This is a worrying trend and raises questions about the commitment of CYCWs across the globe to get the field recognised. In the researcher's view every aspect that will propel the field must be taken seriously, not only to ensure that the field is regulated, but also to guarantee quality services to children and youth.

Within SA, an umbrella body (the SACSSP) operates as the juristic entity under which any number of social service professional groups could be accommodated in self-regulating structures (Professional Boards) (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:24). This arrangement has allowed the existence of subsidiary bodies, such as the PBCYC, which are responsible for the profession-specific regulatory functions profession (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:28). According to Allsopp and Mahery (2010:25), an election process and eventually the inauguration of the first Professional Board for CYC took place in April of 2004 (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:25). The term of office of members of this first PBCYC expired in 2009. The PBCYC as a body could not operate as there were no registered CYCWs to make up an electorate as is required by the Act (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:24). After several deliberations the second PBCYC has been inaugurated in 2013, affirming the importance of the field in the

delivery of social services in SA (Allsopp, 2013b). This is a great milestone for the CYC sector.

SA can no longer afford to have a situation whereby the existence of the statutory body such as the PBCYC lapses. All efforts must be put in place to ensure that the PBCYC as a body exists continuously. Even if individuals who serve on that board change, the body itself must remain intact in terms of systems and procedures. Individual CYCWs cannot sit back and leave all the work to structures such as the NACCW, PBCYC and SACSSP. They each have to play their role, wherever they can, in order to sustain the professionalisation of their field (Allsopp, 2013b). When an opportunity for CYCWs to register under the auspices of the SACSSP finally arrives, they need to subscribe and subject themselves to these long awaited registration systems. In so doing, CYCWs will be playing their individual roles. The formation of the PBCYC, coupled with the long existence of the NACCW, increase the chances of the advancement of the CYC field in SA.

5.6.2 Professional associations

Eisikovits and Beker (2002:431) have since observed the emergence of a variety of professional associations of CYCWs. These authors noted that although some associations get involved in sponsoring conferences, workshops, courses emphasising practice methods, and even worker certification programmes, relatively little systematic attention is given to raising the level of expectations or standards that define quality practice itself as a means of enhancing the level of competence of the profession as a whole (Eisikovits & Beker, 2002:431). Just as benchmarking was important in terms of professional boards, so it is with regards to professional associations. Jones and VanderVen (1990:106) states that the establishment of professional associations is concerned with the issues of standards, codes of practice, accreditation and public image. According to Stuart (2010:51), the Alberta Child and Youth Care Association in Canada has a membership of 900 people and approximately 500 are certified practitioners. With an estimated 3000 practitioners in the province, their paid-up membership translates to 30%. Curry et al. (2011:19) reported that within the U.S.A., the majority of CYCWs are not members of state and/or national professional associations. Gharabaghi (2010:6) concurs with Curry et al. (2011) by stating that even the largest professional association of CYCWs in the

world “can only claim a membership of barely 10% of eligible practitioners.” Although this figure is low, it is encouraging as compared to the SA membership situation.

There is currently no reliable database of all practising CYC practitioners in SA. Jamieson (2013:7), however, reported that the SACSSP has registered 2,674 CYCWs to vote in the election of members to the professional board; 1,532 are employed by the provincial departments of Social Development, and just over 800 community based CYCWs are working in the Isibindi programme (DSD, 2012a in Jamieson, 2013:7). Jamieson (2013:7) further reported that the NACCW had 1,562 paid-up members and 11,833 distinct records of individuals who have attended one of their training courses. If estimations of paid-up members were to be based on these figures, it can be concluded that 13.2% of practising CYCWs are paid-up members of the NACCW. This figure is higher than the 10% world figure reported by Curry et al. (2011) earlier on in this section.

Within the SA context, the NACCW has played various roles in the advancement of the CYC field. In addition to the responsibilities cited by VanderVen earlier in this paragraph, the NACCW found itself playing roles such as training CYCWs and actively promoting the role of CYCWs as therapeutic agents operating in the life space of children (Jamieson, 2013:14). Other responsibilities that the NACCW took upon itself included the registration of CYCWs – although this registration was not statutory, but voluntary. It is this kind of registration that conscientized CYCWs about the seriousness of their job. Many CYCWs took up membership of this association, as it fulfilled many roles and held their hopes towards the professionalisation of the field, therefore providing CYCWs with a platform to move towards forming their own identity as professionals. Bureau (2005) cited Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development which suggests that “vocational identity is a significant aspect of an individual’s sense of self as an adult making a contribution to the world.” The role played by the NACCW to ensure that knowledge of different kinds is circulated and reaches CYCWs was also significant. Another contribution made by NACCW was that of organising conferences over three decades. According to Oosthuizen (2014), attendance to these conferences continued to grow year after year, with the total number of attendees having reached a record of 1000 in 2013.

Another area that the NACCW championed was the development, piloting, implementation and expansion of the Isibindi Project. According to Thumbadoo [sa], this project was a response to community needs in a massive way. An association therefore filled the gap when other mechanisms and structures were not yet in place, thus actively promoting the transformation of the CYC system in SA. The NACCW continues to publish a bi-monthly journal for CYC. In a nutshell, the NACCW has played a key role in promoting the professionalisation of CYC in general. In particular, the NACCW advocated for and implemented programmes that were geared towards improving the standards of care and treatment in family, community and residential settings for troubled children and youth at risk (Patel, 2009:40-41).

There are benefits of being a member of a professional association. The main and obvious benefits are that one will receive information about what is going on within the field. In the nutshell, NACCW championed children's issues through advocacy. The current 13% membership of NACCW does not match the contribution that this organisation has made.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the professional status of CYC in general has been outlined. Attempts have also been made to present a picture in terms of the professional status of CYC in SA. From the literature presented in this chapter, it became evident that despite some setbacks, the CYC field has been persistent over the years to uplift itself to a fully-fledged professional level. The field should therefore not be discouraged from pursuing endeavours such as research that might contribute to further development. The researcher is working on the assumption that in due course (before the publication of this study or immediately thereafter), recognition of CYC as a profession would have been finalised. There are many areas that can be covered in the literature review chapter. However, the researcher is of the view that those areas highlighted in chapter 4 and chapter 5 form a strong basis for this specific study and lays the foundation on which findings can be analysed and a conclusion and recommendations made. The next chapter will focus on the research methodology that was employed for the entire study.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is useful in terms of achieving the systematic interrelation of facts (Kothari, 2006:9). In this chapter the researcher describes in detail the methodology that has been followed in conducting this study, namely: the research approach, type of research, research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis, as well as ethical considerations.

6.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study was carried out with a qualitative approach. The choice of this approach was informed by the researcher's belief that "no single reality underlies the research problem but that instead, different individuals may have constructed different, and possibly equally valid, realities relevant to the problem" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:106). Challenges as experienced by participants as well as their coping strategies can vary in nature. Therefore a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gather "a thick description of the story from the participants" (Giles, 2009:2). According to Kothari (2006:5), qualitative research is concerned with "the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour." Participants' ideas, beliefs and perceptions of reality (Neuman, 2012:48) were also captured through the use of this approach. Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013:47) also explain that qualitative studies seek to generate rich, contextually laden, explanatory data.

Specifically, the study adopted an interpretive approach which is commonly associated with the notion of qualitative data (Denscombe, 2012: 99). Challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs could not be gathered through a positivist approach, but through what those concerned deemed to be challenges for them. Hence Neuman (2012:49) contends that interpretative researchers favour inductive reasoning and an idiographic approach. He described *idiographic* as meaning "specific description and emphasises creating a highly detailed picture of a specific social setting, process, or type of relationship" (Neuman, 2012:49). Another concept

that he advanced is *Verstehen* which he describes as “a desire to get inside the worldview of a person being studied and accurately represent how that person sees the world, feels about it and acts within it” (Neuman, 2012:49).

6.2.1 Type of research

Although the researcher intended to contribute to human knowledge and understanding (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:44) about the challenges and coping strategies as experienced by CYCWs, his primary focus was to expose or come up with strategies that are practical and useful to stakeholders’ situation. Some of the data generated from this study, as well as the recommendations made, are such that stakeholders can utilise them straight away in practice. Therefore the type of research was applied research. The emphasis was on unearthing findings which could address the real challenges that CYCWs experience in order to assist them in accomplishing their CYC tasks (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95).

According to Kothari (2006:3), applied research “aims at finding a solution for an immediate problem facing a society or an industrial/business organisation.” Some of the findings that have emerged could be used to address the real CYCWs’ challenges in practice. Coping strategies shared by some participants can also be adopted by other CYCWs as soon as they are made known to them. In using some of the findings, especially coping strategies, one must always bear in mind that the information was based on the subjective reality of participants and therefore CYCWs have the responsibility to select strategies suitable to their individual needs and preferred styles.

6.2.2 Research design

Kerlinger and Pedhazur, cited in Blaikie (2010:37), define research design as “the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance.” According to Remler and Van Ryzin (2011:73), qualitative research is grounded in the in-depth study of cases. The researcher therefore used a case study design which enabled him to get an in-depth understanding of the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs. Yin (2009:4) asserts that “the more the questions seek to explain some present circumstance, and the more the question requires extensive and ‘in-depth’ description of some

social phenomenon”; the more a case study becomes a relevant design. Although only 12 specific organisations were selected, the amount and type of information shared presented a clearer picture of what other CYCWs based in other organisations might be faced with. It must be noted that the researcher’s interest was primarily on a group of CYCWs and not cases of individual CYCWs. Hence collective case study was used. Mark, in Fouché (2005:272), notes that “collective case study furthers the understanding of the researcher about a social issue or population being studied.” In a way, practical case selection which involved selecting a prototypical case that offered the greatest generalisability was used (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:75). To situate the understanding of the challenges of the identified cases, population, sample and sampling method will be described.

6.3 POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

In the next section, a thorough description of the population, sample and sampling procedures is given.

6.3.1 Population

The researcher was interested in the challenges and coping strategies of all CYCWs in SA. Blaikie (2010:172) defines a population as “an aggregate of all cases that conform to some designated set of criteria.” In 1999 registration was not compulsory for CYCWs in SA (De Kock, 1999:17). It was therefore difficult for the researcher to know how many CYCWs are practicing in the field of CYC. In 2011, the SACSSP compiled a database for employed CYCWs for the purposes of electing and voting for members of the PBCYC. Despite the fact that registration with the PBCYC under the auspices of the SACSSP was anticipated in 2002 (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002), CYCWs were still not registered at the time this study was conducted. Therefore the list compiled by the SACSSP was not as comprehensive as it should be. In the absence of an official database of practising CYCWs, the researcher recruited those CYCWs who were contactable.

The researcher conducted focus group interviews in six provinces of SA. South African provinces are diverse and unique in nature. Depicted in Figure 6.1 below is a

geographical picture of SA's nine provinces as well as the population of each province in percentage form.

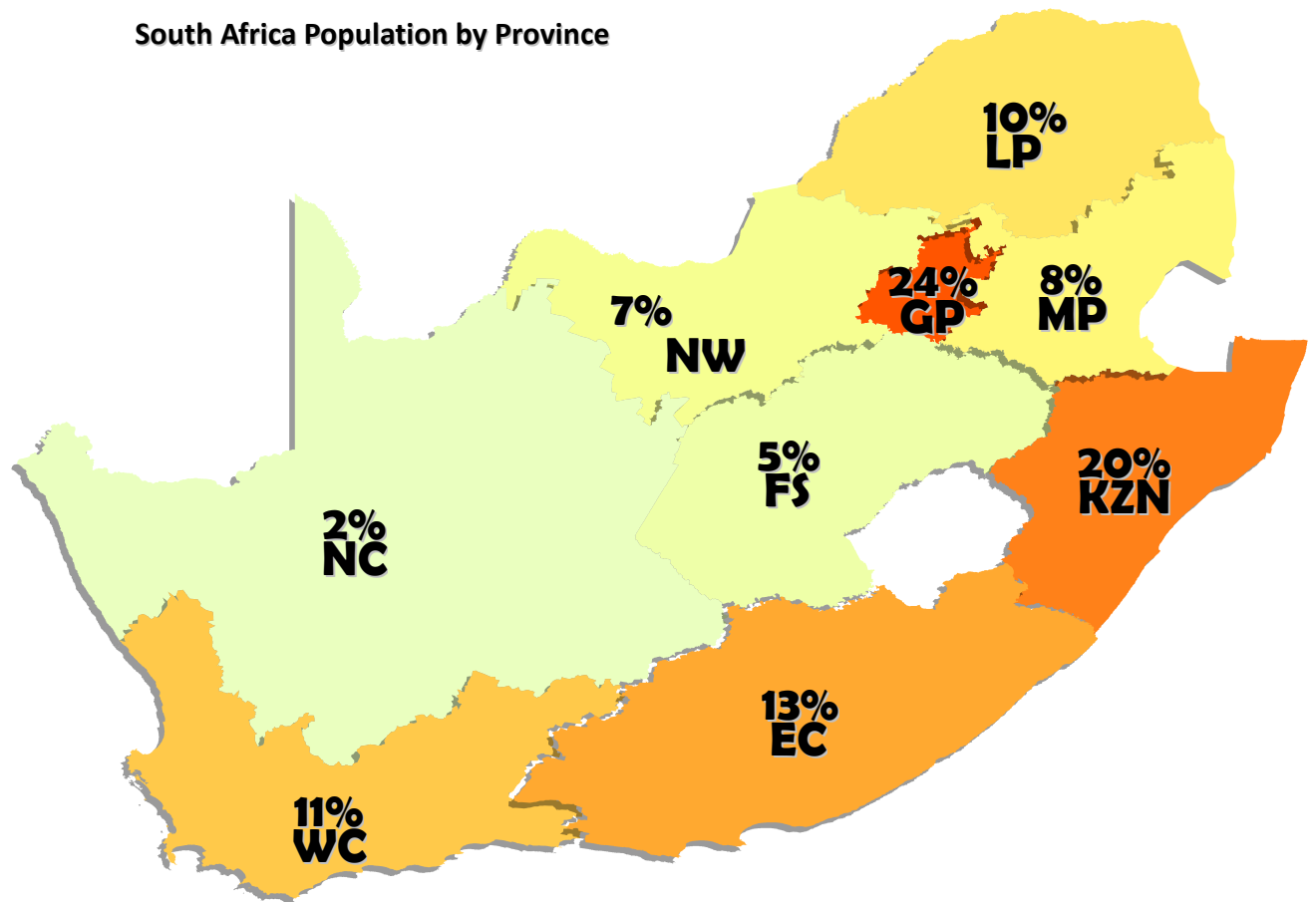


Figure 6.1: South Africa's nine provinces (Stats SA, Census 2011).

The six provinces that were included in this study are Gauteng Province (12 728 4003 people), KwaZulu-Natal Province (10 456 900 people), Eastern Cape Province (6 620 100 people), Western Cape Province (6 016 900 people), Limpopo Province (5 518 000 people), and Mpumalanga Province (4 128 000 people) (Stats SA, 2014). The identification of the six provinces was informed by their population estimates ranging from the province with the highest population to the one with the lowest population.

The exclusion of CYCWs from the other three provinces, namely the North West (3 597 600 people), Free State (2 753 200 people) and Northern Cape (1 162 900 people), was mainly influenced by time and financial constraints. This exclusion should neither be interpreted as suggesting that those CYCWs did not have

challenges nor that their contribution was insignificant. The inclusion of participants from different provinces gave the researcher confidence that multiple perspectives on the research topic (Hlagala, 2012:145) would be gathered.

6.3.2 Sample and sampling method

Guest et al. (2013:41) define sampling as “the process of selecting a subset of items from a defined population for inclusion into a study.” To serve as a sample, the researcher has identified well-known organisations that have been providing care to children in SA for many years. He also included organisations whose programmes were spread across the country. The newly introduced and innovative programmes have also been identified for inclusion purposes in this study. This sampling method therefore allowed for identification and selection of a predetermined type of organisation (Kumar, 2011:207). Purposive sampling was therefore used in this study as the researcher purposively sought “typical and divergent data” (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). According to Bernad and Ryan (2010:365), when using purposive sampling you simply decide the purpose you want the informants to serve and you take what you can get.

Careful attention was made to ensure that participants who were employed in these organisations represented the SA population of CYCWs in one form or another. As Guest et al. (2013:43) argued that the researcher should account for context and gain a more holistic picture, government organisations, NGOs and CBOs were represented in this sample.

According to Gravetter and Forzano (2006:118), “a sample is a set of individuals selected from a population and is intended to represent the population in a research study.” The researcher strived to get focus groups which consisted of at least six to ten participants each (Greeff, 2011:365). The selection criteria were that participants:

- should have worked as CYCWs for at least one year; and
- should be currently employed, either in residential or community CYC programmes.

Both 'qualified and unqualified' CYCWs were considered for inclusion in this study. Another dynamic that the researcher paid attention to was to distinguish and include those who work in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government sectors. All of the above-mentioned categories of CYCWs served as parameters of the population and were of specific interest to the researcher (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006:118). The unique contributions of these parameters were investigated and reported accordingly. Participants were therefore sourced from the following organisations in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Organisations that were used for research purposes.

Province	Name of organisation	Sector	Rural/Urban	Type of programme	Total
Gauteng	Gauteng Department of Social Development	Government sector	Urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Gauteng	Gauteng Department of Social Development	Government sector	Semi-Urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Kwazulu-Natal	Girls and Boys Town South Africa	Non-governmental sector	Urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Kwazulu-Natal	NACCW (Isibindi Project)	Non-governmental sector	Rural	Community CYC project	0
Eastern Cape	NACCW (Isibindi Project)	Non-governmental sector	Rural	Community CYC project	1
Eastern Cape	SOS Children's Villages	Non-governmental sector	Semi-urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Limpopo	Bosasa Child and Youth Care Centres	Non-governmental sector	Rural	Residential CYC facility	1
Limpopo	NACCW (Isibindi Project)	Non-governmental sector	Rural	Community CYC project	1

Western Cape	Western Cape Department of Social Development	Government sector	Urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Western Cape	Bosasa Child and Youth Care Centres	Non-governmental sector	Urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Mpumalanga	SOS Children's Villages	Non-governmental sector	Semi-urban	Residential CYC facility	1
Mpumalanga	Thembisile Home Base Care	Non-governmental sector	Rural	Community CYC project	1
Total					11

Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:31) postulate that qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context. As far as the actual participants were concerned, the researcher had had to rely on the gatekeepers for the selection of participants. These gatekeepers were expected to use stipulated selection criteria outlined in the email communication. The clearly set parameters that were communicated to the gatekeepers were that the researcher needed between six and twelve CYCWs who have been in the field of CYC for at least one year. The sampling methods therefore were a combination of purposive and convenience sampling in that the researcher could only interview CYCWs who were identified by the gatekeepers and available on the day of the interviews. In other words, these were the participants who were available based on the ease of access (Kothari, 2006:15). Indeed all participants were CYCWs, except for one who was a nurse. Participants in a particular focus group all worked for the same organisation. Furthermore, four participants had not been in the field of CYC for the predetermined period of more than one year. This deviation from the set selection criteria could thus be seen as a limitation in executing the study. However, their input during focus group interviews was valuable. The distribution of focus group participants is outlined in table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Distribution of focus group participants.

Province	Rural	Urban	Semi-urban	Total
Gauteng	-	7	6	13
Limpopo	8 + 6	-	-	14
Eastern Cape	20	-	10	30
Kwazulu-Natal	-	5	-	5
Mpumalanga	6	-	8	14
Western Cape	-	8	9	17
Total				93

From a total of 11 focus group interviews, 93 participants took part in this study. Guest et al. (2013:64) advanced the guideline that saturation requires conducting at least two groups for each defining demographic. It must therefore be noted that the above-mentioned guideline was met in that 40 participants were from rural areas, 29 from semi-urban areas and 24 from urban areas. In terms of the type of organisation in which participants were based, 21 worked for government institutions, 57 for NGOs/CBOs and 15 for private institutions. This gave the researcher a satisfactory average of 8.5 participants per focus group. Guest et al. (2013:176) prefers an eight people focus group for the majority of focus group contexts, because it is small enough to allow all members to participate and large enough to facilitate a group dynamic.

6.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

It is important to note that a pilot study was carried out prior to the actual data collection.

6.4.1 Pilot study

Strydom and Delpont (2011:394) argue for the importance of a pilot study in order to ascertain certain trends. After the focus group interview schedule was compiled, based on a thorough literature review, arrangements were made to collect data from one focus group which was based in Gauteng. The main purpose was to test the focus group interview schedule that was developed (Appendix 3) and to establish if it was user friendly. Although Strydom and Delpont (2011:394) recommend that a pilot test be conducted with a few respondents, seven participants took part in this pilot

focus group interview. The schedule proved to be relevant and therefore it did not become necessary for the researcher to make any adjustments. As suggested by Royse, cited in Strydom and Delpont (2011:394-395), the pilot study gave the researcher the assurance that relevant data could be obtained from the participants. Hence the researcher proceeded to utilise the focus group interview schedule in its original form in the actual focus group interviews.

6.4.2 Research method (Focus group interviews)

Doyle, Brady and Byrne (2009:178) note that it is very important that researchers determine what works to answer the research questions. Focus group interviews were used to collect data from the participants. In order to unearth challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs, it was important for participants to be allowed an opportunity to share “their perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns” (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2005:186); something which focus groups allow. During the focus group interview process, participants presented their own views and experiences, but also heard from others (Finch & Lewis, 2003:171). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:196), focus groups are recommended when the researcher does not know what all of the issues are surrounding the topic. Focus group interviews therefore afforded participants an opportunity to agree or disagree on the topic, thus allowing the researcher to see the widely shared views (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:70). As the participants came from different backgrounds, focus group interviews were relevant in that they allowed CYCWs an opportunity to “listen, reflect on what was said, and in the light of this consider their own standpoint further” (Finch & Lewis, 2003:171). Focus groups also allowed the researcher to obtain information within a shorter period of time than it would have been the case with individual interviews (Greeff, 2011:361).

According to Greeff (2011:360), focus groups are “group interviews which serve as a means to understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.” The researcher’s view was that there are no persons better placed to share the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs than CYCWs themselves. Hence 11 focus group interviews were conducted with 93 CYCWs serving as the principal source of data (Greeff, 2011:361).

6.4.3 Research assistant and recording of data

During the first focus group interview, the researcher invited a research assistant to expose her to the research process. The motive was to expose her to the language and culture of the CYC field. The initial plan was for this assistant to travel with the researcher to most of the focus groups sites so that she could assist with the taking of notes and other logistical arrangements. This plan did not materialise due to the fact that funding application specifically earmarked for all her services had been turned down by the funder. Her services were therefore reconsidered and subsequently limited to that of transcribing the recorded data as Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:345) recommended. All focus group interviews were therefore conducted by the researcher himself. During the interviews, a digital audio recorder was used and field notes were also taken by the researcher. According to Hays and Singh (2011:228), field notes are written records developed within an observational period. The research assistant only transcribed the recordings.

6.5 Data analysis

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:246), qualitative data analysis is “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories.” The researcher intended to critically go through pages of field notes and interview transcripts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:246) in order to “identify common themes in people’s description of their experiences” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:142).

A process of coding, categorising and interpreting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:367) was then followed. According to Punch (2005:196), when conducting inductive data analysis concepts are developed inductively from the data and raised to a higher level of abstraction. Thereafter their interrelationships are traced out. Therefore thematic analysis has been used. Thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). Given that the objectives of this study covered a range of areas, it was important that themes that were in line with the intended areas be exhaustively extracted from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006:78) argued that thematic analysis

provides “a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data.”

Theoretically speaking, the process of data analysis started immediately after the first focus interview session (Maxwell, 2013:104) in that the researcher began to think about or make sense of what the participants had shared. However, practically speaking, the first task the researcher did was to ask the assistant researcher to transcribe all the audio recordings immediately after collection whilst continuing to collect data from other focus group sites. As soon as transcripts began to trickle in from the research assistant, the researcher began to read through those transcripts, reducing them to verbatim reports (Hlagala, 2012:143). The reports were backed up by the researcher’s field notes. The researcher also listened to the audio recordings in order to validate the transcripts.

It was only after the data collection was completed from all sites that the researcher critically began with the analysis process. He went through pages of field notes and each interview transcript with the view of identifying common themes in people’s description of their experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:142). Specifically, he followed the steps of reducing data, displaying data, drawing conclusions and verifying, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994:10). The researcher then began to identify common themes as well as various sub-themes within the common themes (Scott, 2009:12) that emerged across all the focus group transcripts. The researcher primarily used descriptive coding whereby a word or short phrases were used to capture the segments of data, as suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:74). In some instances, the researcher also used process coding, i.e. the coding method that uses gerunds (“-ing” words) exclusively to connote observable and conceptual action in the data (Miles et al., 2014:75). Both these coding methods are regarded as First Cycle coding. Bryman (2012:13) defines coding as a process whereby the data are broken down into their components and those parts are then given labels. Pattern codes were subsequently identified. According to Miles et al. (2014:86), pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes that identify theme configuration.

To present an overview of the data analysis process, the researcher went through the following three stages of the qualitative interpretation process, as outlined by Neuman (2012:94):

- **First-order interpretation.** This is the viewpoint of the people that have been studied. The researcher, through the assistant researcher, transcribed the recordings of each focus group interview to ensure that verbatim translations have been captured.
- **Second-order interpretation.** This refers to the researcher's viewpoint. The researcher read through the transcripts, and generated themes and sub-themes based on the information that emerged from different sets of transcripts.
- **Third-order interpretation.** This refers to the connection the researcher makes between the detailed understandings of specific people or events and abstracts concepts, generalisations, or theories used to analyse the data. The researcher linked all the themes and sub-themes generated and even put them in table formats in order to provide a visual summary of these themes. During data analysis, the researcher could not identify any new information. Saturation point was therefore realised and there was no necessity for further data collection. After this visual summary was generated, it was important for the researcher to test the trustworthiness of the themes and sub-themes he had identified.

6.5.1 Trustworthiness of qualitative data

Ritchie (2001:154) argued that trustworthiness is achieved when acceptable processes have been followed in qualitative research. The researcher used the following strategies to ensure trustworthiness: reflexivity, audit trail, member checking, and peer debriefing process. Each of these strategies will be described in brief.

6.5.1.1 Reflexivity

Horsburgh (2003:308) defines reflexivity as “active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation.” During data collection, the researcher made his own socio-cultural position explicit (Lietz, Langer & Furman,

2006:447) in order not to claim full objectivity. The researcher continued asking himself questions, engaging in reflection on both differences and commonalities that he may have had with participants in order to be sensitised to ways in which varying perspectives could both support and potentially hinder the research process (Lietz et al., 2006:447). This was done with the main purpose of ensuring that what has been captured represented the realities of participants as accurately as possible. As far as the researcher is concerned, this research reflects the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the participants as closely as possible (Lietz et al., 2006:444) and not those of the researcher.

6.5.1.2 Audit trail

The researcher kept an audit trail throughout the data analysis process that clearly described the steps he followed. Lietz et al. (2006:450) cite the importance of the researcher following her/his own research procedures consistently. The audit trail enabled the researcher to present an account of the procedure followed in 6.5. In addition to the audit trail, member checking was further used to increase rigor.

6.5.1.3 Member checking

Immediately after the focus group interviews, participants were given an opportunity to identify areas that may have been missed or misinterpreted (Lietz et al., 2006:453). If the information was not captured correctly, participants were given an opportunity to suggest how it should be included and/or recaptured. The researcher also sent through transcripts of collected data to two participants from two different focus groups who took part in the interviews. The aim was for them to check and verify if what the researcher had captured represented what they had mentioned during the interviews in order to avoid misrepresentation. Each participant only received copies of his or her respective focus group transcripts though. The identification of the members was informed by the highest qualification obtained. In one group, the participant with the highest qualification possessed a diploma and in another group a degree. These two were therefore identified as suitable members to check the data as they had 'some exposure' to the research processes. This process is what is termed 'member checking' and was done with the sole purpose of establishing trustworthiness. It was also intended to derive the accuracy of meaning when outlining the themes (Hays & Singh, 2011:206). Both members confirmed via email that indeed the transcripts were a true reflection of the interview discussions.

Member checking was also a cautionary measure as the identity of the researcher plays a significant role in the interpretation of qualitative data (Bardi, 2005:84). The two members have also agreed with the themes that have been generated, as the researcher solicited feedback about their data in terms of the conclusions that he had made (Maxwell, 2005:111).

6.5.1.4 Peer debriefing

According to Cresswell, in Lietz et al. (2006:451), peer debriefing involves “the process of engaging in dialog with colleagues outside of a research project who has the experience with the topic, population or methods being utilized.” As the researcher was busy extrapolating themes and sub-themes from the collected data, he sent the transcripts via email to a peer in the CYC field to simultaneously identify her own themes and sub-themes in order to verify and authenticate the final themes of the study. This peer possesses an MTech degree in CYC. The final discussion with the peer then took place whereby themes and sub-themes were finalised. The themes and sub-themes presented in chapter 7 is a result of this exhaustive exercise.

6.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is always important that attention be paid to the ethical considerations when undertaking any research. Neuman (2012:53) describes the function of ethics as that of informing the researcher “what is moral, right, or proper and what is not.” Ethics therefore not only guides the researcher to conduct himself in a manner that is acceptable in the context of research, but also aims to safeguard all the research participants in this particular study. Before conducting this study, the researcher developed a research proposal that was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria (UP) (Appendix 4). It was the issuing of this letter that gave the researcher the confidence that his study would be carried out in an ethical manner. The researcher made attempts to conduct himself in accordance with the ethical standards followed by researchers in general and as prescribed by UP in particular. Below are the specific procedures the researcher followed to ensure the ethical practice.

The following broad categories were given the necessary attention: informed consent and voluntary participation, deception of participants, confidentiality and anonymity, avoidance of harm and debriefing as well as competence of the researcher.

6.6.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

The researcher wrote to each of the identified organisations and obtained permission to conduct research in some of their programmes. Given that this study was a work-related topic, the researcher sought permission from relevant chief-directors responsible for research in the relevant provincial government units. Permission was also obtained from the chief executive officers, directors and managers of the different residential and/or community CYC programmes prior to conducting focus group interviews with their staff. A written permission letter was in turn granted by each organisation (Appendix 5). It was only after the receipt of these letters that the researcher began to make meeting arrangements with the relevant managers at programme level. Given that permission from managerial staff might be interpreted as an instruction to participate, the researcher had to explain his research purpose to managers at programme level. These managers were in a way gatekeepers. Neuman (2012:296) describes a gatekeeper as someone that members in the field obey. Once that was done, he was introduced to the participants.

Prior to the commencement of interviews, the researcher informed participants that their participation was voluntary and checked that they were not in any way coerced. He took time to explain the topic, the research methods, the fact that interviews will be audiotaped and possible outcomes of the research, which included how the results may be distributed (Israel & Hersh, 2006:44). The content of the interview schedule was also discussed in order to ensure that the participants focused their views on the specific areas. This was an attempt to ensure that participants and the researcher reached explicit agreements and shared expectations (Miles et al., 2014:56). After thoroughly explaining the interview process, the researcher reiterated the voluntary nature of the research process, giving them the option to leave prior to the commencement or during the actual process of the interviews. This was an attempt by the researcher to allow participants to assess information and weigh alternatives before making their own judgements (Monette et al., 2005:53). Indeed one participant left the focus group and never returned. The researcher then issued

each of the participants a written informed consent letter which they signed (Appendix 6). In some cases, the researcher even left participants a copy of the letter in case they needed to refer to it later. All signed informed consent forms were collected by the researcher and filed accordingly. This was another way in which any form of deception was minimised.

6.6.2 Deception of participants

Corey, Corey and Callanan, in Strydom (2011:119), note that “deception involves withholding information, or offering incorrect information in order to ensure the participation of subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused.” The researcher endeavoured to divulge accurate and complete information so that participants could fully comprehend the details of the study. Such information consequently enabled participants to make voluntary and thoroughly reasoned decisions about their participation (Strydom, 2011:117).

The researcher read the informed consent letters out loud for the participants, word for word, prior to them signing. This was an attempt to ensure that they all understood what the study was about so that they do not end up being deceived. Even the questions contained in the interview schedule were presented and clarified before the actual recordings commenced. This was to make sure that participants fully understood what they were participating in. But most importantly, the aim was to ensure that they felt like “joint partners in this worthwhile enterprise rather than dupes of the researcher” (Monette et al., 2005:56). As far as the researcher is concerned, participants were never deceived at all. They were also allowed to ask questions to clarify any area that may not have been clear to them, prior, during and after the interviews.

6.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Neuman (2011:139) mentions that anonymity is “the ethical protection by which participants remain nameless; their identity is protected from disclosure and remains unknown.” The researcher communicated before the interview or during the opening of the discussion that the information was important and gave the reasons for that importance (Patton in Strydom, 2011:117). Given the nature of the data collection method, guaranteeing anonymity was not only difficult, but also impossible. The

researcher therefore guaranteed participants confidentiality. Neuman (2011:139) describes confidentiality as “the ethical protection for those who are studied by holding research data in confidence or keeping it secret from the public; not releasing information in a way that permits linking specific individuals to specific responses.”

Although the researcher wrote down the names of the participants during interviews, their identities were protected by allocating them codes (FG.P). This was an attempt by the researcher to ensure that each participant’s individual contribution could not be linked to his or her name (Monette et al., 2005:53). Even the identities of the organisations in which the participants were based were protected as much as the researcher possibly could. Names of organisations and participants as well as those of children in their care have been omitted during the transcription of data. The researcher also asked participants to respect and treat information shared by fellow participants during focus group interviews in a confidential manner as recommended by Denscombe (2012:141).

The safekeeping of the collected data was done in line with the University of Pretoria’s policy. Electronic data has been kept in locked files at all times to ensure that no unauthorised person had access to raw data, especially when it was still in a form that could easily identify participants. Data will be archived in a locked cabinet in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria for 15 years.

6.6.4 Avoidance of harm and debriefing

Denscombe (2012:122) warns about the unintended possibility of causing harm when conducting research. Strydom (2011:115) concurs that participants may experience concrete harm, for instance with regard to their employment situation. The researcher was aware that issues that may cause participants emotional harm could arise from focus group interviews. Hence he debriefed focus group participants after every session to ensure that no harm accrues to these participants. As far as the researcher is concerned, no harm was caused during the interviews. Although some information shared was personal, none of it required the researcher to refer participants for formal debriefing beyond the focus group sessions. According to Israel and Hersh (2006:48), debriefing has been used within the deception-based experimental research, but this study was not that type of research. Nonetheless, the researcher made a concerted

effort to debrief participants after every session. This was done after the researcher informed them that the interviews were formally over and switched off the audio recorder. Indeed participants used the opportunity to reflect on the research process. They mainly reported that the interviews were beneficial, as will be explained in detail in section 7.1.

6.6.5 Competence of the researcher

The researcher has already completed a Master's degree as part of his professional studies. He was therefore exposed to research as well as the Code of Ethics pertaining to conducting research. The researcher carried out his research according to the procedures agreed upon with his supervisor at all times. Objectivity and restraint in making value judgments (Strydom, 2011:125) was a priority for the researcher throughout this study.

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the methodology that was followed when conducting this particular study. It was the researcher's view that this methodology was best suited to collect data that would eventually reveal the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the context of SA. The researcher is confident that mainly because of the suitability of this methodology, he was able to obtain rich data from the participants.

CHAPTER 7

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011:397) define data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of the collected data.” The researcher has collected data from participants based in rural, semi-rural and urban areas. The programmes in which the participants were based also varied between government institutions, private institutions, NGOs and CBOs. In the data analysis, the researcher attempted to ensure a fair representation of a variety of participants’ views. According to Schurink et al. (2011:398), data analysis does not proceed in a linear fashion. This particular analysis only commenced after data collection was completed.

In this chapter, the researcher will present data about the findings, utilising participants’ quotations from the transcripts. The researcher will use quotations from various focus groups such as (FG8.P5). Note that FG8 represents the focus group number 8, whereas P5 represents the participant number 5 in that specific focus group. This is how focus group participants should be identified.

Research findings will be presented in two parts. Part A focuses on the biographical profile of participants and part B is a discussion of the identified themes and sub-themes under each of the three categories of qualitative findings.

7.2 PART A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

It must be reiterated that the researcher conducted 11 focus group interviews with a total of 93 participants involved in this study. The following biographical information of focus group participants will be presented and discussed: race, gender, language, age, educational levels, status of NACCW membership and length of service. Each variable of the biographical information will be presented in the sections below.

7.2.1 Race of participants

The race of participants is depicted in Figure 7.1 below.

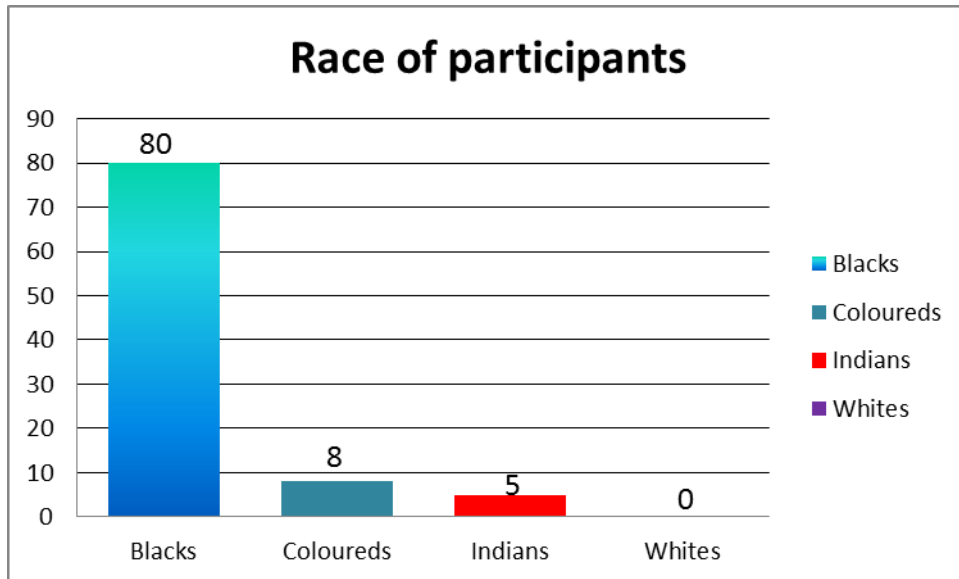


Figure 7.1: Race of participants (n=93).

Figure 7.1 above illustrates the distribution of participants' race as follows: 80 (86%) Blacks, 8 (9%) Coloureds and 5 (5%) Indians. It must be noted that there were no Whites participants represented in this study.

7.2.2 Gender of participants

Figure 7.2 below depicts the representation of both female and male participants.

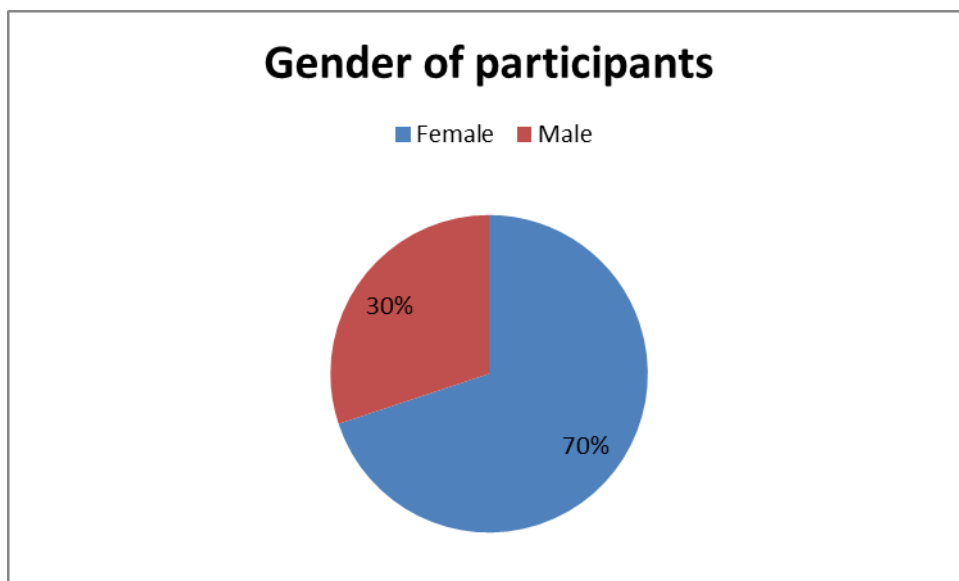


Figure 7.2: Gender of focus group participants (n = 93).

Figure 7.2 above indicates that the majority of participants were female (70%) and only 30% were male. This picture is consistent with the fact that there are more female than male CYCWs (CYC-Online, 2006).

7.2.3 Language of participants

Figure 7.3 below depicts the representation of different participants' home languages.

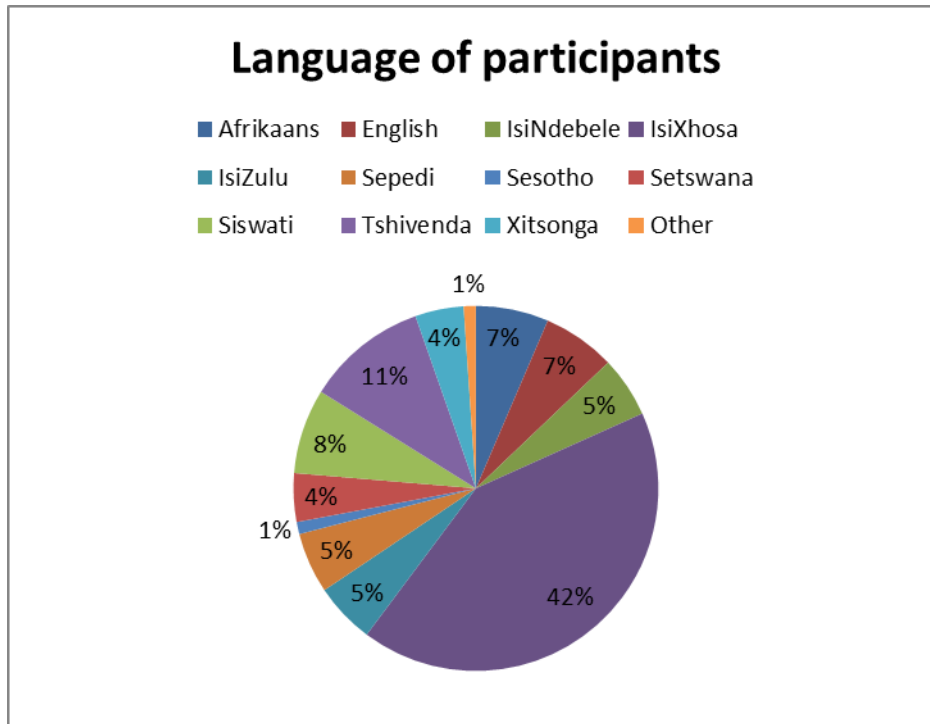


Figure 7.3: Language of participants (n= 93).

Figure 7.3 above indicates that there was a good representation of the diverse SA official languages. Participants indicated their home languages as follows: Afrikaans (7%), English (7%), Isindebele (5%), IsiXhosa (42%), IsiZulu (5%), Sepedi (5%), Sesotho (1%), Setswana (4%), Siswati (8%), Tshivenda (11%), Xitsonga (4%), and Other (1%). Only sign language was not represented, because there was no participant who used this language. Participants' home languages varied predominantly in accordance with the geographical areas in which they were based. For example, all Tshivenda and Xitsonga speaking participants were from Limpopo Province. All Isindebele and Siswati speaking participants were from Mpumalanga Province. All Afrikaans speaking participants came from the Western Cape Province. Participants from Kwazulu-Natal Province spoke only English and IsiZulu. Gauteng is

a province where participants spoke different languages. All participants from the Eastern Cape Province spoke IsiXhosa. Over representation of the IsiXhosa language group (42%) is attributed to the fact that there were 20 participants in one specific focus group in the Eastern Cape Province.

7.2.4 Age of participants

Figure 7.4 highlights the distribution of participants' ages.

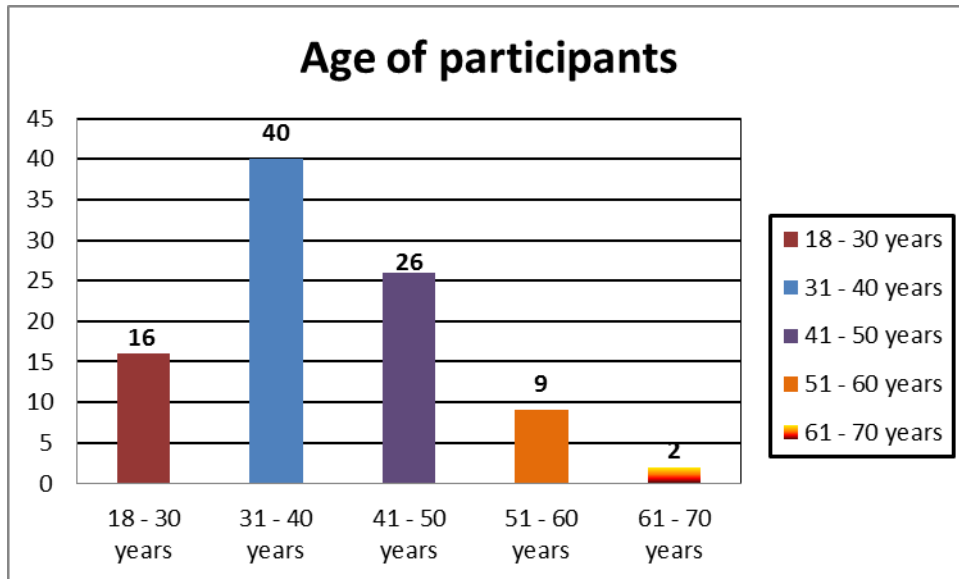


Figure 7.4: Age of participants (n=93).

The ages of participants ranged from 25 to 62 years. From Figure 7.4 above, it is evident that the 40 participants (43%) fall within the age category 31-40 years, followed by the 26 participants (28%) who fall within the 41-50 years category. The third majority is constituted by 16 participants who fall within the category 19-30 years which translates to 17%. This is an encouraging picture in that if the majority of them remain within the field, the level of continuity can be guaranteed for a number of years to come. Categories that accounted for fewer participants are 51-60 years represented by 9 participants (10%) and 61-70 years represented by 2 participants (2%).

7.2.5 Educational levels of participants

In figure 7.5 below, the breakdown of participants' levels of education is presented.

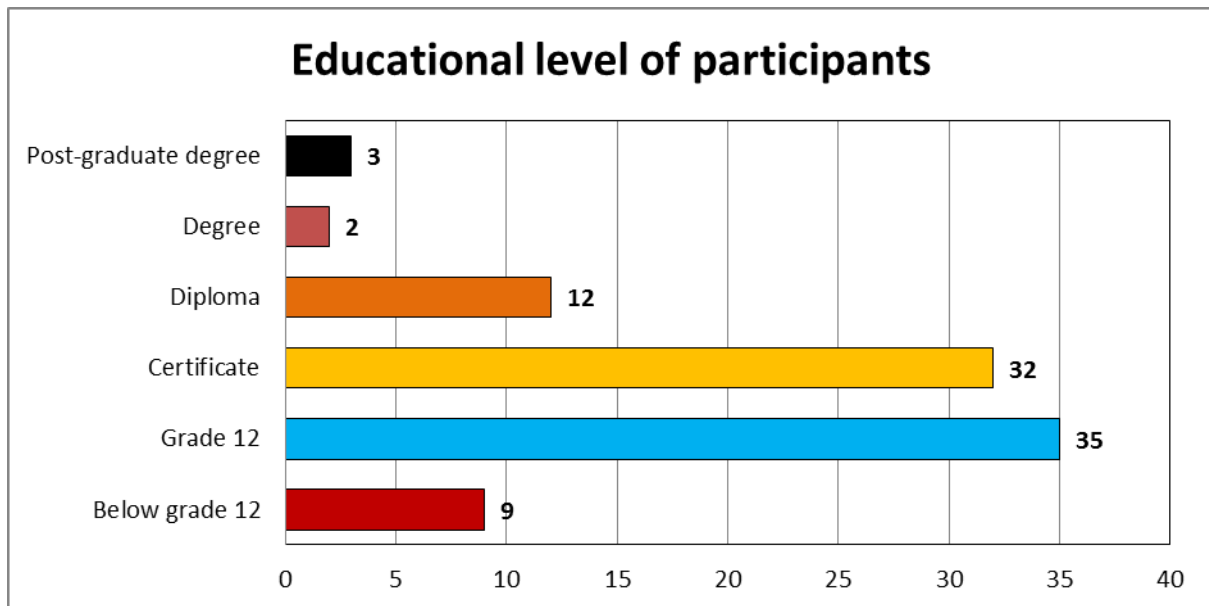


Figure 7.5: Educational levels of participants (n=93).

As presented in Figure 7.5 above, 35 participants (38%) who are in the majority completed grade 12, followed by 32 participants (34%) who have certificates. This picture is encouraging in that these participants are eligible to further their studies either at FET institutions or tertiary institutions. It is also important to highlight that 12 participants (13%) had already obtained diplomas. Furthermore, 2 participants (2%) possessed degrees and 3 participants (3%) had postgraduate degrees. It must be mentioned that some of the certificates, diplomas and degrees were specifically in the field of CYC and Youth Work. It is worth noting that 10% of participants had below grade 12 level of education.

7.2.6 NACCW membership of participants

Figure 7.6 below outlines the NACCW membership of participants.

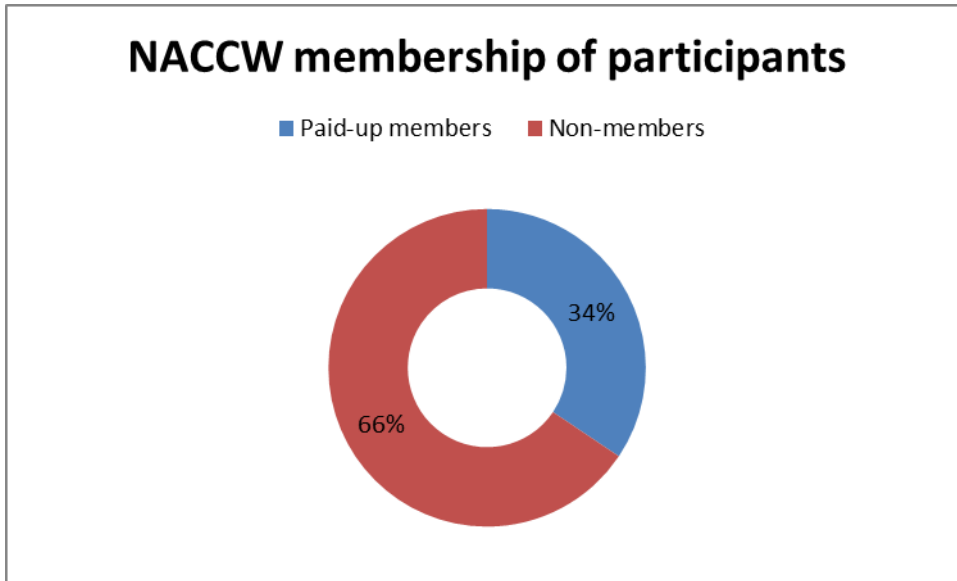


Figure 7.6: NACCW membership of participants (n=93).

Figure 7.6 indicates that out of 93 participants, 32 of them were paid-up members of the NACCW, which translates to 34.4%, while the remaining 65.6% were not paid-up members of the NACCW.

7.2.7 Length of service in CYC field

Participants' length of service in the field of CYC ranged from 2 months to 35 years. Below is Figure 7.7 which outlines participants' length of service.

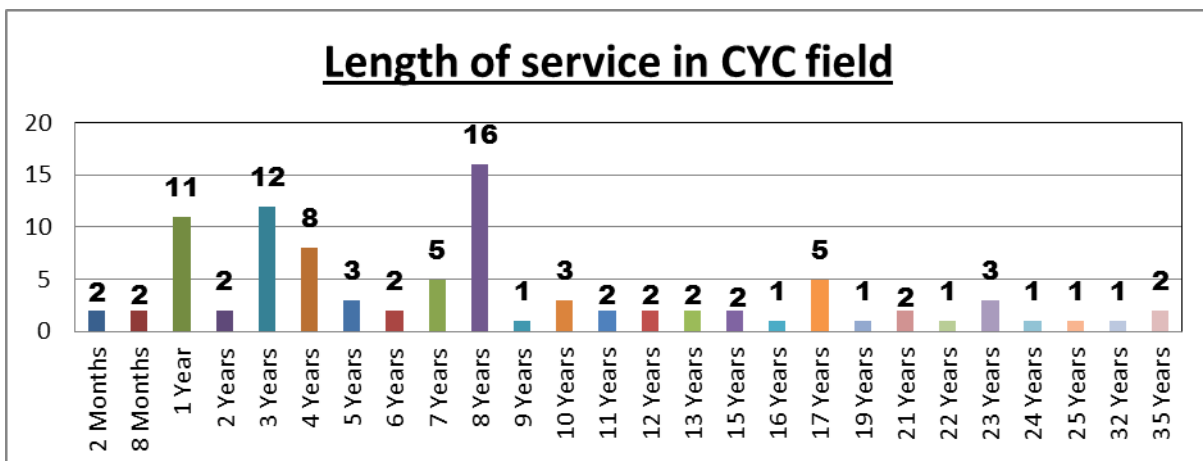


Figure 7.7: Length of service in CYC field (n=93).

According to Figure 7.7, 16 participants (17%), who are in the majority, have spent eight years in the CYC field, followed by 12 participants (13%) who have spent three

years in the field, and 11 participants (12%) who only spent one year in the field. It must be noted that the majority of those participants who have spent one year in CYC field were newly recruited volunteers who have joined a newly established programme that has been in existence for less than 5 years. All these figures translate to an average of seven years in terms of participants' years of service.

Now that the biographical information of the participants has been presented, the qualitative findings will be discussed according to themes and sub-themes that emerged from the focus group interviews.

7.3 PART B: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

As has been dictated by the research questions, these three categories of qualitative findings have been interrogated: psycho-social challenges, professional challenges and socio-economic challenges. Under each category, specific themes and sub-themes were identified. The summary of these categories, themes and sub-themes are displayed in Table 7.1 below. Throughout this chapter, themes and sub-themes will be supported by descriptions, quotations and excerpts. Literature control will also be used to clarify some of the themes and sub-themes.

Table 7.1: Summary of identified categories, themes and sub-themes.

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
CATEGORY 1: PSYCHO-SOCIAL CHALLENGES	
1.1 Inability to disengage from work environment	
1.2 Disengagement from social Activities	
1.3 Personal trauma	
1.4 Invasion of personal Boundaries	
1.5 Emotional well-being issues	

1.6 Coping strategies for psycho-social challenges	1.6.1 Non-existent coping mechanisms
	1.6.2 Personal mission
	1.6.3 Substance abuse
	1.6.4 Withdrawal and thoughts of quitting
CATEGORY 2: PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES	
2.1 Dealing with clients' Behaviours	
2.2 Personal risk	
2.3 Lack of tangible and immediate results	
2.4 Poor stakeholder Relations	2.4.1 Blurred role expectations
	2.4.2 Poor relations with clients
	2.4.3 Poor relations with own team Members
	2.4.4 Poor relations with other Professionals
	2.4.5 Poor relations with community Members
2.5 Lack of recognition	2.5.1 Lack of clarity on the role and title of the CYCW
	2.5.2 Inconsistent job requirements
2.6 Lack of professional growth and development opportunities	2.6.1 Lack of training opportunities
	2.6.2 Lack of promotion opportunities
2.7 Inadequate working Conditions	2.7.1 Working shifts
	2.7.2 Working long hours
	2.7.3 Being on standby
	2.7.4 Staff: children ratio
2.8 Coping strategies for professional challenges	2.8.1 Non-existent coping mechanisms

	2.8.2 Personal support networks	Rationalising
		Self-protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-guarding - Self-projecting - Sourcing relationships - Relying on others Self-care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indulgence - Time off - Recreational activities - Faith related activities - Family support
	2.8.3 Professional support networks	Colleagues
		Team meetings
		Supervision
		Psychological services
		Self-development
		Broader support structures
		Quitting
CATEGORY 3: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES		
3.1	Inadequate remuneration Structures	
3.2	Undifferentiated salary Scales	
3.3	Inadequate benefits	

3.4	Inadequate programme funding	
3.5	Coping strategies for socio-economic challenges	3.5.1 Budgeting
		3.5.2 Formal and informal money lending
		3.5.3 Alternative income generating Streams
		Bank facilities
		Money lenders

Each of the above categories and its related themes and sub-themes will be discussed in the next sections.

7.3.1 Category 1: Psycho-social challenges

Table 7.2 below outlines a summary of themes and sub-themes that have emerged under the psycho-social challenges category.

Table 7.2: Psycho-social challenges and coping strategies

CATEGORY 1: PSYCHO-SOCIAL CHALLENGES	
THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1.1 Inability to disengage from work environment	
1.2 Disengagement from social activities	
1.3 Personal trauma	
1.4 Invasion of personal boundaries	
1.5 Emotional well-being issues	
1.6 Coping strategies for psycho-social challenges	1.6.1 Non-existent coping mechanisms
	1.6.2 Personal mission
	1.6.3 Substance abuse
	1.6.4 Withdrawal and thoughts of quitting

The participants have shared many situations and incidents to illustrate areas which affect their psycho-social well-being. These challenges can be categorised into the following themes: inability to disengage, disengagement from social activities, personal trauma, invasion of personal boundaries and emotional well-being issues. The coping strategies used to deal with psycho-social challenges will also be discussed. Each of these themes and sub-themes will be explained in detail.

Theme 1.1: Inability to disengage from work environment

Inability to disengage refers to the process whereby the worker is unable to stop thinking about what has transpired in the workplace to an extent that his or her functioning in other areas of life gets affected. This challenge is consistent with Smith's (2008) view that working with children and youth involves "keeping them in mind, not being able to walk away at the end of the shift and merely pick where you left the previous day." Inability to disengage is the theme that persistently featured in all the focus group interviews. (FG9.P9) expressed this concept in the following way: *"When I am outside, it does not switch off."* Another participant shared the view that disengaging can be difficult by stating: *"They always say to you here at work sometimes you mustn't take work home and stuff but it's hard"* (FG5.P5). It has emerged that inability to disengage from work environment makes it difficult for CYCWs to live their normal life during their time-off, because they do not focus on themselves as captured by (FG6.P4): *"I don't think about myself and my things, but I think about the problems at work."*

Although inability to disengage was expressed as a common concern, it is not something that can totally be avoided. The nature of CYC requires total commitment and reflection. According to Garfat (2005a), reflective practice involves "thinking seriously about one's actions, the outcome of those actions, the context within which they occur, and one's immediate experiencing of an event." Most CYCWs are really committed to working with children and families. Hence at times continued engagement is unavoidable. When it is done in a thoughtful and purposive manner, reflection can serve as an illustration of CYCWs' passion and concern for their clients. Participant (FG6.P6) captured this point very well when she mentioned the following: *"When you are at the shop you always think about these children and you want to buy them something to make them happy."* Thinking of buying gifts for

children and youth in one's care can be interpreted as a sign of commitment to 'care' and this gesture should not be viewed negatively in this context. Another participant (FG9.P9) also mentioned: *"You must think about what is going to happen today."* This excerpt confirms Racco's (2009) view that reflection involves "looking within ourselves, our actions, and our thoughts and how this plays out in our practice." Hence in some contexts, continued engagement can serve as a strategy to plan for the next shift.

It is only when inability to disengage interferes with one's personal life that it must become a concern. Some participants mentioned that sharing what has transpired at work with their loved ones helps them to cope. Although sharing might be helpful to others, issues of confidentiality need to be taken seriously as "the right to privacy is a human and therapeutic, as well as a legal consideration" (Garfat, 2005b). Participant (FG6.P4) for example described sharing as follows: *"I also share my problems that I encounter with children from my work."* Although sharing with others might serve as a coping mechanism, some participants have rightfully expressed their concern about taking work issues home. In this regard, (FG6.P3) held the view that inability to disengage *"... is a problem in a sense that they are at home and are supposed to bond like a wife and a husband. Instead of doing that, they are focusing on work."* Inability to disengage should not be confused with reflections. Although CYCWs are encouraged to reflect on their interactions, it must be done in such a way that it does not impact on their functioning in other areas. A significant number of participants mentioned that they are unable to disengage most of the time. And yet Webber (2003) advises that the ability to 'disengage' and not take the behaviour of children and youth in care personally will do much to boost one's mental health. When outside work, CYCWs should be able to engage in other social activities. However, engaging in social activities also featured as something that some participants find difficult doing as indicated in the next theme.

Theme 1.2: Disengagement from social activities

All workers from all sectors are expected to perform other roles and engage themselves in a variety of activities that are in line with their lifestyles. Participants have shared information that suggests that some of their colleagues are not able to perform some of the social roles that are expected of them. (FG6.P3) described the

following situation as a typical example: *“Married women and married men when they arrive at home, if they’ve got challenges with their kids, they no longer want to intervene. They say go and tell your father. I’m tired with these kids. It is the kids at work, it is you again. Go to your father and then you find that the husband is so frustrated.”* Tiredness emerged as the biggest contributing factor that makes CYCWs unable to engage in social activities. The worrying factor is that CYCWs might be neglecting their own children in the process as described by (FG3.P6): *“When I get home, I have a lot to do with my kids. Sometimes I fail to teach my kids even homework, because (Name of the young person in care) was swearing at me the whole day. They can’t even pass, because no one helps them with their homework.”*

In some instances, it is the shift work that interferes with CYCWs’ social lives as acknowledged by (FG5.P8) who stated: *“People cannot anymore be as committed to community events like church programmes, etc.”* Shift work was mentioned as affecting the planning of some participants immensely. This topic will be discussed in detail later under inadequate working conditions in section 7.5.7. In many instances, community events are planned around the schedules of the majority of workers. However, CYCWs’ schedules are in many respects different from that of the majority of other employees. This may result in CYCWs unconsciously losing interest in terms of community participation. Hence some will end up like (FG10.P7) who stated: *“Our social life is limited.”*

Participant (FG1.P2) eloquently put it that *“it forces us as child and youth care workers to focus more on the families that we work with; forgetting our families behind or our friends.”* Working shifts definitely affects CYCWs in many ways. (FG2.P2) concurs that *“we have to work on weekends, Sundays and whatever. We don’t attend funerals, sometime you don’t even attend your child’s sports things and important family things.”* This excerpt suggests that some families might try hard to accommodate CYCWs in their planning. However, given the unpredictable nature of CYC, even after plans have been made around a particular CYCW, chances are that he or she may still not honour certain appointments resulting in their loved ones being disappointed. This is another area that was reportedly causing strain in CYCWs’ treasured relationships. Disengagement from social activities deprives

CYCWs opportunities to energise their spirits (Coleman, 2006). When relationships are weak, CYCWs will have little support when dealing with traumas that many participants alluded to having experienced as an important psycho-social challenge.

Theme 1.3: Personal trauma

The nature of CYC is such that CYCWs encounter people who have experienced trauma in one way or another (Racco, 2009). As a result, CYCWs are prone to being traumatised themselves. According to *The Free Dictionary* [sa], trauma is defined as “an event or situation that causes great distress and disruption.” Personal trauma was identified as one of the outstanding psycho-social challenges experienced by the majority of participants. (FG1.P6) correctly shared that *“sometimes you find that you have to deal with the situation that you also experienced when you were young. And that will make it hard for you to work with that family. Sometimes you’ll find yourself maybe crying in front of the family, remembering your experience.”* CYCWs can only deal with traumatic situations if they have satisfactorily dealt with their own personal traumas. However, it emerged that some participants never had the opportunity to deal with their own issues, such as (FG11.P2) who shared the following: *“In some families we are working with, the parents are sick and we have experienced our relatives and our mothers being sick so it affects us a lot.”*

CYCWs are meant to make a positive impact in the lives of those they serve. Amongst some of CYCWs’ responsibilities is the protection of vulnerable children (Snow, 2009). Participants shared that there are times when they cannot effectively provide the much needed protection which causes them personal trauma. (FG1.P4) postulates that *“...you find that those children are abused. It can happen that we have to help the child but you don’t know where to place the child and it becomes your burden.”* The participant was referring to the physical burden of trying to find alternative accommodation for the abused child on the one hand. On the other hand, she also referred to the psychological burden of having to leave an abused child in the very same abusive environment. This lamentation came from a rural-based participant. These psychological challenges cause personal trauma for the CYCWs and confirms Phelan’s (2009) observation that some CYCWs in SA have been personally touched by the same dynamics that are present for their charges.

The story of a four year old Jasmin Lee Pretorius from Brakpan who was allegedly raped and murdered by her uncle in December 2013 (Abreu, 2013) shocked the SA nation. For some CYCWs, hearing these kinds of stories is so common that they no longer get shocked. Colman (2006:776) describes trauma as “a powerful psychological shock that has damaging effects.” CYCWs hear about and deal with similar cases on a daily basis as captured by this participant: *“We are dealing with a girl who has been sexually molested by her biological father. And when I think of my situation at home, that I come to night shift as well and leave my children with their father, I end up always asking my child ‘has anyone ever touched you?’ I am always suspicious because the children are telling us stories that happened to them”* (FG2.P2). A similar concern was shared by (FG5.P3) who stated: *“While I’m busy working my day shift, my last week of day shift, I’m stressing. ‘Oh goodness me, here comes night shift. What am I now going to do? Who am I now gonna get to come and sleep over with my kids?’ And bear in mind you can’t just grab anyone, because there is abuse out there. And we are on alert, because we are already working in this kind of environment.”* These excerpts demonstrate the effect of traumatic experiences on CYCWs at personal and interpersonal levels. Some of the CYCWs’ suspicion can be justified and understood in the context of the numerous traumatic incidents that they witness daily.

Given the kinds of abuse that are taking place in today’s societies, it makes sense that many parents will be cautious. It is however concerning when one becomes over-suspicious. Some of the participants have admitted to having been traumatised due to some of their experiences. (FG2.P3) reported that *“...every time that I came home, I used to take my son and check him at the back, because we work with many such cases. If you are in that situation it affects you. Really every time and if maybe I didn’t check him he’ll say mommy you haven’t checked me.”* The kind of behaviour demonstrated by this particular participant can be associated with that of a person who is traumatised herself. The one participant has emphasised to the researcher that she had been checking her son like this every day. What is even more worrying is that she might have been traumatising her own son in the process.

Personal trauma and the effect thereof on CYCWs’ behaviours must be understood within the context within which they work as (FG2.P6) has eloquently put it: *“... what*

I've since discovered with myself personally around working in the child care field is that you lose trust with people around you. You get to a point whereby you don't trust anyone." To support the views that some of the CYCWs' behaviours might be associated with personal trauma, some participants reported to be over concerned even in areas that are relatively safe. (FG2.P1) for example shared that *"when you go to the mall, let's say there's lots of kids, there is lot of people moving up and down there, one child is crying and nobody is looking at the child, you become affected by asking yourself: 'What's going on? Who's coming with the child?' So I think those things affect me. I think it is due to working with children."*

During the interviews, it emerged that CYCWs' own children might be exposed to real risky situations due to their parents' own challenge of personal trauma. (FG6.P3) shared this chilling incident: *"Three or four weeks back, I found my son watching pornography. Then I asked him why do you watch this? I also asked him, after watching this, 'whom are you going to sleep with, because you are supposed to sleep with someone after watching this?' And then in the morning, I found that my son is sleeping with my daughter and normally they don't sleep in the same bed. I asked him, why are you sleeping with this child? Now I check my daughter. I ask her to take off the clothes, panty, to check if something happened and she was just saying 'mama what are you doing?' I say, I just want to find out are you okay. Then from there I don't want my daughter to be left alone with my son."* This sleeping arrangement bothered this particular participant despite the fact that siblings have separate relationships with one another that change when others intrude (Vista Clinic, 2013:4). Osman and Shal (2014) noted the reality that others around a suspicious person, such as at home and in the workplace, can find him/her irritating and sometimes even confronting or threatening.

Another traumatic challenge that CYCWs are exposed to is working with terminally ill clients. Some participants reported that they work with ill people, some of whom are bedridden. It was reported that despite their dire situations, some of these clients refuse to co-operate with CYCWs. The effect of these challenges is clearly described by a community-based participant (FG4.P2) who notes: *"If my patient dies, that hurts me, but there is no support that I receive after my patient has died."* Goble (2002)

emphasised the importance of caring for CYCWs, particularly in the context of those who are exposed to death as part of their responsibilities.

Theme 1.4: Invasion of personal boundaries

Another psycho-social challenge experienced by some participants is the fact that some of their clients do not respect their personal boundaries. In this regard, some of the female participants have cited being proposed to by boys in their care. For example, (FG9.P6) stated: *“They propose and say kiss me mommy.”* This kind of gesture is something that will certainly put the affected workers in an awkward situation. Many CYCWs regard themselves as adults whose role is to guide children and youth, most of whom have never received adequate care from parental figures. To be proposed to by your client might make one feel disrespected, both as an adult and as a professional. (FG7.P1) describes her experience in this regard as follows: *“Sometimes they look at me as a girlfriend. They try and approach me and that sometimes makes me feel very uncomfortable, though I try to handle the situation. They tend to come and approach you and address you with names like ‘baby’ and all that makes the staff very uneasy.”* Although the shared gesture by different youths in care may be viewed negatively, Smith (2009: 124-125) reminds us that “sexuality is integral to ‘self’ part of who each of us, staff or child is.” On the other hand, Mann-Feder (2003) cites the importance of boundaries to preserve our sense of identity. Proposals and romantic overtures by youth might be an expression of genuine interest towards an adult caregiver and therefore need to be handled carefully. The study conducted by Smith (2009:126) confirms what participants have described and therefore view young people as sexual beings. However, such a move certainly goes beyond some CYCWs’ personal boundaries. If not adequately resolved, such moves might contribute to CYCWs experiencing emotional well-being issues.

Theme 1.5: Emotional well-being issues

Some participants cited psycho-social challenges that might be related to their emotional well-being. In this regard, ‘stress’ was mentioned by participants as a significant challenge. According to Colman (2006:731), stress is defined as “a psychological or physical strain or tension generated by physical, emotional, social, economic, or occupational circumstances, events, or experiences that are difficult to manage or endure.” The stress that is caused by CYC work is consistent with

Barford and Whelton's (2010:272) view that "providing care to high-risk children and adolescents placed in care is stressful and challenging." (FG1.P6) illustrated a stressful situation as follows: *"the other thing is that this work is stressing."* The stressful nature of CYC was expressed equally by participants in residential programmes and community programmes. These findings confirmed the occupational stress that has since been mentioned by Ricks (2001). (FG4.P4) highlights that CYC work causes stress by describing that: *"You find that sometimes you can't sleep at night."* When it is a once-off experience, inability to sleep can be viewed as being normal for CYCWs who deal with difficult situations. However, when this happens for prolonged periods it borders on another one's emotional well-being which includes sleeping disorder and therefore needs to be taken seriously.

Some participants mentioned issues that relate to their emotional well-being. (FG4.P2) has described her situation as follows: *"I'm not coping. I am sick and I lock myself in the house."* According to AllPsych Online (2014), reduced interest in activities that used to be enjoyed and sleep disturbances (either not being able to sleep well or sleeping too much) may be associated with symptoms of depression. (FG6.P6) also opened up when she stated: *"...sometimes I've been depressed or having anger."*

To further illustrate areas with emotional well-being significance, (FG3.P3) has shared her challenges as follows: *"you develop anxiety disorder wherein you are always worried, you become fearful of anything."* (FG9.P7) shared the concern that *"Sometimes we live two lives... at work you focus on these kids in a certain way, at home you do things your way."* CYC subscribes to a notion of personal congruence which requires CYCWs to behave consistently with their deeply held values and beliefs, words and deeds (Steckley, 2009). CYCWs should be consistent in terms of how they conduct themselves, both at work as well as outside work. However, this participant (FG9.P7) was adamant that *"You should leave child and youth care at the gate. It can mess you and your relationship."* The researcher's view is that the participant was really trying to articulate the importance of keeping a balance between being able to switch off when not on duty and being congruent. This balance is not easy for some CYCWs, hence they adopt various coping strategies in the process.

Theme 1.6: Coping strategies for psycho-social challenges

The participants have shared a variety of strategies which they use as their coping mechanisms. The following sub-themes which form part of coping strategies for psycho-social challenges were mentioned: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal mission, substance abuse, and quitting.

Sub-theme 1.6.1: Non-existent coping mechanisms

The researcher was fascinated by an observation that when he asked participants about their coping mechanisms their first reaction was that they were not coping, although some were hesitant to admit it. (FG5.P5) expressed herself as follows: *“I was gonna say I don’t think I am coping.”* This demonstrated a level of hesitation on the part of some participants to admit that they are not coping. (FG5.P8) commented that *“...really some people don’t cope very well.”* Bandura (2010) posits that people who doubt their capabilities shy away from difficult tasks. In this context, those participants who admitted to ‘not coping’ do not resemble those who doubted their abilities. Instead, they acknowledged the hardships inherent in their job. The researcher got an impression that at times, it is easier to observe that others are not coping rather than looking at oneself and paying attention to one’s own needs.

Digney (2013:13) reminds us that “everyone has a different set of coping strategies.” Hence it was only after a while that participants started sharing some of their individual coping strategies. The most prominent coping mechanisms included personal mission, substance abuse and quitting.

Sub-theme 1.6.2: Personal mission

Some of the participants’ responses may be classified under what the researcher would term ‘personal mission’. *Personal mission* entails an honest self-engagement which seeks to understand the reasons one got into a particular field in the first place. It could also entail reasons why one continues in that particular field. Fulcher (2009) described ‘mission’ as being “committed to making a significant contribution to young people, with a clear service orientation and purpose related to their work activities.” To illustrate their personal mission, participants such as (FG5.P5) described CYC as follows: *“I’d say there are pros of knowing the impact that you have on people’s lives.”* Some participants explained the impact that CYC as a field

has made in their lives, by extension sharing their reasons for continuing in this field. (FG9.P5) attested that *“It changed my life, my personality is different. All experience I can say made me a better person. I am better now.”* Depending on one’s past, for some participants it would seem CYC has changed them for the better, in ways they never imagined possible. CYC has the ability to actually expose children and adults to alternative ways of relating with others as captured by (FG9.P9): *“Outside you come across things, you deal with them better. When there is violence, you stay calm. You don’t fight back. You calm situations down.”* This is an example of a participant who seems to have changed for the better since joining the CYC field.

It came out from participants such as (FG1.P7) that for those who are in this field to achieve their personal mission, they must be cautious: *“It takes a long process, but if you persevere and be patient you end up getting what you want as a child youth care worker in order to help the families or children.”* Another participant (FG2.P7) summed up his involvement in CYC as follows: *“Child care made me what I am today.”* (FG5.P3) added: *“You can’t be here because you want your pay cheque at the end of the day. Your heart must be in the right place. You must be able to make an impact even if it is on one child’s life.”* From the quotations above, it is clear that CYC allows those involved in the field to give as well as to receive – making it a reciprocal profession (Alexander, 2008:35).

There is an abundance of evidence from the quotations above in terms of the reasons why some CYCWs stay in the field despite the well-known challenges that CYC presents. These participants’ expressions are supported by Cameron and Maginn (2009:101) who postulate that “CYC may have its personal rewards, but it is not easy.” It is the difficult part of CYC that may lead others to resort to substance abuse as a personal coping strategy.

Sub-theme 1.6.3: Substance abuse

Now that it has been mentioned that CYC is not easy, it may not be surprising that some participants have shared that they abuse substances as a coping strategy. Describing his coping strategy in this regard, (FG2.P7) stated that they resort to drugs and alcohol as their coping mechanisms: *“We end up smoking dagga and all those things, because those are the coping mechanism. You find a person smoking,*

drinking and being drunk all the weekends.” This behaviour is confirmed by Colman (2006:737) who states that substance dependence is “one of the major substance use disorders, characterized by maladaptive pattern of substance abuse leading to clinically significant impairment, manifested by signs and symptoms such as frequently taking larger amounts of the substance over a longer period than intended.” (FG9.P8) also admitted that *“I just collect 4-5 empties of beer bottles and I go to a certain tavern. I sometimes feel shit. Sometimes I drink a lot; of late it is too often.”* It is clear from the latter two excerpts that these participants have turned to substances as their coping mechanism. Although some people use drugs and alcohol without causing themselves or others any harm, this mechanism can easily get out of control and become a habit with dire consequences. Amongst symptoms of substance abuse is absenteeism (Ashe & Nealy, 2005:51). Substance abuse therefore needs to be monitored carefully with the view of providing the necessary support. (FG7.P3) shared his old ways of coping which suggests that he may have stopped using substances after a careful consideration of the possible long-term effects: *“I think the easiest one is to go home and have a shot obviously of beer. A long time ago I used to have cigarettes. I used to have some whiskey when I was having stressful situations.”*

The researcher’s observation was that the abuse of substances and alcohol were not the norm. Instead, the sense he got was that a few individuals may have adopted this strategy due to the non-existence of other supportive mechanisms in their specific personal and professional environments. Without adequate support mechanisms, others may even contemplate quitting.

Sub-theme 1.6.4: Withdrawal and thoughts of quitting

Another coping mechanism that was mentioned was withdrawal and thoughts of quitting the field of CYC. *Withdrawal* refers to CYCWs not being where they are supposed to be and not doing what they are supposed to do. Some of the examples of withdrawal have been expressed by participants such as (FG3.P1) in the following manner: *“Sometimes a person doesn’t feel like coming to work, you feel like staying at home.”* (FG3.P2) supported her by adding: *“So that the mind can relax.”* It is the researcher’s view that withdrawal can be a commonly used mechanism for those who feel tired or unable to deal with a specific situation. Withdrawal can therefore be

deemed a short-term coping mechanism. This behaviour is consistent with Hopkins, Cohen-Callow, Kim and Hwang's (2010:1385) findings that associated withdrawal with being more stressed. For those who feel trapped, thoughts of quitting might thus be an option to consider. However, given the scarcity of employment opportunities within the SA context, quitting is therefore not a viable option for many CYCWs. This topic will be discussed further under theme 2.8 which covers coping strategies for professional challenges.

7.3.2 Category 2: Professional challenges

It must be noted that it is not always easy to separate psycho-social and professional challenges as well as their coping strategies. There will always be a fine line between the two categories. The most prominent themes that the participants have cited under professional challenges are as follows: dealing with clients behaviours; personal risk, lack of tangible and immediate results, poor stakeholder relations, lack of clarity on the role and title of CYCWs, inconsistent job requirements, lack of recognition, lack of training and promotion opportunities, and inadequate working conditions. Each of these challenges will be discussed in detail in this section. Table 7.3 below is a summary of professional challenges and coping strategies.

Table 7.3: Professional challenges and coping strategies

CATEGORY 2: PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES	
THEMES	SUB-THEMES
2.1 Dealing with clients' behaviours	
2.2 Personal risk	
2.3 Lack of tangible and immediate Results	
2.4 Poor stakeholder relations	2.4.1 Blurred role expectations
	2.4.2 Poor relations with clients
	2.4.3 Poor relations with own team Members
	2.4.4 Poor relations with other Professionals

	2.4.5 Poor relations with community Members	
2.5 Lack of recognition	2.5.1 Lack of clarity on the role and title of the CYCW	
	2.5.2 Inconsistent job requirements	
2.6 Lack of professional growth and development opportunities	2.6.1 Lack of training opportunities	
	2.6.2 Lack of promotion opportunities	
2.7 Inadequate working conditions	2.7.1 Working shifts	
	2.7.2: Working long hours	
	2.7.3 Being on standby	
	2.7.4 Staff: children ratio	
2.8 Coping strategies for professional challenges	2.8.1 Non-existent coping mechanisms	
	2.8.2 Personal support networks	Rationalising
		Self-protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-guarding - Self-projecting - Sourcing relationships - Relying on others
		Self-care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indulgence - Time off - Recreational activities - Faith related activities

		- Family support
	2.8.3 Professional support networks	Colleagues
		Team meetings
		Supervision
		Psychological services
		Self-development
		Broader support structures
		Quitting

Theme 2.1: Dealing with clients' behaviours

Managing children's behaviours is one of the core responsibilities of CYCWs (Vanderwoerd, 2006). Participants described a variety of children's behaviours that they are managing on a daily basis. (FG7.P3) summarised these behaviours as follows: *"learning challenges, aggressive behaviour, anti-social behaviour, and all of that stuff."* He further elaborated on the difficult behaviours: *"Imagine, on a normal day you come to work at 8:00 o'clock, by 8:30 you had three fights breakout on campus."* (FG9.P3) added the following: *"This job is like a pressure cooker. It is like you experience 8 seasons in one day and many emotions in one hour."* What has been described above are the typical days of CYCWs in many CYC programmes.

As CYCWs try to deal with behaviours embedded in the above-mentioned section, it is not like children and youth will easily comply. Instead, these youngsters are likely to respond in different manners that could be deemed inappropriate and disturbing as lamented by (FG3.P1): *"to be swears by a young person disturbs very much."* (FG7.P4) shared similar views by stating: *"you come in the morning, you are prepared and only to find that the youths are swearing you and they give you a very huge disrespect and all that affect you, because you think that you are an adult."* It is worth mentioning that the two participants who expressed the view that children should respect adults came from different backgrounds; one is a female from a rural area and the other a male from an urban area. These two participants also came from different racial backgrounds. These participants' utterances suggest that

'respect', as a universal value, is appreciated by many CYCWs irrespective of their backgrounds. This sentiment came from participants based in rural, semi-urban and urban areas. It emerged from the discussions that many children in care seem not to embrace respect and therefore this will understandably challenge many CYCWs.

Although dealing with some behaviour is difficult, some participants seem to understand that difficult behaviours might be an attempt by children and youth to express their needs as discussed in section 4.4.1 of chapter 4. In describing their understanding of the behaviour of children who could not visit their families during school holidays when most of their peers visited their families, (FG8.P6) stated the following: *"At the end of the day you are staying with that child, you do everything, but the child is still not happy because she is looking for her family. And when she sees other children visiting, she feels very disturbed or angry. Then she can do anything to you. She can talk the way she likes; even the way that can even get you hurt."* The participants' experiences are confirmed by Molepo (2004) who observed that children who cannot visit their families tend to direct their anger towards CYCWs.

Associating inappropriate behaviour with unmet needs is critical knowledge any CYCW should possess. This knowledge can minimise the level of challenges experienced by CYCWs. It seems as if some participants have insight into the way that their clients behave. This insight is illustrated by the following quotation: *"Because the child has got a lot in his heart and he can't express himself maybe he expresses himself in a different way; sometimes he is bullying you. He thinks maybe you are the cause of why he's here"* (FG8.P6). This is a typical insight that trained and experienced CYCWs display. Another participant (FG10.P7) postulates that *"some of the children were bullied physically. Then when you see a child beating other children you ask him 'Why are you beating this child like this?' He then answered that 'I was beaten back at home'."* These kinds of insights can lead CYCWs to a better understanding and tolerance. CYCWs need to understand children's behaviours in context, i.e. their needs as well as their stages of development. In this regard, (FG6.P1) articulated his understanding in this manner: *"Sometimes you just accept the fact that a child is in a stage, it is some kind of transition and we know that is going to pass."* Unfortunately some CYCWs have not

reached this level of deducing meanings behind some of the children's behaviours. CYCWs who know that behaviour has meaning (VanderVen, 2002; Hackney & MacMillan, 2008) are likely to tolerate and aspire to find effective, developmental and therapeutic ways of dealing with children and youth who display inappropriate behaviours.

However, some participants who experience challenges in dealing with their clients' destructive behaviours are prone to retaliate. For example, (FG2.P1) voiced her frustration as follows: *"I'm having a problem with the rights of children. I am thinking that they've given them so much rights that they cannot even try to be responsible for what they do."* Most participants expressed the view that it is the 'rights' that have contributed to children not behaving appropriately with the knowledge that not much can be done to them. In this regard, (FG2.P1) explained: *"It is this rights thing. You know why? That child knows you not gonna beat him."* (FG9.P7) agreed by stating: *"These boys are being rewarded for not following rules. The rules in the Act are not conducive. I think these books are written by overseers who do not know this job."* The statement above suggests that the participant does not feel that he had an opportunity to make input at policy level (macro-system level). Although SA has done well to introduce policies that ensure the protection of children, Schubert in Brendtro (2004:8) warned that formal policies are not sufficient to protect children and suggested that all persons should have a voice in these policies to avoid the risk of maltreatment in covert negative subcultures of youth and staff.

The issue of children's rights has been discussed thoroughly at a policy level. Allsopp (2011:80) reported that there has been an emphasis on a shift from a control and punishment approach to a developmental care approach, contextualised within a child rights framework. However, the rights-based approach came out clearly as an area that some participants seem not to have come to terms with as further illustrated by (FG6.P4): *"Today we don't have a punishment method that we use to correct their behaviour."* It is these utterances of 'experienced' CYCWs – at least due to their number of years in the CYC field – that strengthen the call for continuous training of CYCWs. This is a call that (FG7.P5) alluded to when he said: *"Staff need to be well trained to respond to situations in a professional way."* Monitoring of some workers to ensure that the rights of the children are not violated becomes even more

critical. This will avoid instances where children and youth might be hurt in subtle ways, as alluded to by (FG9.P9) who stated: *“Sometimes I have used my hands on boys.”* The researcher was concerned about this statement and probed the meaning of ‘using hands on boys’ and the response from (FG9.P9) was *“Minimum force. I am allowed to defend myself.”*

The issue of ‘rights’ also emerged as a contentious one at community level whereby participants reported to being perceived as interfering with the parents’ way of raising their children. In this regard, (FG11.P9) shared that *“if you talk about the rights of the children, they think we spoil their children.”* The outcry about children’s rights is consistent with Snow’s (2009) view that the entitlement of children to be rights bearers will always remain a controversial topic. It is against this background that all intervention strategies, such as physical restraint, need to be monitored, recorded and constantly reviewed. Heron and Chakrabarti, in Smith (2009:11), argue that indeed *“the superficiality of the rights agenda has added to the complexities and tensions permeating residential provision and have undermined the practitioner morale in the process.”*

One other behavioural challenge that participants shared in one particular focus group was dealing with boys and girls who live together as family, but engage in sexual relationships. (FG8.P6) reported that *“Boys and girls are having affairs. They don’t take each other as brothers and sisters in the house although they are living in one family house.”* These are some of the behaviours that present problems to CYCWs and need to be addressed. If not adequately addressed, some of the children’s behaviours may escalate to a situation whereby CYCWs’ face real personal risk.

Theme 2.2: Personal risk

The second theme in the category of professional challenges revolved around CYCWs’ exposure to personal risk factors. It is one thing to deal with a young person’s behaviour that only affects him/her and other youth. It is another thing when such inappropriate behaviour is directed at CYCWs and threatens their physical well-being.

Participants mentioned instances where their physical well-being was threatened. (FG9.P9) share these threats as follows: *“I have been spat on. My mother has been called whatever. I have been sworn on, but I am expected to establish relationships with these boys.”* This participant’s experiences is consistent with that of Rainbowadventure (2014), who noted that being abused, beat up, spat on, thrown up on, bitten, punched, sworn at and threatened are common occurrences in the CYC field. Some people can only tolerate such threatening behaviours to a certain extent. Participants mentioned that threatening situations like these may be compounded by the fact that some children use substances as attested by (FG7.P2): *“Sometimes they do use substances and it has a direct effect on the way they conduct themselves.”* In cases where substances are involved, there are increased chances of physical threats becoming a reality. Hence one participant reported that *“if we have to be honest, we experience fear. None of us can say he does not fear”* (FG9.P8).

This fear factor is confirmed and elaborated on by another participant, (FG7.P5), who said: *“we know that some of the youth do carry weapons. Being it a knife or a dagger or whatever you wanna call it, a screwdriver.”* (FG9.P8) further explained that *“you will get 27 gang boys fighting each other. What do you do?”* It is these realities of physical threats that will stretch CYCWs to the limit in terms of how to intervene. Even where strict security mechanisms are put in place to ensure that children and youth do not bring dangerous weapons into the programmes, participants reported that their environments are not predictable. In this regard, one participant (FG3.P2) notes: *“They make use of anything which they can find. Anything which can hurt another person. They are not selective on weapons. They can even use chairs when they are around to beat another person.”* It is this on-going sense of vulnerability that causes stress to CYCWs. (FG5.P7) highlighted that the personal risk factors that they are exposed to affect other areas of their lives by stating: *“My colleagues have spoken about the 12 hours. Now in that 12 hours, we are facing emotional and physical abuse.”* (FG1.P2) elaborated and explained the risk of physical abuse in the following manner: *“It also destroys our relationship with the community, because you may find that there is a child whom I’m working with. The child is being raped by the person whom I know and it is difficult for me as a child youth care worker to report that particular person, because even if he goes to*

jail, he'll come back. And when he comes back, it means that he is going to be after me, because he will insist that I'm the one who made him to be arrested." The reality of physical threat is confirmed by McDougall (2004) who stated that "child protection specialists are facing verbal threats, assaults and malicious complaints on a daily basis as they investigate allegations of abuse." If allegations of rape are levelled against perpetrators who are either well respected or much feared within communities, CYCWs are likely to be left without the necessary support, leaving them vulnerable.

Participants further reported that sometimes threats can manifest in reality as can be seen in (FG11.P9)'s story: *"I used to walk when we do home visits. One day on the way I saw a young person, I think he is about 19 years. He called me, but I didn't focus on him. He came closer and then he talked to me saying that 'I love you'. Although I ignored him, he continued to say 'I love you'. Then he beat me and took my cell phone and he ran away. When he was far away, he called and said please take your phone. And I went to take my phone but, by the time I tried to take my phone, he grabbed me and threatened to cut my throat. He pulled me to trees and just said, 'I want to sleep with you now' and I cried."* These kinds of situations leave CYCWs in a dilemma, because they have to protect the children on the one hand. On the other hand, the community members might have a different view of their roles and target them instead. These are real personal risks that participants have shared and should not be taken lightly. All CYCWs need to be supported so that they can handle children's issues without fear – for in some communities, threats can turn into real danger. Any form of support that can assist these workers should be explored in order for CYCWs to be able to achieve the results that they have set for themselves.

Theme 2.3: Lack of tangible and immediate results

Winfield (2013:69) reminded us that most of those who join CYC do so with the intention to make a contribution to children, communities and society. Despite the personal risks involved, many participants reported their continued efforts with the hope of making an impact on the clients they serve. This is consistent with Vanderwoerd's (2006) suggestion that CYCWs make heavy emotional and personal investments in their work. To demonstrate CYCWs' determination to make a contribution, (FG8.P6) stated the following: *"We forgive and forget and continue*

working with children, because we want to see them one day become successful.” In such instances, CYCWs put all their energy into assisting some of these children to improve their personal circumstances.

According to Kostouros and McLean (2006), being able to step back and gain a perspective from time to time on what has been achieved in one’s work is vital. Hence some participants mentioned that it is a professional challenge that at times there are no tangible or immediate results for their efforts. In this regard, (FG7.P4) eloquently put it in the following manner: *“We want to put all our energy to try to get that child on the right track, but when there is no progress, that’s where all the frustration starts.”* Marlowe (2012:96) explained that the ultimate outcome is the main purpose in goal-orientated approach and cited that fulfilment comes when one reaches the goal. It is therefore understandable that participants expressed their disappointments or even guilt when they experienced lack of results in their work with children and families. Swider and Zimmerman (2010:491) warned that a reduced sense of personal accomplishment may result in employees temporarily or permanently withdrawing from an organisation. (FG8.P8) expressed her frustration in the following manner: *“It’s an issue of seeing myself not performing. In the child and youth care sector, sometimes you feel like there’s nothing that you are doing, it drains you and you feel empty.”* All the above excerpts are consistent with Racco’s (2009) view that significant change occurs in small steps.

Lack of tangible results can affect CYCWs’ morale and even evoke a sense of guilt as captured by one participant: *“When the child falls pregnant, you feel like, as a mother, you have failed the child and the child has failed you. This is because you plan and you want to see that child becoming a doctor or a nurse in the next 10 years”* (FG8.P7). If CYCWs become despondent themselves, how much more those removed from the field of CYC? For example, (FG9.P8) lamented: *“We fail these kids. Too many of them go to prison and jail after this.”* It must be remembered that despite CYCWs’ efforts, children and youth who have been in care “experience a range of difficulties, prior, during and after being in care than their peers who grew up outside of CYC programmes” (Stein, 2006:273). Without obvious results, other stakeholders are likely to view the CYC field as not being effective. This may also

result in them concluding that CYCWs are not doing their job – something that will result in poor stakeholder relations.

Theme 2.4: Poor stakeholder relations

Another theme that emerged under the category of professional challenges is that of poor stakeholder relations. CYCWs do not work in isolation (Fulcher, 2009). There are many stakeholders involved such as SWs, psychologists, the police, doctors, nurses, teachers and ward counsellors. The collaboration of all stakeholders is critical if the success of CYCWs' efforts is to be realised. One of the main issues raised during focus group interviews is that many people do not understand what CYC is, who CYCWs are and what their main responsibilities are. Participants expressed this frustration in many different ways. Their opinions have led the researcher to classify these challenges into the following sub-themes: blurred role expectations and poor stakeholder relations (with clients, own team members, other professionals and community members).

Sub-theme 2.4.1: Blurred role expectations

The main concern that participants expressed is that children in their care seem not to expect them to act like normal human beings. Human beings get hurt, tired and moody at times, and so do CYCWs. To illustrate unrealistic expectations, (FG3.P4) reported that despite the volatile encounters with children during some days, *“the child also expects you to come again and help him the following day whereas he threatened you yesterday.”* This view is supported by (FG9.P3) who added that: *“tomorrow he comes and says ‘old man help me’, ‘do something for me’. He forgets what he did.”* This is clearly a distorted way of viewing CYCWs' role as human beings. In a way, that is the nature of CYC. CYCWs are the only adults around children most of the time (Du Toit, 2000). Where else can these children and youth turn to except to the very CYCWs they swore at, disrespected and even threatened? Consistent with Gannon's (2008) observation, when such expectations come from the children they can at least be tolerated to a certain degree. It is when the unrealistic expectations come from other stakeholders that CYCWs feel challenged by their role ambiguity. The existence of role ambiguity is confirmed by Shim (2010:849), who notes that conflict occurs when employees are not sure of the tasks that constitute their job.

Participants expressed the view that they are expected to do way too much. At times they are expected to perform impossible tasks. This has confirmed Arieli's (1997:17) observation that CYCWs are generally overworked. It would seem that participants are familiar with this observation, as (FG2.P7) even coined the phrase: "*When you join child care, you become a miracle worker, you become like a traditional healer.*" (FG6.P5) added "*everything that is demanding must be done by child and youth care workers.*" (FG1.P4) further added: "*I can work with children with disability, I can work with youth, I can work with those in Early Childhood Development because we don't have to specialise. We do all the work and it is a lot of work for us.*" The issue of workload and broad scope for CYCWs was anonymously mentioned in all focus group interviews.

Some participants expressed the view that some of the duties they are expected to perform fall outside their scope of work. (FG2.P7) reported that: "*We are doing security to ensure that there's no abscondment. We are not doing exactly what we are paid to do. We end up running after the children. It is like we get paid child care salary for security work.*" (FG8.P7) agreed that "*the community must understand that being a child and youth care worker is not like you are a police or a doctor.*" Although the expectations expressed above may really frustrate some CYCWs, some of those expectations are genuine and embedded within their job description. However, there are times when situations get out of control. It must be remembered that there are certain children whose minds are always preoccupied with absconding from the programmes. Allsopp (2013a:2) reported an incident whereby a child got killed, apparently by a CYCW, while he was allegedly attempting to escape from a secure care facility. Although the details of this incident are sketchy and under the investigation of the judicial courts, it should serve as a reminder of how some children might vigorously attempt to abscond from secure care placements. Attempts to prevent escapes must be the most stretching task for CYCWs. In such instances, there has to be some kind of understanding from other stakeholders which will minimise the number of "ill-informed public representatives and officials who sometimes use the simplistic correlations from published statistics and research to hold carers accountable for the natural but disruptive process of the children" (Cameron & Maginn, 2009:6).

Participant (FG7.P1), who is a nurse, shared a heightened level of understanding about the demanding nature of CYC as well as some of the unrealistic expectations levelled towards CYCWs. She captured her experiences as follows: *“It looks like the youth care workers are expected to do way too much more. They are expected to be nurses, they are social workers, they are teachers. At this moment we’ve got children who are taking anti-retroviral treatment and these youth care workers are supposed to give this treatment. And I feel it is a bit unfair towards them, because in the nursing field, before you give medication you must study for at least 2 years and you must know the anatomy of the body and then learn about the treatment itself before you can even administer it to a person. But with the youth care workers, they are expected to give this medication without knowing the complication of defaults and the complications of drug resistance.”* In essence, this participant has captured the concept of CYCWs being specialist/generalists (Allsopp, 2011:82-83).

It is voices such as this nurse’s that can bring other stakeholders closer to understanding what CYCWs are grappling with on a daily basis. Such understanding will also protect CYCWs from being exploited to do duties that should clearly be assumed by others. Most importantly, the understanding will protect CYCWs from being pushed into the territory of others – assisting with the maintenance of professional boundaries. This will be in consistent with Barford and Whelton’s (2010:284) call for the reduction of the expectations and responsibilities of CYCWs.

(FG7.P5) explained confidently and emphatically that *“at the end of the day, our main task as youth care workers is to educate the children, to teach the children and to train them.”* Education in its purest sense is definitely not the primary function of CYCWs. The participant clearly did not do a good job in terms of articulating what CYC is about. It would be understandable if these utterances were made by a participant who is a teacher within the CYC multi-disciplinary team. It is articulations such as this one that lead to conflict in multi-disciplinary teams. In order to avoid confusion, CYCWs need to be able to articulate to themselves and to others what it is they do as discussed in chapter 4, section 4.3.1.1. Clear articulation will alleviate a number of issues, including boundary related conflicts. But most importantly, it will clarify to CYCWs themselves and their clients what their role is. The above findings confirm the fact that the expectations of other professionals pertaining to what

CYCWs should be doing are far too much as discussed in section 1.2.2 of chapter 1. Shim (2010: 850) suggested that CYC organisations need to strive for a positive organisational climate to decrease a child welfare employee's intention to leave by clarifying their role. Clearly defined roles will hopefully alleviate poor stakeholder relations with clients.

Sub-theme 2.4.2: Poor relations with clients

Another sub-theme that emerged under this category is poor relations with clients. Some of the clients were cited as making CYCWs' work difficult in one way or another. (FG1.P8) gave this example: *"It is very challenging especially when you work with somebody who didn't want to reveal his or her situation."* Experiences like these can only be associated with *client denialism*. Client denialism may come as a result of clients not having come to terms with their situations, lack of trust, and/or also not having confidence that the professional is equipped to handle their issues. Whatever the reason may be, when this happens, it will result in frustration that affects the well-meaning CYCWs. It would be better if clients had the courage to verbalise their reasons for withholding information so that CYCWs could assist them better. If CYCWs are not able to assist on their own, they could rope in other team members. This can only happen if there is a good relation with team members.

Sub-theme 2.4.3: Poor relations with own team members

Another sub-theme that has emerged from the interviews relates to poor relations within CYC teams themselves. What has emerged from the focus group interviews is that CYCWs at times bring one another down as (FG2.P2) has expressed it: *"We like bad mouthing each other."* The researcher is certain that behaviours such as bad mouthing tendencies affect not only CYCWs' working relationships, but also give other stakeholders an opportunity to undermine them. (FG9.P8) explained the consequences of bad mouthing as follows: *"You feel down, frustrated and that management does not understand you. You can't trust even colleagues here. Sometimes you can't trust yourself."* These confessions are consistent with Smith's (2009:95) assertion that CYCWs tend to direct blame for their inadequacies elsewhere. It is always better that CYCWs do introspection before they blame others. To foster positive stakeholder relations, CYCWs need to look at their immediate colleagues to ascertain what could be going wrong within their teams. Their real

focus should be on the importance of unity in different contexts where teams are striving to achieve a common goal. If they have differences, CYCWs need to identify the right platforms where they can iron out those differences. However, this can only happen in conducive environments that promote freedom of expression and encourage diversity of views. Samjee, Makan, Pierre, Myeza and MacKay (2000) advocated for the creation of the physical environment that can be interpreted as a measure of respect for CYCWs.

The importance of good stakeholder relations cannot be emphasised enough. If poor stakeholder relations exist among team members, children in care can pick up disunity and use that to divide CYCWs even further. When CYCWs are not united, the results will be inconsistent treatment of children. To capture the impact of inconsistencies amongst CYCWs which affect treatment, (FG3.P3) presented the following scenario: *“For instance we work shifts. There comes uncle (participant’s name)’s shift. He would say the boy is very innocent or the girl is very innocent. When my shift comes, the boy is misbehaving, he’s swearing, he’s doing this and this. And when you tell uncle (participant’s name) that the child was doing this, he would say no ways, ‘he’s a good boy’.”* In situations where CYCWs perceive children differently, they are certain to treat those children differently, as experienced by (FG9.P9): *“If you break rules there is punishment. I take away TV. We take the child to his room. There is no TV for at least a week. You write it down, but when you come back on shift you see a boy you punished outside. Colleagues read it, but did not enforce it.”* Inconsistent treatment of children by team members is likely to contribute to CYCWs’ professional challenges. Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:76) cautioned that in environments where CYCWs are not following up on one another’s intervention strategies, the more lenient staff members will be more liked by the children and youth. When this happens, a poor stakeholder relation between CYC team members is bound to worsen. Although inconsistent treatment came out as a burning issue for this particular participant, it did not feature strongly as an issue across all the focus groups.

It further emerged that lack of unity amongst team members gives children and youth ammunition to make all sorts of allegations against CYCWs. Children and youth do so knowing that divided CYCWs cannot even defend one another. (FG3.P6)

expressed some of the typical allegations experienced as follows: *“Sometime they can say they saw Mr. (Name) and Miss (Name) doing something inside the dormitories.”* When the researcher asked for clarification with regards to what that something is, (FG3.P6) clarified as follows: *“Sex, they like to do that and then you can’t even work if you have that stress.”* According to Pragnell (2001), children in care are capable of learning how to manipulate adults with the purpose of exercising control over immediate environments or to survive in social groups.

Other than the challenges of CYCWs being manipulated by the children in their care, it also emerged that blaming others, including colleagues within the immediate team; tends to be the norm in some CYC programmes. To illustrate this point, (FG8.P4) cited the tendency of being blamed by supervisors as follows: *“If the child is not reporting that I am going to play in the community, you will be blamed that you are not doing your job.”* From the discussion it is clear that the relationship between CYCWs with their supervisors can be strained at times. The blaming behaviour was reportedly taking place at different levels. It also emerged that CYCWs were equally prone to blaming their immediate supervisors when things go wrong. This results in the supervisor retaliating. Supervisors reported that they also get blamed by their managers, turning the situation into a blaming cycle. (FG2.P7), who is a supervisor, mentioned that: *“When I get knocked that side, I’m coming to (name of participant). I am taking out the frustration on her because she is the person who is supposed to be in-charge. So I’m getting blamed even if I’m not there. I’m getting blamed because management is asking me what am I doing with (name of participant). And then when I go to (name of participant), I’m going there angry and I’m pushing indeed. I’m pushing saying ‘I’m not gonna take any more of your shit now’. You know it goes to that part where you gonna say if you don’t want to do your job you should resign.”* The excerpt above captures very well the origin as well as the extent of this blame game within some CYC teams, let alone with other professionals. What was even more interesting to notice is that blaming can also be accompanied by threats in some instances. The supervisor’s behaviour is consistent with The Texas Association of Counties’ (2005) observation that at times the supervisor may over-react and come down too hard on employees. If the blame game is not properly managed, it can put strain on those CYCWs involved. It can also escalate and spill over to contribute to poor relations with other professionals.

Sub-theme 2.4.4: Poor relations with other professionals

Lack of co-operation and respect from other professionals is another sub-theme that came out strongly in all focus group interviews. This did not come as a surprise given that “jurisdictional conflict, agency territorialism, and professional arrogance on the part of individuals or agencies” (Gharabaghi, 2010:8) can be the norm in some countries. This view is in line with the ecological systems theory which spells out the existence of boundaries. Most of the participants mentioned being undermined. When the researcher asked exactly who undermines them, (FG5.P2)’s response was as follows: *“By the people who think that they are more professional than the child care worker.”* Upon further probing by the researcher, (FG5.P2) mentioned: *“It is mostly the social workers who will say you got the limit you can’t go beyond whatever.”* On the other hand, (FG8.P7) argued that: *“I think our social workers need to take our profession very serious, because we spend a lot of time with children, we know the children better than they know them.”* The claim by some participants that they know children better than other professionals must be treated carefully if the spirit of team work is to be maintained. CYCWs may indeed know a lot about children. However, they need to acknowledge that what they know is based on their professional perspective. Other professionals have their own professional perspectives and roles. Patel (2009:29) acknowledged the emergence of other categories of personnel in the social service sector. Therefore all perspectives need to be respected and accommodated in order to provide an effective and holistic service to the children and youth.

It became evident during focus group interviews that participants’ outcry about lack of recognition from other professionals came from two groups of CYCWs. Firstly, from those CYCWs who have qualifications and secondly, from those who do not have qualifications but have acquired enormous CYC experience over the years of working in the field. To express frustration with regard to how other professionals treat them, (FG8.P5) stated: *“The outside social workers hide the information, for example that the father is unknown, the mother is unknown.”* Another participant (FG9.P.9) added his frustration in this manner: *“Boys come to the centre and I have no idea where they come from as well as the crime they have committed. I don’t know their psychological assessment and who analysed them. I have to know these things, but I don’t get told what the problem is. Sometimes I only find out afterwards.”*

These sentiments are consistent with Gharabaghi's (2010:154) experiences that in many practice settings, CYCWs often complain about feeling 'voiceless' when it comes to decision making or developing plans for children. The participants in almost all focus group interviews expressed dissatisfaction of some sort in terms of how they work with other professionals. The withholding of information clearly still persists as observed by Du Toit (2000). These tendencies persist despite Gharabaghi's (2010:106) call that CYCWs should be treated as individuals/professionals who can receive information from others, translate that information into their day-to-day work and add value to the work of others.

To highlight her frustration, (FG6.P4) coined an expression to explain the seriousness of the lack of recognition situation by stating that: *"They regard us as fools or fake."* Although many complaints were levelled against social workers, other professionals were not spared these criticisms. (FG4.P2) lamented that *"nursing sisters don't take us serious."* (FG1.P2) added that *"when you visit psychologist accompanying the family, they undermine us. So they don't take our profession as an important profession."* From the excerpts above, it became clear that participants were not satisfied in terms of recognition from a host of professionals.

(FG6.P3) tried to come up with the root cause of CYCWs' 'ill-treatment' in terms of recognition as follows: *"Because we don't have degrees."* It is a fact that in SA there are now people who choose CYC as a profession. They even make an effort to obtain formal qualifications before entering the field. (FG2.P2) attested to these developments by stating: *"The sad thing is that people who are coming into child care now, have diplomas in child care from University of Natal and they come here after completion of their studies."* Despite such efforts, it seems as if CYCWs, with or without qualifications, continue to feel undermined. (FG8.P6) also cited exclusion as a matter of concern as follows: *"Sometimes when the child you work with has got a problem and goes to the social worker, the social worker excludes you and does not work with you. They just work with the child alone and when they encounter problems they come back to you."* Despite the desire to work as a team and make a unique contribution in some cases, CYCWs reported that this reality is not always evident. (FG8.P7) lamented that *"...even if the social worker sees that she can't help the child, but you can help the child, she won't give you a chance to sit down*

with the child.” The ability to recognise and utilise each team member’s skills comes with professional maturity. This view is consistent with Krueger’s (1990:12) that “teamwork is a sophisticated process that requires a great deal of skill.”

Anglin (1999:149) predicted that “there will always be some in each human service discipline – nurses, psychologists, teachers, and social workers, for example – who will want to devote themselves to children and young people.” The researcher came across one such professional who is not necessarily a CYCW, but has come to the appreciation of CYC approaches. Hence in this regard the researcher has come to the conclusion that it is not all professionals who disrespect the role that CYCWs play. His sense comes from the fact that the nature of this study focused on hearing only CYCWs’ challenges and therefore captures only their voices. Capturing other professionals’ views about the role of CYCWs as professionals may require a separate study like the one conducted by Hlagala (2012), whereby she sought to establish other professionals’ perceptions about Youth Work as a profession.

Some participants presented a slightly different picture in terms of their experiences of working with SWs in particular – suggesting that stakeholder relations are not always poor. (FG1.P6) expressed some evidence of pockets of good stakeholder relations as follows: *“I saw the other stakeholders playing a big role in our work which makes us to cope so easily. Like teachers, like social workers. Now they understand our work and the role that we play. Sometimes when we don’t get progress with families, it is where now social workers play the role.”* The researcher established that good stakeholder relations come mostly as a result of persistent efforts by CYCWs to expose other professionals to and teach them about their work, as attested by (FG7.P2): *“We do have trainers coming from Cape Town and Gauteng to do these courses with the schools’ principals and the educators.”* (FG4.P1) also shared: *“When we have too many challenges we refer to social workers and the social workers will by then play their role in that child’s life and then we facilitate the way forward. We follow up on how far is the social worker with that child.”* What was notable is that good collaborations with SWs were mentioned mainly in community based programmes; more so than in residential based programmes. The collaboration efforts have been attested to by Allsopp (2011: 86), who cited the possibilities and benefits of different social service professions working

together. Social service professionals need to work together in order to make a significant impact on the communities they serve.

Sub-theme 2.4.5: Poor relations with community members

CYCWs in community based programmes are expected to interact and assist a range of people. Despite the fact that some children's institutions are located within communities (Kirkland & Du Toit, 2000), participants reported that the task of making an impact in their communities is daunting as community service recipients do not fully cooperate with them. To illustrate the point on non-cooperation, (FG1.P8) shared that *"...it is very challenging especially when you work with somebody you know and who does not want to reveal his or her situation."* Another area that contributes to poor stakeholder relations in community contexts is the unrealistic expectations from community members as a result of their socio-economic situation. (FG11.P6) expressed these expectations in this manner: *"They expect us to come with something and when we just listen and go, they have disappointment in their eyes."* Another example came from (FG1.P7) who pointed out that *"...like if they don't have a house, they expect the child and youth care worker to make all means to arrange maybe an RDP house."* RDP stands for Reconstruction and Development Programme. It is the ANC's document that formed the basis of an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework that sought to mobilise all of SA's people and the country's resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future (O'Mally, 1994). After the 1994 democratic elections, the ANC-led government came up with the programme to build free houses for needy families as part of the broader RDP. This is the programme that is still running even after 20 years. Although the utterances of (FG1.P7) above may seem like unrealistic expectations to some, this is what skilled CYCW are doing in reality. Thumbadoo (2013:26) confirmed that these workers "network, refer, advocate, negotiate, and relate to the various other officials and organizations significant in children's services in the community." Amongst other duties, CYCWs work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the acquisition of houses for vulnerable families. This can be a daunting task considering that housing is primarily the domain of the local municipality officials. The role of CYCWs involves bringing the plight of some desperate children and families to the relevant stakeholders' attention. In some areas partnerships like these do work, whereas in

others they don't. In areas where stakeholder relations are not good, at times due to the severity of corruption in terms of the allocation of houses (Corruption Watch, 2014), CYCWs insist on speedy housing service delivery for vulnerable families. In those instances, CYCWs are bound to be at loggerheads with municipal officials.

Participants made a call for better stakeholder relations within communities, including the very families that they are directly serving. To stress the need for community support, (FG8.P6) made this appeal: *"Some of the children have got parents. I wish as if when I do this job, the parents can also help me because I'm staying with ten or eight children. I wish the support of everyone. The teachers at school should help me, the psychologist, the social worker, the pastor and the mother of that child, or the grandmother."* Embedded in this plea is the realisation that CYC is a team-based discipline as has already been highlighted in chapter 4, section 4.8.4.

It further emerged from the focus group interviews that some community members sit back and point fingers at CYC programmes. Such members hardly visit CYC programmes which are operating in their surrounding areas to see what those programmes are about. Even those NGOs that work within communities seem to be having little understanding about what CYCWs are doing. As a result, instead of working as partners, they compete with CYCWs as (FG11.P6) lamented: *"They think they are doing better work than us."* It further emerged that some community members do not even understand the type of children these CYCWs are dealing with. (FG8.P6) shared her experiences that demonstrate lack of understanding on the part of community members as follows: *"When the children stole something there in the community, the community come here and fight. They will come here very angry to come and fight us with these children. Sometimes they think we sent them to their homes to go and steal things. They don't want to understand that children are children and are the same children as the children they are having in their houses. I think the community need to be taught about the children that we are looking after. They need to learn that these children come from very difficult situations."* It would really be difficult for community members to empathise with CYCWs if they do not know their clientele. This view is consistent with the view held by Fewster in Gharabaghi (2010:2) that without such understanding, some children's behaviour

won't impress the neighbours. The typical example of lack of appreciation of CYCWs' work is further captured by (FG8.P7) who reported *"Even the community is blaming us when they see those children misbehave. They think we are not doing our job in a correct way."*

Good community stakeholder relations can be fostered through effective communication that will inform stakeholders' perceptions. For as long as perceptions that CYCWs are doing nothing exist, there will be no support networks for these workers. The absence of support network was mentioned as a peculiar challenge in some community-based programmes in rural areas. (FG1.P4) lamented that *"we don't have much place to accommodate them here. It can happen that the child comes to my own place and I have to make sure that the child is safe. So it also affects me as a child and youth worker, because I have to leave my family and go out and help the child."*

Another example to support poor stakeholder relations in terms of families came from (FG8.P1) who said: *"You find that on December holidays you phone the relatives for their children and then this relative is saying that 'No I don't need these children.' And they knew you need to be off and go home to see your children."* Hence a participant felt that some parents have a distorted view in terms of the role of the CYC organisations; *"as if it's a boarding school"* (FG1.P2). The phenomenon of CYC programmes being viewed as boarding schools is likely to be prevalent in situations where children came from poverty stricken families, particularly those families from rural areas. Some parents might regard their children as being better-off in such programmes than being returned to poverty-stricken communities.

Above is a demonstration that CYCWs are not fully supported at all times by the very communities that they are endeavouring to assist. All the above excerpts suggest that CYC is still being labelled a "second tier" profession or a "quasi-profession" by other professionals, community stakeholders, families and youth (Gharabaghi, 2010:136). In other words, CYCWs are not being fully recognised as professionals.

Theme 2.5: Lack of recognition

Another theme that featured strongly in all focus group interviews is the lack of recognition. According to Allsopp and Mahery (2010:27), CYC is increasingly recognised as a profession internationally. However, at the time of data collection, CYC as a profession in SA had not yet registered its professionals although the process was closer to being finalised as indicated in chapter 4, section 4.9.2.

With regard to recognising CYCWs' qualifications, (FG3.P3) expressed her frustration as follows: *"You went to the university or you went to the college, it doesn't matter, everyone wants to oppress you. It's like you are nothing."* These utterances came from someone who went to the trouble of obtaining the relevant qualifications related to her work. It emerged that efforts to be qualified in the CYC field did not benefit some of the participants in terms of obtaining recognition. (FG2.P6) lamented that *"even when you try and introduce yourself, you are looked not at the same level as other professions are recognised."* If these are the experiences of 'qualified' CYCWs, the situation must be worse for those who are 'not qualified'.

What is more concerning is the fact that lack of recognition seems to be impacting the quality of services that children receive. In this regard, (FG1.P2) shared her challenges that impact on their services in this manner: *"When you go to the police they also ask us 'who are you?'"* This attitude suggests that if police do not recognise the professional status of this CYCW, they may not take him seriously. Hence in another focus group, (FG11.P12) reported that *"investigators just want to use us to look for the perpetrators instead of doing their job."* From this excerpt, it is evident that lack of recognition and respect for CYCWs resulted in poor service delivery to the children concerned. Although in principle it should not be like that, poor service delivery is the reality that CYCWs are reportedly experiencing. It emerged that the recognition and registration of CYCWs would give hope to some participants at different levels, as expressed by (FG1.P2): *"We need to register as child youth care workers like nurses and other professionals, so that when you report the case to the police, you will feel safe or feel protected."*

Helmet and Griff (1977:145) reported about the push for professionalism, which came from CYCWs themselves. The same push was expressed in this study

whereby participants wanted to be afforded the same status as other professionals. Calling for equal status and recognition, (FG2.P6) noted: *“They were trained before us and they were recognised before us that they are professions standing on their own.”* Hence (FG8.P7)’s profound plea that *“everyone must take this field serious”* cannot continue to be ignored.

It was against the prolonged registration background for CYCWs that participants expressed their outcry about recognition. In June 2014, the SACSSP issued a board notice calling for comments on the regulations for registration of student child and youth care workers and the holding of disciplinary inquiries; registration of child and youth care workers; and fees payable by child and youth care workers, auxiliary child and youth care workers (SACSSP, 2014). Up until then, CYC practice was still almost *“a never mandated service”* (Gharabaghi, 2010:11). Hence the title ‘CYCW’ was unknown.

Sub-theme 2.5.1: Lack of clarity on the role and title of the CYCW

The sub-theme that emerged under the theme lack of recognition revolved around the title of CYCWs. Participants anonymously expressed the view that their profession is not known. It follows that if the profession is not known, the professionals involved in that profession will equally be less known or not known at all. (FG2.P2) expressed the view of being unknown in this manner: *“The other stakeholders in the institution like maybe social workers and nurses they will take us for nannies. And think maybe we don’t have a profession, as if we were just taken from the street and thrown in an institution to take care of children.”* Some of the reasons why CYC is not well known could be as a result of CYCWs themselves not being able to articulate the nature of their work as conceded by (FG2.P2) who stated: *“Sometimes I can’t even explain what I do at work. They are asking me, what do you do to these children? Are you like a mommy to them?”* The perception also emerged that the DSD as the employer also does not recognise them. (FG6.P3) presented this perception as follows: *“When it comes to the department, it doesn’t recognise us as professionals. They just label us as nannies who take care of kids.”* The participants’ outcry is consistent with Samjee et al. (2000) that CYCWs are certainly not ‘glorified nannies’. It may be understandable when some communities do not know who CYCWs are, due to the absence of CYCWs in some communities.

It seems as if the title for CYCWs has been inconsistent in many countries over the years, as explained in chapter 4, section 4.5.1. However, participants acknowledged the evolution of the title for CYCWs. In this regard, (FG5.P8) shared that *“Years ago it only used to be children’s homes where you would live in that home with a certain number of children. That’s how I actually started off being in child care, living in a home with ten children together with my own children. And we were called house parents.”* It emerged from the focus group interviews that the title ‘house parents’ is still being used in some programmes to date. Such programmes use this title as an attempt to capture the essence of what their programme is trying to do. In such contexts, CYCWs may be referred to as ‘house parents’ in their programme specific environments and ‘CYCWs’ in broader CYC environments as illustrated by (FG8.P7): *“You are just being a mother to be there to help the child.”* The researcher is of the opinion that the interchangeable use of CYCWs’ titles may delay the highlighting of CYCWs as professionals and, to an extent, contribute to CYCWs not being known.

The issue of a title emerged to be too complicated to articulate, even for some CYCWs themselves. (FG2.P2) postulated that *“sometimes I just even say no I’m a counsellor.”* Those who regard themselves as CYCWs cannot afford to miss any opportunity to inform and educate others about who CYCWs are and what they do. Even more seriously, they cannot call themselves by other professionals’ titles. Using unofficial titles can only deepen the confusion whilst eradicating whatever gains the field has made in terms of advocating for its existence. CYCWs have a duty to articulate for their profession at all times. In so doing, they will be entrenching, safeguarding and dignifying the CYC profession — and not allowing others to assign other names such as ‘nanny’ or ‘housemother/father’ (Hoffman, 1999).

Some participants expressed their opinions in terms of who should be referred to as CYCWs. (FG5.P7) believed that their title should rather be Social Auxiliary Workers as demonstrated as follows: *“A couple of years ago the terms of child and youth care workers wasn’t used. Then we were regarded as Social Auxiliary Workers. I think at that time I was a chief Social Auxiliary Worker and I used to work very closely with the psychology department and the social worker department.”* The excerpt by (FG5.P7) above illustrates the rooted perceptual culture of some titles being taken

more seriously than others. Some titles are also perceived as opening doors for promotion as further argued by (FG5.P7): *“But if we say okay bring back the term Social Auxiliary Work, and then you study as a Social Auxiliary Worker you obtain your degree as a Social Worker, then you can improve until you got to the Doctorate in child and youth care.”* Some titles can indeed give one status and recognition. It must be noted that other participants did not seem to be in favour of the title Social Auxiliary Worker. Hence they kept interrupting (FG5.P7) when she suggested the title Social Auxiliary Worker by saying ‘a glorified one’. It was evident that participants did not want to be referred to as auxiliary to other professions. The noblest way to resolve the issue of the CYCW title would be to allow those affected, i.e. those practitioners who consider CYC to be “their professional identity” (Gharabaghi, 2010:11), to define themselves and identify the title by which they would like to be known.

Sub-theme 2.5.2: Inconsistent job requirements

Following from inconsistent job title for CYCWs, the sub-theme of inconsistent job requirements also emerged. When dealing with the topic of job requirements, (FG9.P8) posed the following question: *“What are the basic criteria for someone to be here; matric or a driver’s license? We need more staff but it seems anyone can come.”* Inconsistent titles that are given to CYCWs may have prompted questions as the one seen above. Hoffman (2013:14) alluded to the fact that CYCWs come from diverse backgrounds both professionally or educationally. Hence (FG2.P6) conceded that: *“Back then, child and youth care workers were not trained for the job.”* The situation of training has since changed in that there are now people who enrol to get specific CYC training before entering the field (SACSSP, 2014).

It seems as if different CYC programmes employ different criteria of identifying, recruiting and placing CYCWs. This will mainly be dictated by the varied needs of children from different communities. The geographical area and the available resources in which programmes are situated are also likely to contribute in terms of who to recruit as CYCWs. (FG7.P3) outlined the current different levels in terms of job requirements as follows: *“Some have grade 6, I may have a diploma, so that is the dilemma that the child and youth care profession is facing.”* The acknowledgement that CYCWs are at different educational levels seems to have

contributed to the arrangement of registering them at different levels (Jamieson, 2013:24).

Some participants held the view that inconsistencies in job requirements might be contributing to lack of recognition in some ways. For example (FG6.P5) argued that *“we are not recognised as professionals, earning the same salary as those who have passed standard one.”* It was notable that in one focus group, the issue of inconsistent job requirements did not feature at all. When they complained about unfair treatment from other professionals, participants based their complaints on the good work that they were doing instead of the qualifications they possessed. This may be because the programme is situated in a rural area where exposure to opportunities for formal qualifications might be minimal.

Theme 2.6: Lack of professional growth and development opportunities

Another theme that emerged under professional challenges is lack of professional growth and development opportunities. This theme can be divided into two sub-themes, namely lack of training opportunities and lack of promotion opportunities.

Sub-theme 2.6.1: Lack of training opportunities

With regard to training opportunities, (FG7.P5) expressed growth and development challenges as follows: *“One of the challenges was the lack of opportunities to study in this field of child care. At the universities and the technikons and the private colleges this is one course that was never really available.”* In the past, there were indeed few institutions that offered CYC courses. This challenge was gradually addressed, especially when UNISA offered CYC qualifications. UNISA was accessible to many CYCWs who were already employed in the field. The situation has since changed because UNISA stopped offering CYC qualifications. Hence participants expressed their concern as follows (FG1.P9): *“I remember the last time at the meeting that I attended in North West, we were like asking if maybe Unisa can’t be able to provide that kind of qualification. They said it is not something that they can just respond, but they will try to advocate also for the child care profession to be offered in Unisa. But Durban University are offering that electronically. It is not everyone who will manage because of the issue of the modems.”* It is evident from the above excerpts that the move by UNISA to discontinue all CYC qualifications has

negatively affected many CYCWs who had aspired to hold not only a diploma, but ultimately a degree in the field as discussed in 1.2.3. Although the DUT continues to offer CYC qualifications, it became clear that their effort to accommodate distance learners through electronic means may not be practical and affordable for some potential CYC students. Given the current situation in terms of access to tertiary institutions, it means the opportunities for studying in the CYC field will remain minimal as “demand for places to study the child and youth care worker degree outstrips supply” (Jamieson, 2013:15) in terms of the available spaces. The CYC fraternity could however capitalise on the recently released *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). UNISA’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Mandla Makhanya, conceded that UNISA will no longer be the sole provider of Open and distance learning (ODL) qualifications (Makhanya, 2014). Insufficient training opportunities can have a bearing on promotion opportunities for CYCWs as discussed in sub-theme 2.6.2 below.

Sub-theme 2.6.2: Lack of promotion opportunities

Another area of professional growth and development revolved around the lack of promotion opportunities. Participants who felt that they were ready to progress to higher positions also shared their frustrations. (FG5.P9) stated: *“The most highly paid person, is a chief. The most obvious thing is just to become the chief child care worker or a supervisor.”* (FG5.P8) concurred by uttering these sentiments: *“Here there is a bottleneck. You either have to wait for me to die or retire.”* These views about limited promotion opportunities within certain programmes have been further shared by (FG3.P1) who stated that: *“The only growth is like from being a child and youth care worker to being a senior.”* All these professional growth sentiments were shared by participants based in urban and semi-urban areas. For some participants, studying continues to be their hope. However, it emerged that when they talk about promotion opportunities, they limited their focus mainly to opportunities that existed within their own organisations. It emerged that some participants seem to be aware of the macro-systemic realities that not only affect them and their institutions, but other CYCWs elsewhere. (FG3.P3) for example cited: *“Shortage of centres, shortage of work. There are no opportunities, so that is why you settle for what you get.”* This

particular participant (FG3.P3) was based in a rural area, which suggested that she was familiar with challenges peculiar to the rural environments.

In some fields, when you have certain qualifications, you stand a better chance of getting positions that might guarantee better remuneration. CYC is also making progress, although slowly, in terms of providing better opportunities for CYC practitioners. To support this statement, the researcher would like to refer to an email that was circulating from Monash University on 2014/01/22 advertising a position for a full-time CYC lecturer as well as a part-time CYC lecturer (Siluma, 2014/01/22). This email was likely to be circulated to those CYCWs who qualified for the position to the exclusion of those who did not qualify. It seems as if it is against this background that CYCWs continue to cry out for opportunities to study and obtain qualifications so that they can apply for senior positions that may become available within their field with the potential for better working conditions.

Theme 2.7: Inadequate working conditions

Another theme that emerged as a professional challenge is inadequate working conditions. The sub-themes of working shifts, working long hours, being on standby and the ratio between staff and children featured as the main concerns for the majority of the participants. These sub-themes will be discussed in detail in this section. Some of the issues raised under inadequate working conditions will be discussed under inadequate remuneration structures in Theme 3.1.

Sub-theme 2.7.1: Working shifts

The arrangement of working shifts was identified as a major challenge for the majority of participants. Even those who are no longer doing shift work, such as (FG5.P8), expressed their concerns as follows: *“I have a great concern for child and youth care workers that have to work shifts. I think it does a lot (of harm) to people’s social lives.”* An example of how CYCWs’ social lives are being affected by shift work was cited by (FG2.P6) in this manner: *“Even if you are not married, talking of the dating circles, there are those guys when you start to say I’m rushing, I’m doing night shift, then the guy will say are you a security? By saying that it undermines you.”* The impression the researcher got from (FG2.P6)’s statement above is that, unless properly negotiated, shift work may actually ruin some relationships – those

that have been long established as well as new ones. It is perhaps for this reason that many CYCWs expressed shift work as the number one situation they would like to change if given a chance. (FG10.P7) further explained the impact of shift work as follows: *“Other relationships are not that 100% good because of us staying here.”* This expression was made by a participant who mentioned that she left her children in rural areas. She only came to the semi-urban area for work purposes.

Doing shift work forms part of the nature of the CYC field in some programmes. For many years to come, CYC will require some people to be available to the children for 24 hours in order to match the needs of the children (Jamieson, 2013:23). Some CYCWs have worked hard to escape this shift work arrangement; some have succeeded and others have not. Participants mentioned that shift work does not only concern the affected CYCWs, but seemingly confuse those outside the field. (FG1.P6) has illustrated this confusion as follows: *“We work flexi-hours so in the community they don’t understand our work and they don’t take it as a real work or as a professional one, because we don’t have on-time or off-time.”*

Even those CYCWs who have come to terms with shift work being part of CYC expressed the frustration that come as a result of situations which require them to abandon their plans in order to attend to work related matters. (FG1.P5) shared some of the awkward situations he encountered as follows: *“We reach people who are HIV positive. We find that when we teach them how to take treatment they undermine us. But afterwards when they feel sick, they call in the evening or during the midnight for help.”* The challenge of disruptions in one’s personal life as a result of shift work or being on standby came out clearly in this study. This is despite Smith’s (2009:99) call for shift hours to be planned accordingly in order to allow CYCWs to plan their lives.

Sub-theme 2.7.2: Working long hours

Over and above working shifts, another sub-theme that emerged is that of working long hours. Some participants expressed working prolonged hours beyond the unpopular 12-hour shift as another challenge. Lamenting working long hours, (FG10.P1) stated: *“My last born told me one day ‘Mama why you do not leave the job and come and sit with us, because you are scarce?’* Participants who work long

hours desire 'normal shift work'. (FG8.P6) expressed her desire in this manner: *"Another thing that can help us is not to work 24 hours. If I can work shift maybe I will always be free."* The most expressed concern about shift work and working long hours was the fact that participants had to leave their families for longer periods as expressed by (FG10.P9): *"I have to leave my family, my everything, my community so I have to see them once a month after getting those few days off."* The practice of parents staying away from their families and communities as a result of working far away is still common across many sectors in SA. To avoid such realities, many workers have resorted to bringing their children along, resulting in some living in informal settlements. However, for workers who only get a few days' time-off once a month, an informal settlement arrangement will not solve their problems either. The participants' outcry is consistent with Stein's (2009) view that problems can emerge when working long hours and schedules interfere significantly with CYCWs' personal and family life.

Sub-theme 2.7.3: Being on standby

Another challenge or sub-theme under inadequate working conditions is being on standby. Participants who occupy supervisory positions also expressed that they are not exempted from these social disruptions. Some of them have been issued with company or organisation cell phones so that they can be reached when on standby. (FG2.P7) related his situation as follows: *"When you come back from work, most of my life is surrounded by...(name of institution). Sometime I will say to my family 'I will take you to the shopping mall'. Then an issue of...(name of institution) will come in. Then the plans to go to the Mall fail. Then we quarrel."* CYCWs' resentment of being on standby has always been a bone of contention (Allsopp & Gannon, 2000).

Sub-theme 2.7.4: Staff:children ratio

Although the sub-theme of staff:children ratio did not feature strongly across all the focus group interviews, it is important to highlight it. In this particular residentially-based focus group, (FG9.P8) asked: *"How can we succeed? The ratio is 1:23 or 1:20, is this right?"* Smith (2009:159) advocated for better staffing ratios for programmes that deal specifically with difficult children. According to the researcher, the staff:children ratio did not prevail as the main issue for participants, unless this issue was embedded in the complaints about 'heavy workload' which came out

strongly in many programmes. Barford and Whelton's (2010:284) notion that job pressure could potentially be reduced by increasing the number of staff in the staff:children ratio is of vital significance and should receive adequate attention.

In concluding the discussion under this professional challenges category, it is worth noting that there were many more professional related challenges listed than psycho-social challenges. However, it is not easy to separate psycho-social challenges from professional challenges. The two are intertwined. As a result, professional coping strategies should always be considered in conjunction with psycho-social coping strategies that have been discussed earlier under Theme 1.6.

Theme 2.8: Coping strategies for professional challenges

Under this theme, the focus will be on the coping strategies that emerged under the category of professional challenges. CYC is a complex and challenging work (Modlin, 2013:6). Physical violence or the consequences of failure to deal with a situation satisfactorily (Smith, 2009:95) are some of those realities that can affect CYCWs physically and/or emotionally.

CYCWs are required and expected to be ready to deal with any situation that can pose a risk to children and to themselves. Readiness can be achieved through ongoing training. In one of his studies Dawson in Brendtro (2004:1) found that up to 90% of youth professionals do not consider themselves adequately prepared to handle serious crisis situations. Indeed in this study (FG9.P2) conceded that "*maybe, it is either we are not equipped properly to deal with them.*" Depending on the level of preparedness, CYCWs are prone to adopt varied coping strategies, some of which are helpful, while others are not. Under this theme, three broad sub-themes have emerged, namely: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal support networks and professional support networks. In subsequent sub-sections, each sub-theme will be discussed in detail with the aim of clarifying how it serves as a coping strategy.

Sub-theme 2.8.1: Non-existent coping mechanisms

During the focus group interviews, most participants were more than ready to share their state of well-being. It was as if this was the opportunity they have always been waiting for. Just like some admitted under psycho-social coping strategies that they

were not coping, participants continued to share by means of illustrations that they were equally not coping under the category of professional challenges. Describing her situation, (FG6.P1) highlighted as follows: *“I think my emotional intelligence is fading away gradually. I’m becoming less emotionally intelligent and my family don’t rely on me anymore.”* This statement is evidently an expression of someone who is not coping. The encouraging factor though about this participant is that she acknowledges her state of well-being and hopefully will seek the necessary help.

In contrast to the confession made above, (FG8.P7) stated: *“We cope because we love this profession.”* This expression is plausible. However, the researcher’s reservation is that for some CYCWs, admitting that they are not coping might be equated with less passion for the profession. It is better that CYCWs acknowledge their situations when they are not coping. Failure to acknowledge may lead them to act out their frustrations in one way or another. When that happens, others will pick up on their behaviours. It is hoped that when such behaviours are noticed, the necessary support will follow suit. Swider and Zimmerman (2010:490) warned that job performance is extremely pertinent; for employers work outcomes are critical. Hence in most instances, harsh punitive measures will be meted out to those who are perceived to be conducting themselves in an unprofessional manner.

Furthermore, the participants mentioned absenteeism and late coming as coping strategies. However, in the researcher’s opinion, these can rather be seen as signs of not coping instead of coping strategies. Describing patterns of absenteeism, (FG2.P7) noted: *“You get a lot of absenteeism. You get a lot of late coming, because people don’t want to take responsibility.”* It is worth noting that two potential participants, from two different institutions, were reported to have been unexpectedly absent from work on the day of focus group interviews. This may be an illustration of how rife absenteeism is in some programmes. This behavioural pattern is consistent with the views of Grandey et al., cited in Swider and Zimmerman (2010:491) that *“emotional exhaustion and overextension could result in absenteeism.”* Acknowledging patterns of absenteeism, (FG9.P9) said: *“In one dormitory we have 56 boys and 4 care workers. Anytime 2 can be absent.”* Unexpected absenteeism may not only jeopardise the quality of care of children and youth. It can also put other CYCWs and children at risk. To confirm the extent of absenteeism, (FG7.P5) also witnessed that: *“the outcome is that you see the staff getting sick.”* CYCWs

themselves confirmed being sick as a result of this work. (FG8.P4) mentioned: *“It is hard, you end up sick because the load is heavy.”* Genuine sickness should be treated with empathy, but dubious absenteeism should equally be dealt with given the amount of risks that can arise from an inadequate staffing complement at any given time.

Another coping strategy that some participants shared to illustrate that they are not coping involves being unfaithful in their personal relationships. (FG2.P6) unapologetically shared that *“Once there’s no trust there will be cheating, that’s a coping strategy guys. We cheat and we get relaxed.”* (FG9.P9) also confessed that *“the other thing that helped me is the ladies.”* (FG9.P9) went further to share *“People like to ask me what I do. I give them the nice story. I do not say negative things. I say good things and maybe it might be my lucky evening.”* Upon second thought about what he had just shared, (FG9.P9) later clarified: *“Beautiful women calm me down but I don’t want to get into their pants.”*

It is workers such as the ones mentioned above that need support. Although they may regard their behaviours as coping strategies, clearly these are not desirable strategies. Their behaviours can have direct consequences to them as individuals, as well as indirect consequences for the CYC field that they represent (Gmel & Rehm, 2003). The challenge in terms of support though is that behaviours such as cheating, shouting at own children, substance abuse and excessive drinking mainly take place outside workplaces. In such cases, it would be extremely difficult for colleagues, supervisors and managers to provide the necessary support. As a result, the only clues supervisors are likely to pick up are substandard performance and poor service to children. This is when punitive measures will be meted out promptly to CYCWs, as the real issues will be undetected. What is encouraging though is that those who have adopted cheating as a coping mechanisms were significantly few. The majority of participants shared strategies that fall under personal support networks and professional support networks.

Sub-theme 2.8.2: Personal support networks

Personal support networks emerged as one of the broad coping strategies. Personal support networks involve the strategies that CYCWs adopt individually. They consist

of different mental processes adopted, actual activities one engages in, and identified individuals who can serve as support mechanisms before one goes out to seek professional support. The real feature of a personal support network is that one takes care of oneself without relying on the available workplace support structures. The specific features of this sub-theme include: rationalising, self-protection, and self-care.

- **Rationalising**

The first internal coping strategy that the researcher has identified is rationalising. *Merriam-Webster* (2014) describes rationalising as a way of thinking about or describing something, such as bad behaviour, in a way that explains it and makes it seem proper or more attractive. Contained in rationalising are these concepts: ignoring, acceptance, hoping, and self-awareness. When using rationalising strategies, CYCWs tend to cognitively engage themselves to find meaning in terms of what is going on and how that can be solved. Each of these concepts will be illustrated by relevant excerpts. To illustrate ignoring, (FG7.P2) stated: *“Fortunately we are trained to ignore such behaviour of the children, but for how long?”* Planned ignoring is one of the well-known CYC strategies. According to Hewitt (2003), planned ignoring is “a conscious decision to not attend to the behaviour at the time it occurs”. For those who are trained, this is the strategy that can be used without leaving the child feeling neglected. However, for untrained workers, ignoring can have devastating effects on the children who are forever longing for care. Such workers might end up behaving like (FG8.P1), who confessed that *“sometimes if you are angry you keep it in your heart, telling yourself ‘I’m working for my children’, and so you don’t care.”* (FG3.P4) concurred with the attitude displayed above when she mentioned that sometimes *“you just have to swallow it and just have to help. It’s your job, nothing else.”* At face value, the strategies shared by the two participants above might seem like *acceptance*. Take (FG6.P5)’s statement that says *“I accept the situation as it is”*. If one looks closely at it, it is in fact not acceptance, but helplessness. According to *The Free Dictionary* [sa], helplessness occurs when one is “unable to help oneself; powerless or incompetent.” When dealing with children with emotional and behavioural problems, the tendency to feel helpless is a reality that is consistent with Webber’s (2003) observation.

To illustrate *hoping*, (FG6.P4) stated: “*Sometimes you just keep on hoping that things will get better, until you find ten years down the line that nothing is getting right. So you just have to think positive about your job no matter these challenges.*” Positive thinking is a proven and effective strategy that is applied in many sectors and disciplines. According to Bandura (2010), perceived self-efficacy is closely aligned with hope. However, if nothing improves despite having positive thoughts, this strategy can have negative long-term effects on the individual concerned. This view is consistent with Kostouros and McLean (2006) who posit that a sense of helplessness can set in when the situation of the CYCW’s clients does not improve. *Hoping* therefore needs to be used carefully, with the necessary support and other tangible actions that will move the person closer to better situations. Webber (2003) posited that adults can remain psychologically sound by refusing to engage in self-defeating thinking. The last concept associated with rationalising is *self-awareness*. To illustrate this concept, (FG6.P6) stated: “*I practice self-awareness that things will be right.*” Self-consciousness can be related to self-awareness. According to Kelly (2004), “active self-awareness suggests constant scrutiny of both our conscious and available self, and the less accessible ‘sub-conscious self.’” Hence in some instances, those CYCWs who are self-aware may even resort to self-protection as a coping strategy.

- **Self-protection**

Self-protection is another coping strategy that has emerged. According to Long (1995), the need to protect our lives has always existed. It would seem that CYCWs adopt the self-protection mechanism to ensure that they survive in their current positions or territories. Self-protection can either be conscious or unconscious and can take any of these four forms: self-guarding, self-projection, sourcing relationships and relying on others. Each of the concepts associated with self-protection will be discussed in the below.

- **Self-guarding**

Self-guarding is the term that the researcher has identified as a coping strategy. It can be described as actions that ensure that one does not get into trouble of any sort. The researcher will explain this concept by means of an example. In one focus group, (FG2.P6) articulated the self-guarding strategy in this manner: “*Whenever a child and youth care worker is called*

into the office with an official from our head office, it means something has gone wrong somewhere somehow. And I have to be alert. That is why I said as a team leader, I won't sit on that research because I want the people that are sitting there to come back to me with the information so that I can build up my case against whatever that is coming out of that meeting." For the researcher, this was a classic example of *self-guarding*. Another concept that the researcher has identified is *self-projecting*.

- **Self-projecting**

Self-projecting can be described as unconscious acts of saying and/or displaying undesirable behaviour to innocent others as a result of certain behaviours having been directed or displayed to you. It is a way of expressing one's sense of powerlessness. It was mentioned that children in care sometimes give CYCWs hard times with the knowledge that such workers cannot do much in return. Participants mentioned getting a beating from their supervisors. Participants at all levels, including supervisors, overwhelmingly confessed to taking out their frustration on others, particularly their own immediate family members. This method of coping is what the researcher would term *self-projecting*. To illustrate some of the situations that can trigger the self-projecting concept, (FG9.P9) stated: *"I am a nice guy, but it is difficult to keep cool. I lose temper and if I do not lose it, sometimes inside I am burning."* (FG2.P2) explained the actual self-projecting as follows: *"Sometimes you become rude to your supervisor you know. You always even tell your colleagues that 'I am not going to give him a smile', I will always have this serious face so that she cannot tell me anything."* This is a classic example of self-projection, whereby the CYCW is testing the supervisor (The Texas Association of Counties, 2005).

Participants overwhelmingly reported using this self-projecting strategy. To elaborate further on self-projecting tendencies, (FG7.P3) described it in the following manner: *"You may take this out on your pets or your wife and your children."* (FG6.P6) added: *"I have to take the anger out on my children."* When the researcher sought clarification of this statement, this is how (FG6.P6) responded: *"Sometimes being depressed and then I*

shout, because of the experiences that I have encountered when we have the panel discussion.” (FG1.P6) further explained that *“...because you have that stress, you will take this stress onto your own family and you will relieve that stress onto your own children. At home sometimes you find that you’ll shout the children, because you are tired, your mind is stressed.”* What is of concern about participants’ self-projecting tendencies is that most of the time, it is participants’ own children that seem to be the common recipients of these self-projecting behaviours. (FG6.P1) admitted the following: *“My own child can’t cope. She can’t put up with me, because now and then they have to say ‘why are you so impatient with her?’”* This concern must be taken seriously as CYCWs may end up being emotional abusers of their loved ones, particularly their own spouses and children. When some of the internal strategies have failed, it emerged from participants that they may even resort to external sources to secure tangible protection. One such strategy is sourcing relationships from others.

- **Sourcing relationships**

The other form of self-protection is sourcing relationships from others. Some participants expressed the view that they need to be extremely careful when dealing with certain children and youth. (FG9.P3) captured this notion in the following manner: *“All these boys if you don’t approach them well, you are their biggest enemy.”* (FG6.P1) described her way of being careful as follows: *“With teenagers I just call them in privacy and I try to talk to them in privacy and sort of just talk about life and you’ll find that something was hidden, they didn’t want to disclose.”* (FG10.P7) explained the same tactic further: *“I’m working with older children from 16 years and upwards. When maybe there’s someone who is misbehaving, one of the children will say ‘Oh let us call the meeting so that we can sort this.’ Then we talk, we talk, we talk then we do get support.”* Although on the face value this might seem like sourcing relationship, it is in fact a good CYC practice when the CYCW strives to give the young person the privacy and individual attention he/she deserves. Identifying and using the strengths of young persons in the programme is also a good CYC practice (Racco, 2009).

Sourcing relationships can at times be associated with the reward system. According to Vanderwoerd (2006), the reward system involves an attempt “to win children’s cooperation by being friendly and overly permissive”. (FG3.P6) divulged that *“sometimes we cheat these boys by giving them snacks.”* When sourcing relationships have failed, it emerged that some participants resort to relying on others as self-protection coping strategy.

- **Relying on others**

Participants have explained that there are some real situations that put them at risk. Despite these risks being real, it emerged that in some programmes, there are few strategies in place to protect CYCWs. It is against this background that some participants reported that they rely on others for protection. (FG5.P7) for example shared that *“...if there is an assault of a staff member, staff member are not allowed to lay a charge against the resident.”* Hence participants such as (FG3.P4) strongly believed that: *“...in this environment you have to protect yourself always, because you are the one who’s doing the job. You are looking after them and you have to look after yourself.”*

Participants shared that there are situations where the worker has got to continually explore tangible mechanisms of self-protection. In this regard, (FG3.P3) confessed that: *“I have been threatened, I must come to work tomorrow but I know I’ll get beaten up because I’m a woman. Then I can’t compete, I have to relate to my male colleagues to protect me. But without them knowing that I’m depending on them. I’m afraid to walk around alone. I have to follow them around.”* It is in situations like these that some workers lose authority. Not because of their weaknesses, but because of the real threats that they face. Before one can adopt *relying on others* as a strategy, one will have exhausted all other strategies such as *withdrawal behaviour* as explained by Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner in Hopkins et al. (2010: 1380). It is worth noting that for both withdrawal and relying on others CYCWs actually come to work, but instead of being where they should be, CYCWs get restricted as they are forced to be where colleagues are. To illustrate this reality, (FG3.P2) gave the following example: *“One end up even staying in the office in order to protect*

yourself.” This behaviour is consistent with Phelan’s (2009) view that newer workers have a tendency to retreat from the life space environment when they do not feel safe. Some CYCWs may even justify retreating to offices as self-care. Self-care is certainly different from relying on others, as will be discussed in the next section.

- **Self-care**

Self-care is another strategy that emerged under the sub-theme personal support networks as a broad coping strategy. According to Kostouros and McLean (2006), each helping professional has a different form of self-care. From the focus group interviews, self-care emerged in the form of indulgence, time off, recreational activities, faith related activities and family support. Self-care is a common coping strategy that is highly recommended for social service professionals (Mathews, 2009).

- **Indulgence**

Under self-care, the concept of indulgence came out clearly. Some of the participants shared their realisation that in this field, if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will. As a result, participants have come up with ways to indulge themselves as a way to cope. To illustrate this, (FG5.P8) shared: *“I always used to love a long hot bubble bath, I soak in it with my book and that has always worked for me.”* (FG9.P9) concurred to using the same method when she shared: *“I get a nice bubble bath. I put a lot of foam and bath.”* These participants seem to have heeded Best’s (2009:13) call that “we all need personal and private ways of taking care of ourselves.”

- **Time off**

Another concept that emerged under self-care is taking time off. Cameron and Maginn (2009:66) remind us that “experienced carers have learned how to use their off-shift time to reflect, recharge batteries, look at situations from a wider perspective and come back refreshed for the next duty.” Participants in this study have also alluded to the importance of taking time off and using it in all sorts of ways to regain energy. Time off

includes finding your own space and time even within one's own home, as suggested by (FG5.P8): *"Even when my children were younger, I would say now it is 'me time'. I used to put notices on the door and all kinds of things to tell them that this is the time I'm taking for myself."*

Another area that has been cited as being beneficial is taking leave. Participants mentioned ordinary leave as a tangible and crucial time off from work. (FG1.P6) shared that *"Sometimes you find I'm tired and am stressed. As you can't work effectively you have to take a leave."* Taking leave is the most basic strategy and yet is an important method that some CYCWs might be taking for granted. Most CYCWs do have leave as part of their conditions of employment. They therefore need to learn to take their leave at convenient times that suit both their needs and those of their employers. Leave must not only be taken when one has reached a climax in terms of exhaustion. Instead, it must be taken at the right time so that one can use it for other beneficial activities, such as recreational activities. Taking time off is consistent with Kostouros and McLean's (2006) view that having quality time far away from the issues of work is critical.

- **Recreational activities**

Participants mentioned a variety of recreational activities that they engage in whilst away from work. For example, (FG8.P5) mentioned: *"To go out to the Mall, to go to town to spend maybe 2 hours. When you come back at least the stress is less."* Other activities include gym and listening to music, which featured a lot as a coping mechanism as demonstrated here by (FG8.P6): *"To go to the gym."* (FG9.P9) also shared other activities as follows: *"I had a punching bag. I had beautiful dogs and I like to walk them. I have a play station."* (FG9.P7) also mentioned drinking and music as a recreational activity: *"I drink a lot, I like music, old romantic music, early 80's songs. It makes me relax. I like to watch sports, rugby, soccer, sport."* Most of the recreational activities mentioned above are commendable and CYCWs need to identify and explore those that suit them most. Recreational activities are consistent with the findings of Costa and McCrae, in Barford and Whelton (2010:283), that being

outgoing, sociable, and energetic may result in more positive interactions and relationships with high-risk children and teens.

Some participants mentioned recreational activities which they engage in with the children in their programmes. This approach is commendable in that the activities not only benefit CYCWs, but the children as well. Such activities ensure that CYCWs do not wait for time off to de-stress. Instead they turn their working environments into fun environments, as demonstrated by (FG9.P7): *“You make the environment to be conducive. We have games and we play with these boys. They like programmes and we do the programmes they like.”* (FG10.P2) explained further that at times they are *“playing the cassette you are jiving with them.”* This view is supported by Fulcher (2005) who is a proponent of purposeful activities. Although CYC can be a demanding job, for those who have mastered the programming tricks, it can also be a fun-filled job. Participants mentioned taking self-care beyond their work environments by engaging in faith related activities.

- **Faith related activities**

Faith related activities also featured as a common and popular coping strategy. (FG8.P5) shared that *“I go to church. It helps because we’ll sing, we do whatever we do at church when you come back at least the stress is less.”* It seems that participants resort to faith related activities not only to help themselves cope, but also to benefit those in their care as demonstrated by (FG8.P6): *“I’m always praying to God to help me, because as a child and youth care worker, although I encounter a lot of problems, I must always be positive so that I can be a good leader and help these children.”* (FG9.P.1)’s example also shows that the benefits of faith related activities are targeted at clients as well: *“Church, I take all my problems to Christ, I ask Him to give me wisdom.”* During the focus group interviews, the researcher actually witnessed faith related activities in action in several programmes. In one programme, as the interviews were underway, there was singing and praying in an adjacent room and when the researcher enquired what was going on, this is what (FG3.P6) had to

say: “...you hear that sound of people who are singing there? That is the main way to cope in this centre. We just pray every day 1 o’clock until 2 o’clock.” It must also be mentioned that in three focus group meetings, participants asked if the session could be opened with a song and prayer. This was an indication of how some CYCWs incorporated their faith based activities into their daily working routines.

It also came out that some participants extend their involvement into their communities. (FG7.P2) illustrated this point as follows: “*I think also our community involvement, like in a temple it also helps a lot.*” Some participants have made a conscious decision to be actively involved in their places of worship, such as a church or a temple. (FG5.P6) shared her involvement as follows: “*I’m spiritually re-involved with our church. I sing in the choir, it takes a lot off.*” Over and above the faith related activities, family support was also mentioned by participants. Faith related activities as a form of self-care are consistent with Davidson’s (2009) suggestion for CYCWs to care for themselves spiritually.

- **Family support**

Support from family members and friends also featured prominently as a coping mechanism. (FG5.P8) mentioned: “*I encourage family get-togethers.*” (FG9.P6) added how she utilises family support as follows: “*I talk to my best friend.*” Other than close family members, intimate partners also reportedly play crucial roles in the lives of CYCWs, as suggested by (FG8.P.3): “*And to go see your boyfriend.*” (FG9.P9) concurred by adding “*I once had a girlfriend who is a social worker, but I could not share, but she could make me talk in general.*” (FG8.P4) who is a ‘live-in’ CYCW also felt that intimate partners play a role in coping: “*To be visited by your boyfriend over the week, because you will take time to be with him, to share. And if you don’t, there is something that you are, hurt he is the one that you are going to tell, to cry to him and he’ll comfort you.*” Family members and partners must be regarded as support mechanisms and utilised accordingly. This will be consistent with Halbesleben’s study, cited in Barford and Whelton (2010:283) that found that individuals that have a

healthy and supportive partner are better positioned to deal with emotional stress.

Although it became evident that most CYCWs use their families as a means of support, it seems that this practice of sharing with families is not encouraged by all CYC programmes, as (FG9.P9) lamented: *“This is a very trying job. It drains you. We work for 12 hours but when I get home I want to sleep. If I had a bad day, and just want to get it out. I sleep. It may burn my system, because we are not allowed to share at home.”* The practice of ensuring the clients’ confidentiality is one of the key ethical issues across many disciplines. Therefore, there has to be a balance between sharing with family members and partners as a coping mechanism and upholding the confidentiality of clients. As the system of sharing with loved ones emerged to be working for many participants, it will be difficult for CYCWs to be expected not to share. The challenge is for those who share to do so without divulging too much detail about their clients. Details that can make family members link information to specific clients should be guarded at all costs. In line with the ecological systems theory, CYCWs need to know where to draw the boundaries. Personal support networks are inexpensive, unobtrusive and therefore should be encouraged. They can however be used in conjunction with professional support networks.

Sub-theme 2.8.3: Professional support networks

The third broader sub-theme that emerged under the coping strategy theme is professional support networks. Participants shared some professional support networks which include colleagues, team meetings, supervision, psychological support systems, self-development, broader support structures and quitting. Each of these support networks will be discussed in detail.

- **Colleagues**

CYC requires one to have an immediate and practical support system in place at all times. Some of the participants mentioned their immediate colleagues as their support system. To illustrate this point, (FG9.P8) noted: *“Mr [Name of the*

participant] helped me. He is a very positive person. I spent time with positive people. I tell him this stuff is boiling me and he gives me nice advice.” It was evident from the discussions that participants’ colleagues provide prompt solutions to situations at hand. (FG9.P7) has concurred in this manner: *“One of my fellow colleagues gave me one good advice that ‘once you have an argument, sort it out within, no hatred.”* This advice is in line with what Gharabaghi and Phelan (2011:82) found in their study about the unwritten rules of not leaving issues for the next shift. It also emerged that support can come from colleagues in the same unit, as well as from another unit. It is important for the affected CYCW to identify who is the best colleague to share with under which circumstances. Explaining the benefits of sharing with colleagues in another unit, (FG8.P7) mentioned: *“If I have a challenge, I go to another house and talk to that mother and she will help me. Maybe she was in that situation. If she experienced the same challenge she can help me.”*

Above are examples of a good advice that any CYCW who is desperate will appreciate. Sometimes the advice can be in the form of practical intervention strategies, other times it can come as a simple affirmation. In CYC, what might seem insignificant might prove to be powerful coping strategies for some CYCWs. At times it is advisable not to over-rely on immediate colleagues. Given that both CYCWs will be in the same environment, sharing with others who were not directly affected can prove helpful. Team meetings are a platform where CYCWs can take their challenges to check with their other ‘distant’ colleagues whether they handled situations properly. This is in acknowledgement of the notion that “people are often oblivious to the ways in which they imitate each other” (Swanzen & Marinconwitz, 2013:60). Therefore the team may come to a different perspective as to how challenges could have been handled. In that way, CYCWs can learn and grow.

- **Team meetings**

Another coping mechanism that emerged under the sub-theme professional support networks is support from team members. It is within team relationships that “truth, safety, and growth” can be nurtured (Bernst, 2013:52). To illustrate the value of sharing with colleagues, (FG6.P5) stated:

“Discussing work problems with my friends and my colleagues, sharing information helps.” Contrary to Cameron and Maginn’s (2009:101) research findings that “a colleague’s advice that is based solely on experience, rather than carefully researched model in child care, is not enough to improve practice in professional child care”, what the researcher established in this study is that this method certainly contributed as a coping strategy for many participants.

Team meetings come in different forms. Sometimes calling all the affected people together gives CYCWs an opportunity to clarify and ultimately resolve matters at hand. This is the view that has been expressed by participants such as (FG8.P7), who mentioned: *“The other thing that helps us to cope is to call a family meeting, the house meeting and sit down with the children.”* This practice of house meetings is consistent with Webber’s (2003) view that CYCWs can be effective when they engage in problem solving with children and youth. What has been shared by (FG8.P7) above is a good CYC practice in that whatever affects CYCWs as a challenge has the likelihood of affecting children and youth as well. This is in line with ecological systems theory as discussed in section 2.3.9 of chapter 2, where feedback has been discussed. Meeting with the children and youth can actually save workers time in that some issues may not even need to be taken to other staff meetings.

Some participants seem to have come to a point where they know that some matters can be dealt with without involving seniors, whereas others need to be escalated to their seniors. In this regard, (FG8.P6) noted: *“Sometimes when the issue is deep we call the supervisor and the social worker to get them involved in the issue.”* This approach not only saves other professionals’ time, but can actually give CYCWs confidence that they are capable of resolving issues. In the process, it may also earn them respect from their other professional colleagues. The nature of some matters may require CYCWs to consult in supervision instead of discussing them in team meetings.

- **Supervision**

Supervision was cited as another coping mechanism. For example (FG8.P1) noted: *“Sometimes you go to a senior to explain the challenge and he helps you on how to manage it.”* Van der Westhuizen (2013:13) recommends the use of techniques and skills which one is trained in or where supervision is readily available. It is against this background that some participants cited some reservations about supervision at times, despite it being helpful. (FG8.P1) expressed the importance of deciding on which matters to take to supervision in this manner: *“Sometimes you’ll make a mistake; you go to him maybe to her to ask ‘how can I get myself out of this trouble?’ He will give you some idea, assisting you. He will also come and check on you whether you are coping or not. But if you don’t cope indeed, you come often to discuss lot of things.”* What has been shared by (FG8.P1) above sounds like an effective use of supervision. The participant seemed to be conscious about how often to consult the supervisor. This demonstrated to the researcher that there are some pockets of supervision excellence in some programmes.

To further support the researcher’s claim about pockets of supervision excellence, (FG1.P8) mentioned: *“In our team we have supervisors. We do have a project manager as well. So we sit as management and assess our team and see if maybe we find that there is a child and youth care worker who is not coping well, it is the task of a supervisor to sit down with that particular child and youth care worker and ask her how to help.”* This practice is consistent with Michael’s (2005) advocacy for individualised supervision. Comparatively speaking, supervision was not mentioned strongly as a coping mechanism across focus groups. This is a confirmation that supervision is not a standard practice across the CYC spectrum, as discussed in chapter 1, section 1.2.2. Lack of supervision or inappropriate use thereof could be one of the reasons why the need for psychological services has been emphatically raised by some participants.

- **Psychological services**

Psychological services are important support mechanisms for CYCWs. However, some participants reported that they do not have access to such

services. To illustrate the absence of these services, (FG9.P2) lamented: *“There are no preachers or psychologists to assist us.”* In the absence of such services within their programmes, some CYCWs mentioned initiating their own contacts to access such services. In this regard (FG9.P9) stated: *“A friend of mine is a therapist and I talk to him.”* This is an example of how desperate some CYCWs are to access psycho-social services. Participants have emphatically expressed their desire to have access to psychological services. (FG9.P5) has put his desire in this manner: *“My coping is that I am someone who is willing to listen to occupational therapist, somebody with experience.”* (FG8.P2) also shared her wish as follows: *“I think child and youth care worker need stress management so that you can also confide maybe to a psychologist.”*

In one urban-based programme, the researcher saw a poster displayed on the wall with the contact details of the psychologist which everybody in the programme, including CYCWs, can access. Despite that poster being displayed, (FG2.P2) who comes from the same programme shared her experiences as follows: *“These children come with serious problems and sometimes they don’t even get programs like psycho-therapeutic programs, which psychologist should render.”* It is comments like this one that piqued the researcher’s curiosity in terms of access to and the effectiveness of psychological services in some programmes. The main concern was that if children who are supposed to be the primary beneficiaries of psychological services are not receiving them, what are the chances of CYCWs as secondary beneficiaries receiving such services? What strengthened the researcher’s suspicion that CYCWs might not be receiving psychological services is that none of the participants in another urban-based focus group, which falls under the same umbrella body as the one that displayed a poster for psychological services, mentioned receiving such services. This really raised a concern as to whether some services are displayed as a façade.

It also emerged that some programmes have put measures in place to avail psychological services to CYCWs when needed. For example, (FG7.P3) confidently shared: *“I think in serious cases like serious trauma, the*

organisation actually arranges for psychologist or trauma counsellors.” Other organisations seem to have put in place other specific programmes that are geared towards addressing CYCWs’ psycho-social needs. According to Thurman et al. (2009:2), in 2007 NACCW facilitated the development of an innovative psycho-social support model for CYCWs, called Care for Caregivers (C4C). The existence of this programme was confirmed by (FG1.P1) in this manner: *“The training that we have already got is called the grief work. It helps us.”* Thurman et al. (2009:2) confirmed that the C4C model brings clinical psychologists directly to CYCWs for a six month programme of professional psycho-social support through individual and group counselling. It also emerged that some professionals even play ‘a double role’ to support CYCWs with their psychological needs. (FG4.P6) shared that *“I get stressed and then when I get to the office on the day of a meeting, I then tell the coordinator about what I have encountered in the field. Then they are able to tell me how they used to tackle such problems maybe to get me back on track by way of counselling me.”* It was evident that some organisations are interested in the psycho-social well-being of their CYCWs.

To summarise the picture in terms of the availability of psychological services to CYCWs, participants from five out of 11 organisations reported that they have some kind of psychological service in place. Other participants cited self-development as a means of coping strategy.

- **Self-development**

Over and above the professional coping strategies mentioned in the preceding section, it emerged that some participants also utilise professional self-development as a coping strategy. According to Fugate et al. (2003:15), *“survival in turbulent career environment requires workers to continually manage change - in themselves and their contexts.”* Self-development is one such a measure and involves getting some form of training, either from within or outside the organisation. Hence some participants reported that knowledge acquired from previous training and applied to their current situations helps as a way of coping. (FG9.P5) for example noted: *“I normally use my training that NACCW gave me.”* Continued professional development also forms part of

self-development. Participants mentioned not only relying on previous training received, but also on on-going training. In this regard, (FG8.P8) has shared: *“We also have in service-trainings for mothers, for caregivers every Wednesday as the other caregivers have said. We also have life skills programme. These are some of the coping mechanism that we try to use to overcome all these challenges that we have mentioned.”*

Self-development arises when one realises and admits that she or he has some limitations in terms of knowledge and/or skills in certain areas. Others can also pursue self-development when they see that despite their vast knowledge and skills, situations are changing at such a pace that they need to acquaint themselves with new developments. Upon such realisation, the person arranges in-house training or goes out to seek relevant places where he or she can acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in order to close the gap in the identified areas. Such a person comes to appreciate the knowledge generated by others and strives to incorporate it to improve his or her practice. From the focus group interviews, some participants have clearly identified a skills and knowledge gap, but it seems that they are not being provided with the opportunity for training. This is illustrated by participants such as (FG5.P7) who attested in this manner: *“We need on-going training to cope with different types of residents.”* Even those participants who are reasonably trained expressed the importance of everybody receiving training. For example (FG5.P1) stated: *“We are not all on par; everybody is not trained enough regarding child and youth care.”*

Over and above other forms of training, there are those participants who want to pursue studies so that they can ultimately get formal tertiary qualifications. Given that access to CYC qualifications in tertiary institutions was perceived to be limited, some resort to pursuing formal studies in related fields instead. To illustrate this point, (FG9.P9) shared his goal as follows: *“I want to go further in this job, to study criminology and child psychology.”* (FG1.P2) added that: *“We try to register something like Community Health Psychology at UNISA.”* (FG10.P9) also shared: *“Courses which are relevant to child care like youth development.”* These are some of the participants who have taken it

upon themselves to pursue education despite the constraints that they experience in trying to obtain CYC qualifications.

Some participants reported that they study to obtain knowledge that they can utilise within their own environments, as explained by (FG6.P5): *“I equip myself with knowledge and information, ethics and principle so that when I go to them and they talk like this I just use references and quotes. So it helps, because they start respecting you knowing that you know your story.”* These are some of the CYCWs who study for their own empowerment. For them, studies will enable them to match their professional counterparts with confidence. These findings are consistent with Delano’s (2010) view that CYCWs should use training as a way to help themselves grow.

It also emerged that there are participants who regard quitting the field of CYC as a realistic option. Such participants are developing themselves so that they can have an idea as to where to go. (FG2.P2) shared her strategy as follows: *“...like registering, encouraging each other with studying. We are really studying now. Maybe it is because we are tired of being called like ‘child care workers are just nannies.”* (FG7.P3) shared his experience that *“historically, child and youth care was regarded as a step-child of other professions such as social work and medicine.”* It seems that the stepchild syndrome might still be in existence to a certain extent as (FG6.P3) reported the benefits of studying as follows: *“It helps because at the end you’ll get the qualification then you’ll get another job.”* She further clarified that the purpose is to *“move away from care and from being a care worker.”* In that case the view held by Jones, Landsverk and Roberts (2007:102) that CYC may be viewed by many as a *‘stepping stone position’* still rings true to a certain extent. Shim (2010:848) pleaded that organisations need to address issues that might lead to ‘undesirable turnover’, as the quality of client service and organisational effectiveness will be compromised. He described ‘undesirable turnover’ to include “competent and qualified employees leaving due to organisational issues such as lack of supervision, poor support, and role conflict” (Shim, 2010:848). Participants reported that they also resort to

broader support structures with the hope that they can advocate on their behalf.

- **Broader support structures**

Some of the participants mentioned approaching broader support structures as their means of coping as professionals. The types of these structures are those that are perceived by the participants as having advocacy abilities as well as an interest in the field of CYC. For example (FG1.P9) stated: *“We also talk to DSD and NACCW. We also ask the NACCW as we work under their umbrella to advocate for us.”* Approaching broader structures did not feature prominently during the interviews, but only came up in one specific group. This may suggest that many CYCWs have not come to the realisation that they can get involved and make inputs at macro-level. However, in this one particular rural-based focus group, it emerged that CYCWs have come to the realisation that they can rely on other broader structures to advance their course, as explained by (FG1.P9): *“We have the Indunas (traditional leaders) where if there are many challenges that occur on our work, we also report to them.”* These are some of the support mechanisms that one can get when all the systems are functioning well. However, when systems fail, one might consider quitting as an option.

- **Quitting**

As mentioned earlier in sub-theme 1.6.4, quitting is not an easy option for many CYCWs. According to Swider and Zimmerman (2010:491), “if employees suffering from emotional exhaustion reason that feelings of frustration and tension about their future work performance will not subside, then they could elect to take a more drastic form of separation, turnover, to recover.” Quitting is a last resort after one has tried everything else and failed. For many realistic people, quitting one’s job or changing the field completely may just remain a dream. However, some participants have explored quitting in different ways. (FG9.P5) shared: *“Sometimes I ask myself ‘why am I doing this job? What am I doing here?’”* (FG8.P1) is one of those participants who seems to be clued up with the realities of lack of job opportunities, particularly in rural areas. He stated: *“Where do you find a job as it is difficult to find*

another job. And it is not easy to leave because you have a family” (FG8.P1). (FG8.P1)’s views above sounded like those of a person who may be feeling trapped in their jobs. Such CYCWs need care and support. When one feels trapped, it is unlikely that one can perform to the maximum. In the process, children will suffer, as illustrated by (FG7.P3): “So you come to work, go to your cases, trying to avoid any conflict situations as far as possible and pass the day because you need the salary.”

Some of those participants who expressed quitting as an option do not seem to have a strategy in place and are also not sure exactly what it is that they are going to do after they have quit their jobs. To illustrate this point (FG9.P8) said: *“I am always on the lookout for another job.”* (FG8.P5) also mentioned: *“Sometimes you decide to change the profession, go and take another thing.”* It seems that these participants are looking for anything that might come their way. This strategy can signify the level of demoralisation. The research undertaken in SA by the DSD in secure care facilities found that many of the CYCWs are demoralised (DSD, 2010:37). Although not based in SA, Moses (2000:123) also conducted a study and found that despite the pragmatic benefits that a CYC job offered, most of the participants, “regardless of their future goals, tended to perceive their job as temporary in the context of a career progression.” (FG3.P2) shared her intentions which are in line with Moses’(2000:123) findings when she stated: *“I’m just telling myself that God has brought me here to gain experience for the job that He has put specially for me somewhere.”*

The researcher got the impression that the CYCWs who mentioned quitting as an option did so merely to express their frustrations. In this regard, (FG8.P7) stated: *“Sometimes you don’t cope at all and you decide ‘I will just throw them with my resignation letter in the morning and leave the job because it is too much.”* Despite not having plans, it must however be mentioned that such CYCWs who experience continued challenges may end up having less loyalty and always look for more “permanent and secure position elsewhere” (Gharabaghi, 2010:9). Decision-makers and employers should not capitalise on the knowledge that the economic contexts are tough and therefore ignore

CYCWs' plight. Not addressing CYCWs' challenges will result in children in care being the most affected, as they would be under the care of unhappy and disillusioned CYCWs.

The researcher's overall impression with regards to quitting is that only the minority of participants are planning to leave the CYC field. From the focus group interviews, it was evident that the position of CYCW "is a demanding one" (Thurman et al., 2009:2). The majority of participants expressed their frustrations with the hope that situations might improve. With better working conditions, many CWCWs seem to be determined to stay, even if they end up occupying different positions within the field. To illustrate his commitment not only to the field, but also to SA as a country (FG5.P1) stated: *"If you go from here to the UK, which I was entitled to do in 2005, and say 'brother I'm earning bucks, I'm earning bucks', but why must I leave South Africa?"* The findings of this study present a holistic picture and not a programme specific picture. The researcher must however share that in some programmes, there were reports to demonstrate that quitting has indeed taken place. For example, (FG1.P8) shared: *"There are many people with whom we have started, but for now because they see that they are getting nothing, for them it's like they were wasting their time so they have dropped out. And most of them dropped out for the reason of not being registered. Here in our team it is four or five if I am not mistaken."*

Cameron and Maginn (2009:101) cited that the conventional view of the residential care sector has been one where carers and managers suffer from low morale and obtain little job satisfaction. This view was proven to be untrue for some CYCWs in SA. In contrast to those who may be considering quitting, there are those CYCWs who are determined to stay within the field of CYC. Some of them have been in the field for a maximum period of 35 years, as illustrated in section 7.2.7 of this chapter. To illustrate his commitment to the field, (FG2.P6) asserted: *"We chose this career; we were not pushed by anyone to come here."* For those CYCWs who are committed to the field, perhaps Krueger's (2006) words will encourage them: "To get ahead requires hard work, education, commitment and creativity." Some CYCWs are likely to

heed Krueger’s call and work hard. However, the socio-economic situations in which CYCWs find themselves were reportedly not making matters any easier, as will be discussed in the next section.

7.3.3 Category 3: Socio-economic challenges

Over and above all the challenges that CYCWs experience, it emerged that the socio-economic situations are affecting CYCWs severely. From the data gathered, the researcher categorised the socio-economic challenges into four themes, i.e. inadequate remuneration structures, undifferentiated salary scales, inadequate benefits, and inadequate programme funding. Strategies that CYCWs have shared to cope and mitigate such challenges are: budgeting, formal and informal lending mechanisms (which includes bank facilities and money lenders), and alternative income generating streams. Table 7.4 below is an outline of the identified socio-economic challenges and coping strategies.

Table 7.4: Socio-economic challenges and coping strategies

CATEGORY 3: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES			
THEMES		SUB-THEMES	
3.1 Inadequate remuneration structures			
3.2 Undifferentiated salary scales			
3.3 Inadequate benefits			
3.4 Inadequate programme funding			
3.5 Coping strategies for socio-economic challenges	socio-	3.5.1 Budgeting	
		3.5.2 Formal and informal lending	Bank facilities
			Money lenders
3.5.3 Alternative income generating streams			

Theme 3.1: Inadequate remuneration structures

Inadequate remuneration structures emerged as one of the main themes under the socio-economic category. Participants overwhelmingly cited that their remuneration structures are inadequate in one way or another. To illustrate this point, (FG9.P7) lamented: *“The overall profession is not rewarding. Most child and youth care workers are more loyal to the job than what they get paid.”* This excerpt is consistent with Kostouros and McLean’s (2006) view that CYC is something far more intrinsically rewarding than the mere financial gain. It also emerged that some CYCWs are not getting salaries, but stipends as noted by (FG1.P8): *“We don’t get salaries, we get stipend and when you refer to the work that you’re doing you will find that we are earning peanuts.”* Participants in almost all focus group interviews were not satisfied with their remuneration. To illustrate this dissatisfaction, (FG2.P2) was adamant that: *“The salary is not enough. It’s certainly not enough.”* (FG11.P9) summarised their situation as follows: *“Although we are child care workers, we also experience poverty.”* (FG11.P4) added: *“If you go to the family and you are hungry and bankrupt and also this family is hungry and bankrupt, it affects you.”* All of the above excerpts illustrate the situation of participants that relates to how they are being remunerated.

Some participants have come to terms with their current salaries. However, these CYCWs seem to be banking on annual increases in order to continue meeting their daily needs. It emerged that in some organisations, annual increases are not guaranteed as (FG8.P.3) has pointed out: *“Now we are 2, 3 years without getting salary increment, no bonuses and life is difficult outside.”* Workers who do not get annual increases will certainly not cope with inflation; especially given the reality of the turbulent nature of the current world economy. It must be remembered that CYCWs are equally affected by everything that is happening in the broader economic world. Hence (FG11.P9)’s statement attests to the severity of socio-economic impact on CYCWs: *“We also experience poverty; we used to come at work with an empty stomach, like today.”*

It also emerged that some categories of CYCWs are not complaining about the salaries they get per se, instead their complaints revolve around their salaries in comparison to that of their counterparts from other professions. To illustrate this point, (FG8.P4) argued: *“As child and youth care workers, we don’t have subsidy like*

other professionals, subsidy for car or house or education for my biological son.” Some of those participants who are earning ‘relatively’ well as compared to others seem to have raised their ambitions in terms of their living standards. This is consistent with Allsopp’s (2011:81) observation on the impact of capitalism across the world “where consumerism feeds the need for novelty, change, and the lure of something better.” Hence (FG2.P1)’s desire for better things was articulated in this manner: *“We are living in the environment now where everything is high. If you buy a car with no ABS, air conditioner, power steering you are behind. In this level we actually supposed to be getting more.”*

Some participants appeared to possess the ability to sit back and look at their remuneration objectively. For example, (FG5.P5) conceded: *“When you compare us as we are working for government to the private sector, we honestly earn more than those in the NGOs.”* (FG5.P1) concurred that: *“Sad enough as we are earning much more than the NGOs, but I’m telling you that those people are doing 3 times more the job that we are doing and yet there’s nothing out for them. We getting all the perks of the government, i.e. the transport and medical aid, you name it, overtime, etc. They are getting nothing.”* The situation of inadequate remuneration structures was not the only issue in this category. Another issue that was mentioned is undifferentiated salary scales.

Theme 3.2: Undifferentiated salary scales

For those CYCWs working in the government sector, employment levels and salary notches were identified as pressing issues. To illustrate this, (FG2.P1) pointed out: *“I think the notch is not enough.”* (FG6.P5) added that: *“We can’t apply for higher post because higher posts are now advertised at the lower notch.”* Over and above the dissatisfaction about salary notches, those in the government sector further complained about different salary scales across provinces. Hence (FG5.P2) asked: *“I was wondering why is (Name of province) salaries not the same as other provinces?”* Unlike rural-based participants, these urban-based participants seemed to be aware of opportunities as well as associated benefits of CYCWs across provinces. The issue of salary disparities across provinces can be solved by the political powers at national level. Within the SA context, what is important is that if the national Government wants to do away with these disparities, they can do so

without much difficulty. Professionals such as social workers working for the government generally get the same kind of salaries across provinces. For example, according to PayScale ([sa]), the average salary of a social worker in SA is R144.85. In fact, where salaries differ, they differ purely as a strategy to attract certain human skills to poorly resourced and unattractive provinces.

The debate about whether salaries should be differentiated or not emerged from two groups, namely those CYCWs with qualifications and those with a lot of experience in terms of length of service. For those who have acquired qualifications, especially in the field of CYC, the gist of their complaints revolved around non-recognition of one's qualifications with regards to remuneration. CYCWs in this group are proponents of differentiated remunerations. (FG10.P9) illustrated this point in the following manner: *“Even if you upgrade yourself by studying further you don't get any higher level in terms of your salary.”* To clarify the situation further, (FG2.P2) stated: *“And maybe you having a BTech in child care, but you are just a child care worker at level 6 and you cannot afford all these things. And when you look at others in different professions who have studied the same years as you've studied, they are earning better and yet you're told you're at your highest level of your salary.”* (FG5.P9) supported the argument for those with qualifications in this manner: *“You've invested so much time and you have put in money to educate yourself.”* (FG3.P3) added that *“But there is no difference between someone who went to the University for 3 years for this profession and someone who didn't.”* These findings confirmed the assumption that CYCWs that complete any form of accredited training and/or acquire recognised qualifications are inclined to have raised expectations in terms of promotions, better working conditions and remuneration benefits, as discussed in section 1.2.3 of chapter 1. Those CYCWs who joined the field with qualifications would claim that they bring with them a wealth of theoretical knowledge which can benefit the children and youth. The matter around qualifications needs to not only be clarified, but also constantly reviewed, so that CYCWs can know what to expect in terms of remuneration in relation to their qualifications.

There are participants who did not support differentiated remuneration structures. Those without qualifications argued that their experience and skill should also be counted when it comes to remuneration. (FG5.P3) is one such participant who

advanced the view in this manner: *“We encounter the same challenges. Why can’t they put us all on level 6 or 7 for that matter, because everybody is doing the same job irrespective of whether he started yesterday.”* The issue of differentiated versus undifferentiated remunerations can really be a tricky situation, especially within unionised environments. (FG5.P5) for example believes that *“in ideal world after 20 years you should be earning a lot.”* A possible explanation for the argument presented by (FG5.P5) above could be linked to the view that loyalty and commitment to the organisation naturally result in a degree of devotion to the children and youth in care (Barford & Whelton, 2010:283).

(FG5.P3) presented a counter argument against basing remuneration on the length of service in this manner: *“Sometimes you get a person that has over 20 years’ service but who is not performing.”* It is for this reason that the researcher believes that participants were arguing their perspectives (Burr, 2003:6) depending on their current situation. As far as the researcher is concerned, education and experience are both important. There has to be a balance between the two when considering CYCWs’ remuneration. The NPC (2011:309) also shared the approach that *“the wage structure should recognise qualifications, experience and the scarcity of skills in specific subjects or geographic areas.”*

Inadequate remuneration structures seem not to be the only concern in terms of CYCWs’ immediate and personal needs. It also emerged as having negative repercussions on the significant others in their lives. To illustrate this point, (FG1.P9) stated: *“This thing of socio-economic does not only affect us as workers, it also affect our biological children, because truly I believe as a parent I have a dream for my children to attend a suitable school where there is a lot of development and programmes.”* The education of CYCWs’ own children featured strongly in the focus groups as a major concern. (FG3.P3) added that: *“If I earn little here, my children cannot go to private school, but to a stable school. From there they have to get minimum education. That will be a line of generational suffocation.”* From the interviews, it emerged that inadequate remuneration has a negative impact on the morale of CYCWs.

Whatever remuneration formula that CYC employers might come up with, it is important that employers reward and encourage staff for their hard work and dedication (Barford & Whelton, 2010:284). Clarity and transparency in terms of who qualifies for which level is critical. Remuneration policy should be clarified so that each CYCW can see what he/she can expect if he/she chooses to join a specific organisation at a specific level. Benefits that are associated with every position should also be outlined.

Theme 3.3: Inadequate benefits

Another challenge or theme that has emerged under the socio-economic category is inadequate benefits. Participants presented different views in terms of additional benefits they get as part of their remuneration. (FG9.P6) reported that: *“No travel allowance. Sometimes we have to come to work on public holidays and yet you get nothing.”* Although this area was not probed further for clarity, section 18 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 provides for all those who work on public holidays to be paid double the amount their normal rate. It is therefore assumed that organisations will always treat CYCWs in accordance with the labour laws of the country. From the focus group interviews, there was no overwhelming evidence that CYCWs were not paid in accordance with labour laws.

Some participants mentioned that they receive benefits, although they were not satisfied with the nature or amount of those benefits. For example, (FG6.P1) suggested: *“This housing subsidy I think it needs to be revised it has gone down... because it is now low; it is not the same as before.”* (FG8.P4) expressed her dissatisfaction about the nature of medical benefits in the following manner: *“The medical aid only covers the mother, but not the biological children. The medical aid is not a good one. You have to pay for some of the tablets.”* It will always be a challenge for employers in all sectors to always satisfy all its employees.

Other participants mentioned that they do not get any additional benefits. To illustrate this point, (FG3.P1) lamented in the following manner: *“There are no benefits here. Like medical aid, housing allowance, car allowance, transport allowance, food allowance.”* Even in cases where certain benefits may be deemed necessary, such benefits seemed to be non-existent as (FG3.P4) also lamented: *“No*

injury allowance.” Although the participant did not cite any incident whereby a CYCW was injured on duty and never compensated, all these remuneration matters need to be attended to; otherwise there might be some negative repercussions. As far as the participants were concerned, remuneration was just another way of appreciating what workers were doing. In other words, remuneration did not match their work as (FG5.P5) has stated: *“You can’t put a monetary value against the impact that we have in these kids’ lives. But at the same time you need to recognise us as much as we work.”* From the excerpts above, it seems that what participants are longing for is a holistic effort to recognise CYCWs as professionals. CYCWs can be adequately remunerated if there is adequate funding for the entire programme.

Theme 3.4: Inadequate programme funding

Another theme that emerged under socio-economic challenges did not necessarily affect CYCWs directly in their personal capacities. However, these workers get affected in terms of how they carry out their duties. Such a theme is inadequate programme funding. According to Patel (2009:20) a lack of funding, for community-oriented services in particular, and a lack of human resources with the appropriate skills to deliver the full spectrum of services provided for in the legislation are common barriers. Ideally, these challenges were supposed to be discussed under professional challenges, but for the sake of structure and clarity they will be discussed here. Challenges under inadequate programme funding revolved around resources. For example (FG9.P7) stated: *“There are no resources; sometimes you want sponsors to do things with children but you don’t get them.”* Community based participants shared their lack of resources as follows: *“Sometimes you may have to use your phone with your own airtime which is also difficult”* (FG1.P8). This view is consistent with Patel’s (2009:30) finding in a different type of study whereby some NPO volunteer respondents mentioned that they were using their own meagre resources to pay for transport and food to support beneficiaries in their programmes. Although inadequate resources affect the quality of the services rendered by CYCWs, it also affects them in that they find themselves using their own limited resources.

It emerged that there are instances whereby CYCWs take it upon themselves to provide certain gifts for the children and youth in their care. These provisions come

voluntarily as they believe that children in ‘normal settings’ appreciate such gifts. To illustrate these gestures, (FG5.P9) stated: *“Maybe sometimes buying stuff from your own pocket.”* In some cases, CYCWs seem to feel obliged to provide for these children as (FG9.P6) explained: *“They are demanding sweets or chocolate. They say ‘when you come back, bring me some sweets.’”* Depending on the context, some CYCWs may buy these gifts in order to bribe children and youth. Other times, they may be buying these items to demonstrate that they care. At the end of the day, such gestures end up hitting CYCWs in the pocket, thus making it difficult to cope.

Theme 3.5: Coping strategies for socio-economic challenges

Participants have shared several strategies that assist them cope with socio-economic challenges. Some of these strategies illustrate their attempts to survive. For example, when asked how they cope, FG10 answered as a group in this manner: *“We are not coping. We are not coping at all. We are struggling.”* Participants in this particular focus group reported that they adopt methods similar to those that the majority of workers from other sectors are employing. Some of these methods are reasonable whereas others can actually affect CYCWs negatively if not stopped. It must be acknowledged that those methods that are deemed undesirable may illustrate the desperate situations in which CYCWs find themselves. The following coping strategies were mentioned: budgeting, formal and informal money lending, bank facilities, money lenders, and alternative income generating streams. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in the sections below.

Sub-theme 3.5.1: Budgeting

Budgeting is one of coping mechanisms cited by participants as they try to live within their means. For example (FG3.P6) reported: *“We just limit our needs because of the money. For example we don’t have life covers because we can’t even manage to pay for life covers.”* One of the skills all workers need, irrespective of the sector or position, is how to manage one’s income. This is the lesson that some participants articulated eloquently, such as (FG2.P7): *“Sometimes you can be earning the same salary and find that he can budget and you can’t. You see we mustn’t forget that the socio-economic problem will always exist and it affects everyone not only child care workers.”* Although the excerpt above demonstrates a valuable socio-economic insight, it emerged that not all participants possess budgeting skills. Hence some

participants in two focus groups were vocal about the need to acquire these skills. For example (FG2.P6) stated: *“Some skills are not imparted to us. I strongly believe that with the little that we earn, we need a strong support system from the employer in order to assist us to understand the economy of our country because even tonight the petrol price is going up.”* These workers were correct in terms of acknowledging the economic realities which affect all the people, both the employed and the unemployed across all sectors.

The researcher further established that some CYC programmes go the extra mile to educate their CYCWs in areas such as budgeting. Although the primary purpose might be for them to manage the budget of the programme, these skills were mentioned as key coping strategies in their personal lives. (FG1.P6) pointed out: *“We thought of the other budget that we did in the other module through the NACCW. We also use that in budgeting for our family from the little money that we receive. We teach also the families we work with to do budget.”* Failure to live in accordance with one’s income may lead one to resorting to money lenders for survival as demonstrated in the next section.

Sub-theme 3.5.2: Formal and informal money lending

There will always be times when one finds oneself in financial difficulties. In that instance, many have no choice but to borrow money from others. Participants reported that in the event that they cannot meet their financial needs through budgeting means, they resort to borrowing money from formal and informal lending institutions, such as banks and micro-lenders. Others explore alternative income generating streams.

- **Bank facilities**

It is always advisable that when one borrows money, one does so for a good reason. Participants shared instances where circumstances forced them to borrow money from banks. For example, (FG7.P2), who was based in semi-urban area, explained some of the facilities that he uses when in need of finances in this manner: *“With finances I go to the bank, get bank overdraft and bank loans.”* Although the above mentioned facilities are recommended as they charge reasonable interest rates, only certain people who earn a

certain amount of income can qualify for these facilities. From the focus group interviews, only a few participants were articulate in terms of how these bank facilities assist them to cope with socio-economic challenges. For the majority of the focus group participants, money lenders came out as their main lending platform.

- **Money lenders**

Many participants admitted to resorting to money lenders for their socio-economic survival. For example (FG6.P4), who is semi-urban based, confessed: *“The pay is not enough, so if you can look, most of our colleagues here used to go to Mashonisa (Unscrupulous money lenders) all the time. All the time they are there and most of them they are garnished.”* Within the SA context, money lenders can also be referred to as “loan sharks”. According to Fin24 (2014), “Loan sharks offer short-term loans at excessively high interest rates.” Elaborating on reasons for utilising micro-money lenders, (FG3.P6) stated: *“Under money we are not coping. We are doing it because we need some little bit of cash.”* Going to one money lender is one way of coping, but going to multiple moneylenders is a sign of real desperation as another participant alluded to this trend. (FG2.P6) is one of those who mentioned having multiple-loans and she stated: *“We survive through multi-loaning, because the salary honestly speaking does not meet our needs.”* It is not like these CYCWs do not know the implications of getting too indebted through micro-lenders. (FG10.P9) shared that: *“We get deeper and deeper in debts, because we can’t make ends meet. Our salaries are small, it’s making us sick and depressed.”* Although the money lenders are regulated in SA (The Micro Finance Regulatory Council in South Africa([sa])), there are many who are not regulated and continue to operate, targeting vulnerable, low income earners. These money lenders charge exorbitant interest rates and many people struggle to pay them off once they have commenced dealings with them. (FG10.P2) agreed that *“these loans come with a big interest so even health wise you become slender, slender, slender.”* Many borrowers find themselves trapped – moving from one money lender to another. (FG3.P4) is amongst those participants who are trapped and as a result she is borrowing from different sources: *“From colleagues and loan sharks as well as banks.”* Other

participants mentioned to be exploring alternative income generating streams instead of borrowing from money lenders.

Sub-theme 3.5.3: Alternative income generating streams

Some participants reported that they simply do not qualify to borrow money from banks and/or money lenders. Others know and avoid the implications of borrowing money. In such instances, participants reported that they explore other means to generate additional income for themselves. For example (FG9.P5) shared: *“I supplement my job with odd jobs. I Dee Jay at clubs and parties.”* The researcher was informed that others even establish small businesses such as selling chickens. There are those who even use their other skills and talents to supplement their income. Such participants include (FG9.P8) who mentioned: *“I do little construction jobs, tiling, and painting.”* Other participants mentioned that they seek alternative jobs elsewhere such as *“driving for the undertakers on Saturdays”* (FG6.P4). Many other creative and different mechanisms of generating income have been explored by the participants. (FG6.P1) also shared: *“I’ve learned to reuse a lot; recycling, reducing and that is my way of life.”* All the above mentioned participants were based in semi-urban areas where there are opportunities of supplementing one’s income as compared to rural areas. It is plausible when one tries to generate additional income. However, it emerged that some programmes prohibit CYCWs from being involved in any form of business or income generating initiative. To illustrate this point, (FG3.P6) stated: *“Here there is nothing, because they don’t want someone to have some small business, they don’t want it, it’s not allowed.”*

It further emerged that there are those participants who try to use the little income they get to improve their economic situations in various ways. (FG1.P9), who was based in rural area, explained that: *“Out of this stipend that they are giving us, we have a stokvel. Some are playing with other people from the community outside where we encourage each other to save because we can’t just teach the families that we work with to save money while we are not.”* This practice is consistent with Lukhele’s definition, cited in Ntoyiwa (2012:2), of Stokvels being “a type of credit union in which a group of people enter into an agreement to contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool weekly, fortnightly or monthly.” Stokvels are communal saving schemes which are much better as compared to borrowing from

money lenders. In line with other community-oriented activities which are popular in rural areas, those participants who join Stokvels seem to have been equipped with the budgeting skills which they apply to their daily lives as well.

In one rural-based particular focus group, it was reported that there are those who resort to ways that will ensure that they get additional social grants from the Government. A female participant mentioned that some of them deliberately fall pregnant in order to get an additional Child Support Grant from the Government, as illustrated here: *“We fall pregnant, because we need the children’s grant”* (FG3.P6). The practice of falling pregnant for the purposes of CSG is refuted by the research that was carried out. Findings indicated that the news that teenage girls or many female adults intentionally get pregnant to access child support grants is a pervasive myth (Solomon, 2013). Hence the researcher also ruled out this practice as a common coping strategy. For most people, relying on the Child Support Grant is a short-term solution. Those who might consider it as a sustainable strategy will certainly be ignorant of the negative long-term consequences of such a decision.

All the income generating activities mentioned above are meant to augment CYCWs’ individual income. For programme specific purposes, some CYCWs have initiated income generating programmes that will earn them money that they can plough back into their programmes. For example, (FG1.P5) shared: *“We have the washing car business. From that we save the money for children so that they can apply and register at FETs or at Universities.”* Some even resort to seeking donations for their programme specific activities.

7.4 CONCLUSION

From the data that has been collected, it became evident that CYCWs are faced with an array of challenges. Some of the challenges are consistent with the findings of Savicki, in Barford and Whelton (2010:273), which speak about higher rates of burnout in CYCWs. This author contends that burnout could be attributable to low starting wages, lack of respect and unmet expectations in relation to their role and duties. It was also evident that many participants seemed to have acquainted themselves with those challenges that affect them. The majority of participants were

able to articulate these challenges in different ways. It is the researcher's belief that this awareness in itself is a step closer to CYCWs working hard to make situations better for themselves and for their field. In the next chapter, a generic discussion of the findings, as well as the conclusions and recommendations will follow. These will hopefully suggest a way forward in terms of how to address some of the challenges that have been unearthed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Denscombe (2012:141) recommends that the outcomes of research conducted need to be communicated to a wider audience in order for them to benefit from such endeavours. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the empirical findings and outline the conclusions reached based on the empirical evidence and literature review. As this study focused on the challenges faced by CYCWs, it was expected that the data generated would reveal more challenges than success focused data. From the empirical findings in the previous chapter, it is evident that CYCWs in SA are faced with an array of challenges. However, to conclude that the information shared exhausted the challenges experienced by CYCWs in its entirety may be an exaggeration. The challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA are consistent with those experienced by other CYCWs in other parts of the world, as stated by Linton and Forster (2003). According to Strand and Dore (2009:396), in general CYCWs experience challenges which include work-related stress from a variety of sources, including heavy caseloads, frequent exposure to negative and often traumatic situations, safety threats, insufficient supervision, and inadequate client resources.

As far as the researcher is concerned, some of the challenges experienced by CYCWs may not necessarily be unique to the CYC field, but could be prevalent in the social services sector in general. However, owing to the unique nature of the CYC field, the researcher would instead focus on those challenges that are specific to the CYC field as they fall within the scope of this study. The focus of this chapter is therefore a broad discussion of the findings, with special attention to some of the areas that need to be highlighted. Overall conclusions as well as generic recommendations will also be presented.

8.2. DISCUSSIONS OF THE KEY EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

For the purposes of clarity, each topic will be discussed individually; conclusions and recommendations linked to a particular topic will also be made. Given that the study sought to answer three main questions in the areas of psycho-social challenges, professional challenges, socio-economic challenges and coping strategies, the discussion will cover each of these areas. Thereafter a summary of recommendations will also be outlined.

8.2.1 Psycho-social challenges and coping strategies

The first research question was based on the psycho-social challenges that CYCWs experienced. The researcher would like to proceed from the position that every individual is likely to perceive situations differently depending on a number of factors, such as personality, age, gender, race, level of education, work experience, etc. Swider and Zimmerman (2010:502) made a finding that “individuals’ personalities are a strong predictor of the level of job burnout they experience.” All these factors play a significant role in terms of how each CYCW perceives situations as challenges and subsequently the coping strategies he/she adopts. It is against this background that what one CYCW may consider as being a challenge, another may perceive very differently. As early as the first century A.D., the philosopher Epictetus noted that “men are disturbed not by events, but by the views they take of them” (Gabor & Ing, 2006).

The following key findings emerged under the psycho-social challenges question: inability to disengage, disengagement from socialisation activities, personal trauma, invasion of personal boundaries and emotional well-being issues. The identified challenges unearthed the struggles that CYCWs are facing as a result of their direct involvement in the CYC field, leading to the key finding that the demand for continued and purposeful engagement with the clients takes a lot of energy out of CYCWs. The researcher takes cognisance of Phelan’s (2014:18) reservation about the use of the term ‘client’, as he argues that it does not resonate in effective life-space work. The researcher will however use it here as an attempt to accommodate a variety of people that CYCWs find themselves having to interact with, sometimes by default. Individual CYCWs can only endure the strains of working with a variety of clients within a supportive micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem arrangement. In

other words, every element of the system needs to be maximally functional so that CYCWs as elements of a broader system do not carry the unbearable load alone. It is the researcher's considered view that if CYCWs find themselves carrying an unbearable workload, something which happens from time to time, it should only be for shorter periods. From the data gathered, it was evident that some CYCWs endure unbearable workloads for prolonged periods, resulting in the emergence of the psycho-social challenges.

It also emerged from the study that the expectations of some of the clients of CYCWs are unrealistic. In order to mitigate this situation, the clients of CYC services need to be taught earlier during first encounters that they are going to be active partners in those professional relationships. The roles and the expectations of CYCWs should be spelled out earlier so that what follows is a matter of reinforcement. CYCWs should therefore not fall into the trap of feeling sorry for their clients, for that can only serve to perpetuate a sense of helplessness. Hurst (2014) defines learned helplessness as "the general belief that one is incapable of accomplishing tasks and has little or no control of the environment." While it is in the nature of CYC to be caring and empathetic with clients, this should not come across in a manner that disempowers clients. CYCWs need to trust their clients enough in order to enable them to take greater responsibilities in their own lives. According to Sladde (2004), each person, family, and community has within themselves the resources necessary to create an environment to further their development. All that is required of CYCWs is to offer support based on clients' strengths and their needs (Ironstone in Bureau, 2005). Acknowledgement of strengths and needs will give CYCWs assurance that their clients can carry on with their lives beyond CYCWs' interventions. The researcher would like to discuss the key findings regarding the sub-themes that emerged under psycho-social challenges one by one in the next section.

8.2.1.1 Inability to disengage and disengagement from socialisation activities

The findings confirmed the researcher's suspicion that some CYCWs might be unable to disengage, as discussed in section 1.2.2 of chapter 1. CYCWs need to

understand that each and every job has its own stresses. They must therefore make a conscious decision not to allow what is going on in their work environments to interfere with their social lives. The importance of developing healthy boundaries between work lives and personal lives is a skill that CYCWs must harness. These boundaries need to be drawn not only at a physical level, but also a mental one. Establishing these boundaries must be done within the parameters of congruence. Indeed CYCWs need to reflect on the events of the day, plan for the next engagement and then switch off in order to engage with other activities, including socialisation activities. Purposeful disengaging will assist CYCWs to re-gain the necessary energy required for future meaningful engagements. Inability to disengage is not only detrimental to the CYCWs. It also affects their loved ones in that they may not receive the necessary attention that they deserve. Those who receive CYC services can also be affected in that CYCWs may not be energised to continue providing quality services.

CYCWs, like many other professionals, need to understand that they have secured employment with the view of enhancing their own lives and therefore should not allow the nature of their job to consume the rest of their lives. A healthy balance between one's personal life and professional life is critical. In fact, given the exhaustive nature of CYC, socialisation must be a conscious effort and can serve as a coping mechanism if effectively used. Therefore socialisation must be enthusiastically embraced. In other words, CYCWs must work hard to find reasons for not socialising. For those who intend to remain in this field for the long haul, socialisation must be a way of living in order to avoid emotional well-being issues.

8.2.1.2 Personal trauma and emotional well-being

Another challenge that was shared by the majority of participants is personal trauma. Personal trauma is something that does not come voluntarily. Most of the time, it comes unexpectedly. Therefore, CYCWs need to be alert all the time and ensure that they adequately deal with their personal traumas. Trauma that originates from their personal lives as well as trauma that originates from the work environment need to be given equal attention. Any attempt to suppress any kind of trauma can only lead to undesired consequences in the long-term. CYCWs who enjoy medical aid benefits

need to utilise such benefits not only for their physical well-being, but also for their mental well-being. This will protect them from the risk of experiencing burnout. From the data collected, not all CYCWs enjoy medical aid benefits. However, in acknowledgement of the demanding nature of the field, some organisations have put in place mechanisms to ensure that CYCWs access psychological services when the need arises. This is a demonstration of employers who actively support their workforce (Jamieson, 2013:22). Lessons can be learnt from those organisations. The researcher would therefore urge CYCWs to utilise such services to the fullest.

From the interviews, it also emerged that not all programmes have systematically put in place supportive mechanisms for their CYCWs. For those organisations that are in the process of putting supportive structures in place, attention should be paid to ensure that such structures should not be an ad hoc arrangement, but a systematic one. McCaffery (2014) advocated for “any special mechanisms that may be needed for community-based caregivers.” Although the researcher is advocating for a systematic support mechanism, he also takes cognisance of the fact that not all CYCWs will buy into the idea of utilising systematic support structures. For some CYCWs, such formal support systems may be perceived as an extension of the oppressive arrangements put in place by their employers. This is against the backdrop that individuals will always have their own preference in terms of coping mechanisms. Distrustful CYCWs must have an option to see someone outside of organisations/programmes. This will serve as an attempt to guarantee them openness and freedom of expression. Isaacson (2002) advocates for CYCWs to utilise someone who is not emotionally involved to act as a mediator or sounding board. Getting into some kind of partnership with organisations that provide psycho-social support services free of charge can be a valuable exercise. Although free services might take time to access, it is still worth the wait than neglecting CYCWs’ psycho-social needs outright. In the context of available technologies, CYCWs may also utilise online trauma counselling services such as those offered by Lifeline. According to Lifeline (2014) any person experiencing any form of trauma can complete an online counselling form and submit it via email, and the suitable counsellor will be allocated to him or her.

Given that CYC is geared towards providing for the psycho-social development of the children and youth, it is critical that organisations support CYCWs with their own psycho-social challenges. Maier (2005) argued that the psycho-social needs of the children and youth can only be adequately addressed if the psycho-social needs of CYCWs are adequately addressed. Failure to address CYCWs' needs might subsequently result in the neglect of vulnerable children and youth, resulting in what is known as 'secondary abuse'. Secondary abuse is defined as "any system, programme, policy, procedure or individual interaction with a child in placement that abuses, neglects, or is detrimental to the child's health, safety, or emotional and physical well-being, or in any way exploits or violates the child's basic rights" (Gil in Daphene Project, 2007:8). It is the researcher's view that if a negotiated system is put in place, the majority of CYCWs will use it. In fact, even if they don't the knowledge that such a system exists might be sufficient to sustain them. CYCWs need to be assured that their employers acknowledge the demanding nature of their work. It is this acknowledgement that will fuel CYCWs towards achieving their personal mission of making an impact in the lives of others.

Having recommended psycho-social support for CYCWs by organisations, it must be noted that the primary responsibility of ensuring that they are coping lies with CYCWs themselves (Isaacson, 2002). CYCWs should have the skills to know when they are psycho-socially stretched and timeously seek the necessary support. According to Kostouros and McLean (2006), the ability of a helping professional to be able to understand himself/herself is critical. Any unnecessary delay might make matters worse – affecting other spheres of their lives. It is important to note that sometimes it takes courage to seek support. In situations where psycho-social support services are either non-existent or not accessible, CYCWs must bring their plight to the relevant authorities in order to safeguard their mental well-being.

8.2.1.3 Invasion of personal boundaries

Another sub-theme or key finding that emerged is the invasion of personal boundaries. The life-space nature of CYC can tempt some young persons to take advantage of CYCWs by violating their personal boundaries. When this happens, it must be remembered that some of the young persons in care have never had adequate relationships where personal boundaries were adequately modelled. On

the one hand, some of these developing young persons have experienced distant relationships which bordered on rejection. Others have experienced definite abandonment (Krueger, 1991). This situation is complicated by the fact that “some children have been wounded in ways that manifest particularly in the interpersonal sphere” (Mann-Feder, 2003). On the other hand, some young persons have experienced relationships that were too close and violated their personal spaces. In both cases, the proximal nature of CYC can be confusing for such young persons. According to Wood and Long, in Bureau (2005), CYCWs are consistently in ‘greater proximity’ to a young person’s living or daily environment than is found in traditional clinical practice. It is therefore the task of CYCWs to appropriately guide these young persons to relate to both their peers and adults. The researcher’s view is that CYCWs can only effectively guide these young people if they have reasonably satisfied and/or resolved their own personal relationship issues. This calls for a thorough introspection on the part of CYCWs.

The researcher would like to conclude that CYCWs have got mechanisms that enable them to cope with their psycho-social challenges. Most of these mechanisms are self-initiated. Supervision is the cornerstone of effective CYC practice. However, one of the key findings that emerged is that supervision is not effectively embraced as a coping strategy in most organisations. This finding is in line with that of Best (2009:9). Hence some ineffective strategies with potential long-term effects have been adopted by some CYCWs. The psycho-social needs of CYCWs need to be taken seriously in order to ensure that they do not only remain in the field, but do so as productive members of the social service profession.

8.2.2 Professional challenges

With regards to professional challenges, the key findings of this study confirmed Linton and Forster’s (2003) notion that CYCWs receive no social recognition or professional status as discussed in section 1.2.3 of chapter 1. Evidence from this study revealed that CYCWs still face difficulties in terms of gaining respect from society in general as observed by Barford and Whelton (2010:274). Participants have raised more challenges in the category of professional challenges than in the other two categories. In the researcher’s view, this could be due to the fact that the study took place in the CYCWs’ professional contexts and settings. This pattern

could also be interpreted as supporting Garfat's (2003a:7) notion that CYCWs see themselves as professionals and, as a result, would like to be treated as such.

Themes that emerged under professional challenges are: dealing with clients' behaviours, personal risk, lack of tangible and immediate results, poor stakeholder relations, lack of recognition (lack of clarity on the role and title of CYCWs and inconsistent job requirements), lack of professional growth and development opportunities, as well as inadequate working conditions. Barford and Whelton (2010:283) argued that burnout could possibly be reduced in CYC programmes by improving working conditions. This means that attention should be given to CYCWs' immediate working environments (micro, meso and exosystem) as well as to the broader social services sector (macrosystem). Shim (2010:850) clarified that a positive organisational culture is expected to decrease CYCWs' intention to leave by supporting achievement / innovation / competence, cooperation / supportiveness / responsiveness, and emphasis on rewards. All these aspects need to receive full attention in order to keep CYCWs motivated to deal with clients' difficult behaviours.

8.2.2.1 Dealing with clients' behaviours and personal risk

One of the key findings under professional challenges category is the reality of CYCWs having to manage difficult clients' behaviours. The fact that these behaviours emanate from clients' painful situations should not be underestimated. According to Vanderwoerd (2006), these are children whose emotional disturbance and history of neglect and abuse makes them all the more difficult to manage. It can only be fair to expect those CYCWs who deal with these children and youth on a constant basis to be emotionally and physically drained. Employers should therefore ensure that CYCWs do not end up becoming emotionally wrecked workers. Most of the coping mechanisms discussed in section 7.6 of chapter 7 have already proven to be effective for the majority of CYCWs and therefore should be amplified.

Most importantly, mechanisms that minimise personal risk should be explored and implemented. Personal risk has been mentioned as a reality in some programmes. The starting point of coping with such situations is that CYCWs themselves need to ensure that they adopt coping mechanisms that will protect them from harm. Such mechanisms must be inherent within the broader CYC principles such as respect

and forging healthy relationships with children and youth (Brendtro, 2004; Vanderwoerd, 2006). In some instances, specific training such as physical restraint training might be necessary. Protection from personal harm cannot be seen as an isolated coping mechanism. It is a complex process that requires a lot of thought and consideration in terms of how CYCWs view their clients and themselves, as well as how they view their profession. In other words, a holistic professional view of the context within which CYCWs work is required. This view will assist CYCWs also in terms of the type of results they can expect from this work.

8.2.2.2 Lack of tangible and immediate results

Another key finding is that participants expected to see tangible and immediate results with regards to their work. CYCWs need to be reminded that the CYC practice is process oriented. Despite this orientation, Vanderwoerd (2006) observed that too often CYCWs judge their programs, their progress, and themselves on the basis of the behaviour of the children. The reality of this field is that only few CYCWs get an opportunity to witness the impact that they have made in their children's lives, especially after the children and youth have left the programmes. Witnessing the results of one's personal investment (Vanderwoerd, 2006) is indeed a rare but fulfilling occurrence. It must however be remembered that even though CYCWs might not get to witness their expected tangible results, the positive encounters experienced by children and youth during specific moments are equally valuable. It is the researcher's view that CYCWs tend to be hard on themselves at times. They want to see children who have been in their care become 'too successful'. Such targets may be too high for the majority of the children whose childhood foundation may not have been that strong. For these children, gestures like a little appreciation, a little support, or a little gesture of care might be enough for them to continue living. In other words, young persons' subjective experiences are vital (Sladde, 2004). Therefore when children have the desire to continue living as a result of their encounters with some CYCWs, that in itself must be regarded as a success. The main challenge for CYCWs should be letting young persons define their own successes which should come from within. The true meaning of success is likely to come when these young persons look back to their difficult past and imagine that situations could have been worse had it not been for the interventions of some CYCWs. Many children started with shaky foundations and that reminder alone

should serve as a sustaining mechanism for CYCWs. CYCWs can further be sustained by healthy stakeholder relations – something which was mentioned by participants as being a rare commodity in some programmes.

8.2.2.3 Poor stakeholder relations

Poor relations with clients, team members, other professionals and community members was another key finding that has emerged from this study under professional challenges. This challenge must be understood against the background and context of the social services sector in SA. Allsopp (2011:82) cited a reminder that the social services sector in apartheid SA was dominated by the SW profession. From an ecological systems theory perspective, it can therefore be expected that the emergence of CYCWs within the social services professions is likely to generate tension for other professionals. Such tensions must thus be understood within the historical context of the social services sector in SA. Some professionals who have enjoyed the recognition monopoly within the social services sector for too long might feel that their territory is being invaded. This dynamic once again relates to the concept of boundaries as discussed in section 2.3.2 of chapter 2. Gharabaghi (2010:25) argues that boundaries in CYC are active in the sense that CYCWs reach out to clients in order to construct very specific types of connections. CYCWs therefore need to be patient and understand that their emergence into the social services sector might have unsettled many other professionals. Such patience might yield fruitful stakeholder relations in the long run. Other professionals need to equally move with speed to welcome the introduction of CYCWs in the social services sector. With a bit of openness, social service professionals can work together in harmony, as already witnessed by Allsopp (2011:86). The roles of different social service professionals can be integrated as CYCWs are increasingly moving into other settings.

In order to make an effective impact, CYCWs need to forge healthy relationships with other social service professionals. This process should however not be one directional. Instead it should be a process where CYCWs make themselves known to other professionals who are equally willing to understand the role and contributions of CYCWs with the view of embracing them as equal partners within the social

service sector. Once healthy relationships are forged, the joint focus could shift towards penetrating families and communities as a united social services workforce.

The introduction of CYCWs, especially in family contexts, has the potential to initially destabilise those families that are used to not receiving social services at all. Even if their current functioning is not completely healthy and beneficial, families will find themselves working hard to try and maintain their status quo as discussed under homeostasis in chapter 2, section 2.3.4. Those families and communities that are used to receiving services from other traditional social service professionals are likely to be affected as well. It may take them time to adapt to these changes that have been brought about by the integration of CYCWs within the social services sector. It is against this background that CYCWs will find themselves not easily welcomed, especially in the beginning, until such time that trust has been developed. When CYCWs continue to demonstrate that they can be trusted with sensitive personal information, their clients will share their often painful feelings with little hesitation. In Thumbadoo's (2013:113) study, children and youth attested to the developmental care that they received from CYCWs whilst based within their own families and communities. It seems that those families that have received CYCWs' services never stop to appreciate the impact that CYCWs have made. Therefore CYCWs need to tread very carefully and sensitively when entering the family and community systems. For some of the community-based CYCWs, this sensitivity has been embedded in their initial training. At the same time, CYCWs cannot allow any family and community dynamics that seem destructive to the healthy development of children and youth to continue for too long. This will need careful consideration in terms of allowing families to live their own lives as they wish, whilst at the same time being guided towards a 'better living'.

Another key finding revolved around CYCWs' title. The reality that deserves CYCWs' attention is that workplace politics is something that is not unique to CYC. Participants expressed dissatisfaction in terms of how others view them. In most cases, how others treat CYCWs is determined by how CYCWs view themselves. This view is consistent with that of Langin (2005) who stated "we see ourselves as we want to be seen." According to Furedi (2003), the concept of self-esteem affirms the sense of human vulnerability and legitimises the problems that individuals have

in coping with the trials of everyday life. Therefore CYCWs need not only view themselves as professionals, but they must also behave as such at all times. This does not mean that they should try to be something they are not. Attempts must be made by all CYCWs not to conduct themselves in such a manner that will give others ammunition to criticise the profession. CYCWs as professionals also need to understand what their field is about and, most importantly, articulate it as eloquently as possible. It is very important that the first coping mechanism should take place at a mental level of the individual CYCWs. Once challenging matters have been clarified at this level, then these CYCWs will move on and engage with other stakeholders with greater confidence and determination. CYCWs must continue to demonstrate their abilities to their immediate colleagues, social service counterparts and to their clients. This will earn them the respect and recognition in the eyes of others. Unfortunately CYCWs have always needed to continuously prove themselves in terms of the contribution they are making (Fewster, 1991:69). The researcher would however caution against CYCWs trying to compete with other professionals. Real competition is with oneself. CYCWs have to strive to do their best in all areas of their work so that they can be recognised without demanding such recognition. Real recognition should come voluntarily and when it comes that way, real fulfilment sets in.

Having said that recognition should not be demanded in the preceding section, this should not be interpreted as exonerating authorities, employers and other professionals from affording CYCWs the necessary respect and recognition that they deserve. According to Stuart (2010:48), “formal recognition of professional status means that government and/ or employers have recognized, through pay or legislation, the value of the profession of CYC.” This author goes further to clarify that “informal recognition means that the work is valued and visible and that people feel good about themselves and the work they do.” Both formal and informal recognition is necessary for the holistic motivation of CYCWs. At the highest level, authorities should demonstrate through actions and systems that CYC is a valued profession. Formalising the profession and addressing CYCWs by their appropriate titles is one way of recognising them. Another way can be through creating environments that enable CYCWs to grow and develop professionally. Furthermore, ensuring that CYCWs’ working conditions are conducive can also serve as a tangible

way through which authorities and employers can demonstrate that CYC is a valuable field. The whole system must be geared towards allowing and making that recognition evident.

8.2.3 Coping strategies for professional challenges

The majority of the identified personal and professional coping mechanisms expressed by CYCWs in chapter 7, section 7.6 should be supported. Personal mission as a coping strategy for psycho-social challenges is critical. Personal support networks which include self-care (indulgence, time off, recreational activities, faith related activities and family support) should be intensified. Furthermore, professional support networks such as relying on colleagues, utilising team meetings, supervision and psychological services should not be underestimated. Self-development and reliance on broader support structures is also critical.

It is easy to build on strategies that are already working than impose new ones that might not be relevant to CYCWs' contexts. For those strategies that seem 'undesirable', as discussed in sub-themes 1.6.1 and 2.8.1 of chapter 7, CYCWs should be assisted in exploring other alternatives. It is the researcher's view that when full recognition of CYCWs ultimately sets in, it will become easy for them to identify, afford and utilise coping strategies that are beneficial. In other words, strategies such as quitting the field should not be high on their agenda. When CYCWs get tired of or outgrow their current roles, the researcher anticipates a scenario whereby they will explore other areas which will still afford them an opportunity to continue serving in the CYC sector. There are indeed many areas in which one can advance the field. Areas such as management, teaching, research and advocacy are some of the avenues that need to be explored further. For those who would like to remain closer to the children and youth, they can explore developing and implementing high level programmes that have direct benefits for these children. They can also choose to focus on dealing with certain types of children so that they become specialists in their chosen areas. Griffin (2003) cited an example that CYCWs could work from a prevention and health promotion approach rather than just treatment. All these suggested options will of course require one to invest time and money in developing one's skills to the highest level possible.

A number of coping strategies mentioned by the participants are sound and commendable. It is those few strategies discussed mainly under non-existent coping strategies that need attention. Although it may be only a small percentage of CYCWs who might have adopted ‘undesirable coping strategies’, they need to be directed towards healthy coping strategies in order to safeguard and prolong their professional well-being. Supporting CYCWs will ensure that vulnerable children and youth are being served by people with integrity. The integrity and reputation of the entire profession will also be elevated when CYCWs are seen to be taking charge of their personal and professional lives in the face of challenges. It is the researcher’s view that the challenges experienced by CYCWs are intertwined. There have been a number of processes that have impeded the professionalisation of CYC in SA. It is however encouraging to see that situations are about to change as “all the legislation and regulations defining the profession are in draft form” (Jamieson, 2013:3). When professional issues are addressed, a number of psycho-social challenges will fall away. Equally when professional issues are adequately resolved, socio-economic needs will, to a large extent, be addressed.

8.2.4 Socio-economic challenges and coping strategies

The following key findings emerged under the topic socio-economic challenges: inadequate remuneration structures (undifferentiated salary scales, inadequate benefits) and inadequate programme funding. Although some challenges mentioned above can be dealt with at organisational level (mesosystem), others fall beyond the scope of organisations and squarely on the shoulders of the government (macrosystem). It is indeed true that some of the socio-economic key findings revealed may be as a result of worldwide socio-economic climates. As a result, such challenges will not be experienced by CYCWs alone but by other professionals in other sectors as well. Those challenges that are pertinent to CYCWs need to be addressed so that when broader socio-economic challenges arise, CYCWs are reasonably cushioned against the adversity of such conditions. If worldwide socio-economic turmoil finds CYCWs not adequately positioned in terms of remuneration, the impact can affect them severely. The severity of the socio-economic status of some CYCWs came out evidently in this study.

Despite the evident financial hardships that some CYCWs were experiencing, the researcher was astonished by this one particular focus group. Participants were offered an opportunity to share their personal socio-economic challenges. Instead of doing so, not a single one of them talked about socio-economic challenges as it affected them individually or collectively. These participants continued to talk about the needs of those in their care, despite the fact that they do not earn a salary but a stipend. It must be mentioned that for some participants, even this stipend did not come as regularly as it should. This illustrated the deep rooted nature of care and commitment that these workers have for their clients. In an ideal situation, when such CYCWs focus on the needs of children, youth and families, their socio-economic needs should simultaneously be taken care of.

The NPC (2011:114) cautioned that as the country expands access to employment on a mass scale, a large proportion of working people will receive low pay. The blame in terms of the plight of CYCWs who receive a stipend and low pay should not always be apportioned to their employer organisations. In some cases, the broader socio-economic climates dictate to organisations as to what they can afford to give these workers. In cases whereby governmental organisations serve as employers, it is possible that CYCWs can be remunerated adequately. In other words, social service professionals who have obtained the same level of qualifications and gathered the same amount of experience should be remunerated comparatively (Hlagala, 2012:236). Employer organisations and the government should work with determination to improve the working conditions of CYCWs.

It seems important that attention should also be given to career development and career pathing of CYCWs at various levels. For volunteer, auxiliary and student CYCWs, the researcher would recommend that at government level, priority should be given to those who are already involved in CYC programmes when other opportunities such as internships and bursaries become available. In so doing, they will be implementing workplace training and financial inclusion as ways to deal with structural weaknesses (NPC, 2011:114). For specific areas such as the social services sector, it is important that opportunities should not target everyone without ascertaining some level of commitment. Although the researcher is aware that this might not be readily well received by other members of the broader society who

might also be in dire socio-economic situations, recommendations can be structured in such a way that they favour those who have proved themselves in terms of their desire to serve vulnerable people within their communities. In that way, the investment will be channelled properly and avoid fruitless expenditure. According to the DHET (2009:10), the productivity of each individual is determined by, among others, his or her technical skills, the extent to which his or her basic needs are met, values and orientation, social inclusion, and a commitment to advancing the public good. Therefore opening up opportunities to all, without prioritising those who have proved their passion can only result in the wrong people being attracted to the field. CYC requires CYCWs to possess certain qualities which would have to include the following, as suggested by Linton and Forster (2003):

- **Idealism:** a firm hopefulness and faith in the power to make positive change in human life.
- **Pragmatism:** a realistic practicality in the use of means, a willingness to experiment in the service of a burning desire to be effective.
- **Intelligence:** both cognitive and intuitive intelligence, a high degree of self-knowledge and the knowledge of how to use self in the helping task, coupled with a thirst for the accumulated scientific knowledge regarding development, pathology, human ecology, treatment, etc.
- **Empathy:** an enormous capacity for caring deeply about those in need.
- **Commitment:** the application of self, often with amazing stamina, to the thorny problem of effecting change in disturbed human beings.
- **Courage:** the willingness and ability to engage with always stressful, usually challenging, and sometimes dangerous youngsters.

Recruitment criteria can therefore be structured in such a way that people who possess some of the above-mentioned qualities are preferentially incorporated into the social service professions.

The key findings under socio-economic challenges revealed that a lot of coping strategies depend on how much one earns as well as the benefits that go with that position. Hence financial literacy workshops are important for all workers; particularly those who are earning low incomes to prevent a situation whereby many CYCWs

find themselves having to rely on money lenders for economic survival. According to the NPC (2011:112), the trends throughout the world have shifted to a situation whereby many people do not enjoy “a standard package of benefits.” It is against this background that CYCWs’ salaries should be such that they can qualify to approach formal lending institutions if such a need should arise. The benefit of formal institutions is that they charge reasonable interest rates on any loans granted. CYCWs need to earn salaries that will enable them to qualify for housing loans. Given that the majority of CYCWs are women, decent salaries can serve as a foundation for solid family structures. If CYCWs are neglected for a long time in the area of socio-economic matters, they will be tempted to resort to other undesirable measures that are common in other sectors such as strikes. The consequences of such measures can only be detrimental to the vulnerable children, youth, families and communities.

8.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to **explore the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context**. In order to achieve this goal, four key questions were asked.

The first question was “**What are the psycho-social challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA?**” This question was satisfactorily answered in that the key findings revealed that CYCWs experience the following psycho-social challenges: inability to disengage, disengagement from socialisation activities, personal trauma, invasion of personal boundaries and issues relating to emotional well-being.

The second question was: “**What are the professional challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA?**” Equally, the question on the professional challenges was satisfactorily answered whereby the following challenges were highlighted: dealing with clients’ behaviours; personal risk, lack of tangible and immediate results, poor stakeholder relations, lack of clarity on the role and title of CYCWs, inconsistent job requirements, lack of recognition, lack of training and promotion opportunities, and inadequate working conditions.

With regard to the third question which sought to explore “**the socio-economic challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA**”, the following key finding emerged: inadequate remuneration structures, undifferentiated salary scales, inadequate benefits and inadequate programme funding.

The final question which focused on the coping strategies adopted by CYCWs to deal with the psycho-social challenges, professional challenges and socio-economic challenges was also answered. Under psycho-social challenges, the following coping strategies emerged: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal mission, substance abuse, and quitting. The coping strategies under professional challenges included: non-existent coping mechanisms, personal support networks and professional support networks. The coping strategies relating to socio-economic challenges included: budgeting, formal and informal lending mechanisms (which includes bank facilities and money lenders), and alternative income generating streams.

Given that all questions have been satisfactorily answered, the researcher has reached the following conclusions:

- The first conclusion with regards to the entire study is that the key findings in terms of challenges experienced by SA CYCWs are consistent with what has been found in other parts of the world, as supported by literature and empirical evidence. Within the SA context, this study is the first to explore the challenges of CYCWs at this level and has thus allowed CYCWs in SA to share their experiences. As a result, whenever one speaks about challenges that CYCWs in SA experience, one can do so from an advantaged factual point, resulting in minimal assumptions. The real contribution of this study lies in the unearthed coping strategies adopted by CYCWs, given the unique socio-economic SA context.
- The second conclusion is that CYCWs in SA experience a range of challenges. Given that the study was situated within an ecological systems theory, the impact of other systems such as poor stakeholder relation in working with individual children (microsystem), working within communities

(exosystems), working with families and communities (mesosystem), and working within the broader society (macrosystem) became evident. This proved that CYCWs are affected at different levels. The researcher's overall impression was that the majority of challenges raised emanated from the CYC field not being recognised as a profession (macrosystem). Challenges such as dealing with clients' inappropriate behaviour are however embedded in the nature of CYC and thus need to be managed as much as possible so that they do not impact on CYCWs in a destructive way.

- The third conclusion is that despite the challenges expressed, the researcher got a sense that the majority of CYCWs are committed to their jobs in particular and the CYC field in general. The participants have, however, used the focus group sessions as a platform to share their frustrations with the ultimate goal of remaining effective and productive members of the social service professions. The overall tone of participants was not positive in all focus groups due to the challenges they experienced. It is however the researcher's view that those CYCWs' commitment to the field far surpassed the challenges that they experienced. This view can be supported by the length of service some of these CYCWs have spent in their specific programmes in particular and the field of CYC in general. It must also be reiterated that the focus of this study was to unearth the challenges that CYCWs were experiencing. It was therefore not surprising that the answers that came forth were focused on challenges. It would therefore be beneficial if other studies that focus on successes and the contribution of CYCWs, such as that of Thumbadoo (2013), could be expanded. In the next sections, recommendations will be made with the hope of making a contribution towards retaining CYCWs within the social service sector.

8.4 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The bulk of the challenge specific recommendations have already been embedded in the relevant sections in chapter 7. In this section generic recommendations, which have arisen from the psycho-social, professional and socio-economic challenges unearthed in this study, will be proposed.

8.4.1 Support networks

- The researcher recommends that concerted efforts need to be made by both CYCWs and employers to ensure access to psycho-social support networks. The utilisation of available technology-based psycho-social services needs to be explored and/or intensified by CYCWs.

8.4.2 Professional titles and registration

The first area that needs attention is the clarification of the title with which CYCWs are addressed. Although it has been documented in the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 that those who care for children will be known as CYCWs, the 'differentiated and progressive titles', which include learner CYCW, auxiliary CYCW, CYCW, and specialist CYCW as suggested by Jamieson (2013:4), are supported. This approach of differentiated titles promotes linkages between education and training and the world of work, which is one of the visions of the NDP (NPC, 2011:296). It should however be noted that for the purposes of this discussion, the researcher will continue to use the title CYCW which embraces all the different categories of CYCWs. Once official titles are finalised and 'legislated', individual CYCWs and organisations should use those titles in a consistent manner as "the quest for professionalization is about the status that goes with the title 'professional'" (Smith, 2009:119). The question that needs to be asked though is: For how long would the CYC field like to maintain this system of differentiated titles? There has to be an answer to this question in order to allow forward thinking and planning.

- The researcher would further recommend that there must be a deadline by when all those who want to be recognised as 'CYCWs' at different levels must have obtained the necessary training and qualifications which will enable them to register as professionals. Just like it has been done with teachers and social workers, the researcher proposes a legislated process whereby CYCWs need to have a certain level of training before they can be allowed to practice as CYCWs. Du Toit's (2000) proposal that CYCWs should be unable to practise CYC work without a valid registration certificate should be enforced. Once registration of CYCWs has been promulgated, organisations

employing CYCWs at different levels should be required to employ only registered CYCWs, and if they fail to do so, they should face the consequences.

8.4.3 Education, training and development

- It is worth noting that the relationship between education and poverty appears to be strong. Stats SA (2014:30) highlighted that the lower the level of education attained, the more likely adults were to be poor. Stats SA (2014:42) further reported that only 2.5% of households where the head of the household had some form of post-matric education were found to be poor. This is a good indicator that by introducing a qualification at FET level, the CYC field will be geared towards making a contribution in terms of denting the levels of poverty in SA. NACCW made recommendations that SACSSP should be given the mandate with regards to registration, education, training and development (Allsopp & Mahery, 2010:29) of social service professionals. It is the researcher's recommendation that the CYC field can make a huge impact by setting the educational requirements for CYCWs as high as possible so that those who choose this field not only work for survival, but literally raise themselves and their families out of poverty. The researcher would recommend an incentive strategy that will encourage those who join the field at a basic level to continue studying towards the highest qualifications available. Perhaps a timeframe can be set to push CYCWs to reach the highest levels by the year 2030, which is consistent with the NDP targets. If agreed upon and pronounced, the 2030 target will also enable those who join the CYC field at an entry level to know in advance how much time they have in order to advance to their desired levels. These timeframes will alleviate future unrealistic expectations.
- There are already three training providers that offer CYC courses at FETC level in SA. Due to the fact that some participants reported not knowing how to access some of these providers, there has to be a central place where CYCWs can actually access these providers. Information and website links of service providers offering CYC programmes could, for example, be placed on

the websites of the SACSSP. This will ensure that even those who have not yet joined the CYC field can have access to and probably be enticed by this information.

- The NPC (2011:25) acknowledges the reality that improved education will lead to higher employment and earnings. Hence provisions of tertiary CYC qualifications need to be continually evaluated as well. Jamieson (2013:15) reported that “expanding the number of opportunities for study in Institutions of Higher Learning will be a priority for the SACSSP and the PBCYC once the profession is recognized.” Although there are sufficient accredited training programmes in place, there has to be some efforts to ensure that these programmes are accessible. Open and distance learning (ODL) offerings would ensure this accessibility to the majority of CYCWs who are already in CYC employment. Collie (2004:233) made the suggestion that “training programmes benefit workers most when they are accredited, either professionally or academically.” The researcher would therefore recommend that the number of tertiary institutions that can offer CYC qualifications through Open and Distance Learning mode be increased. Coupled with this recommendation, the researcher would like the CYC stakeholders to take advantage of the newly introduced White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) by approaching more traditional residential tertiary institutions with the view of requesting them to consider offering CYC qualifications through Open and Distance Learning mode.
- The value of training CYCWs in general should not be underestimated. Although training is generally expensive and therefore unaffordable for most individuals and organisations, the benefits far outweigh the costs. According to Ellett, Ellis, Tonya, Westbrook and Dews (2007:266), training can reduce turnover rates which are quite costly. Collins-Camargo, Ellett and Lester (2012:289) also cautioned against staff turnover as it tends to have a snowball effect. Best (2009:5) added that training has financial and psycho-social benefits. Well trained and qualified CYCWs are likely to be less stressed as compared to their untrained counterparts. The indirect benefits of training are

that it may include psychodynamic, systemic and social learning and other concepts which help to build a vocabulary of unconscious emotional life (Collie, 2004:233). All stakeholders are therefore urged to invest in training which will certainly contribute to CYCWs 'experiencing' fewer psycho-social challenges.

- Curry et al. (2011:3) emphasise the need for a competent and caring workforce. Although it was outlined in the service delivery model (DSD, 2005:34) that attention will be given to (1) professional education, (2) continuous professional development (CPD), (3) skills training for the implementation of the service delivery model, and (4) on-going in-service training, only professional education and skills training are offered to CYCWs seven years down the line. CPD is not yet implemented for this category of social service professionals – perhaps due to the fact that CYCWs are not yet registered. The researcher would like to record his concern about the time lapse between some of the noble strategies and the actual implementation thereof. In order for CYCWs in SA to continue dealing effectively with the ever-changing and complex needs of children and youth, the researcher would recommend the speedy introduction and enforcement of CPD processes for CYCWs. A creative and progressive way of offering CPD must be explored, because given the current salaries that the majority of CYCWs earn; very few can afford such courses if they have to pay for them out of their own pockets. One of the ways that can be considered is a subsidised model whereby the government can contract certain providers to train CYCWs in certain areas. This will allow CYCWs to acquire the required CPD points. The amount of CPD points required must also be set at a level that will not constrain CYCWs financially. The introduction of CPD will be in line with what has taken place in other parts of the world, such as in the USA where the CPD practice for CYC practitioners has been going on for the past two decades (Curry et al., 2011:3).

8.4.4 Programme funding

- According to Patel (2009:27), many welfare NPOs are highly dependent on the government for their core funding. As a result, the types of programmes these NPOs offer will, to a large extent, be influenced by the amount of funding they receive from government and other funders. Charles (2010:3) has observed that most of the cuts have been happening to programmes that support the most marginalised people. Efforts must be made to support and sustain those programmes that are already offering CYC services. In line with the NPC's (2011:53) position for a review of funding for NPOs, the researcher would like to recommend that the percentage of the government subsidy funding towards NGOs, FBOs and CBOs be speedily reviewed and ultimately increased. This will enable organisations to employ a suitable number of CYCWs who can render effective and therapeutic programmes to children and youth.

8.4.5 Remuneration of CYCWs

- Another area that needs attention is the remuneration of CYCWs. According to Patel (2009:43), remuneration levels in the welfare NPO sector are lower than in the public and commercial sectors. Therefore another recommendation with regards to NGOs and CBOs is that in its review for a subsidy system, the government needs to consider a funding model that will enable programmes to pay CYCWs reasonable salaries. In most cases, funding conditions prohibit or restrict the amount of funding that can be used towards salaries. This restriction will constrain programmes, resulting in them losing good and dedicated workers to other institutions, mainly government institutions. Patel (2009:18) observes that the post-1994 democratic dispensation resulted in NPOs losing staff to the Government, as government salaries are increased while subsidies for NPOs are not given sufficient attention.
- The reality of CYCWs earning low salaries seems to persist despite recommendations having been made some 17 years ago that the salaries of social welfare personnel in both the public and voluntary welfare sectors must

be addressed (Department of Social Welfare, 1997). Furthermore, the reality of social services personnel being lost to the social service sector needs to be looked at in its entirety, as the sector has experienced loss of social workers due to poor salaries and working conditions (DSD, 2005:11). The repeat of this staffing exodus within the social services sector should be prevented at all costs. Considering that some 'government CYCWs' conceded that their peers in NGOs are working extremely hard, NPO, CBO and NGO programmes should be adequately supported in a financial sense to prevent CYCWs from leaving the NPO sector as a result of attractive salaries in government institutions.

- For those CYCWs who might have entered the CYC field as volunteers, let there be a clear career path for them – a call that Patel (2009:41) has already made. After completing the required training and having worked for a stipulated period, such workers must be considered for a reasonable basic salary. Low salaries may suggest to these workers that their contributions are held in low esteem and that their welfare is not a consideration, resulting in low organisational commitment and high staff turnover (Strand & Dore, 2009:395). Attention should particularly be given to community-based CYCWs in order to ensure that they remain committed to serving their respective communities. After extensive interaction with some community-based CYCWs, Thumbadoo (2013:27) came to the conclusion that these workers need to experience that they are valued. The sustainability of community-based CYC programmes can only be guaranteed if these CYCWs continue to offer services where they have been trained. Perhaps other collaboration arrangements with local municipalities could be explored so that these workers are remunerated accordingly.
- The White Paper on Social Welfare has since recommended an equitable rate for jobs be instituted across the whole of the public service (Department of Social Welfare, 1997). The researcher would further recommend standardised salaries for CYCWs employed in the government sector across all the nine provinces. This standardisation should take into consideration the

qualifications one has obtained as well as the length of service. A transparent remuneration system will contribute towards the stabilisation of the CYC sector. It will also ensure that trained and qualified CYCWs do not leave their respective provinces, which in many instances need them most, and flock to those provinces that are perceived to be paying competitive salaries.

8.4.6 Recommendations for further research

This study focused on a specific area and specific category of social service professionals. There will always be room for further research in the social services sector. The researcher would therefore conclude this section with the following research recommendations:

- Considering that this study was carried out prior to the formal recognition of CYC as a profession, once registered the impact of formal recognition on CYCWs is an area that can be looked into.
- Multi-disciplinary research needs to be conducted within the social services sector to establish the contribution that CYCWs and other professionals make. This approach will strengthen collaborations between social service professionals.
- Research that involves the perceptions and experiences of children and youth as recipients of services of CYCWs is another area to be explored for possible research.

8.5 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Four objectives were formulated in order to attain the goal of the study. Table 8.1 below indicates the set objectives as well as whether these objectives were met or not.

Table 8.1: Accomplishment of the study objectives

No	Objective	Achievement
1	To identify the psycho-social challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.	This goal was achieved as presented under themes 1.1 – 1.5.
2	To identify the professional challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.	This goal was achieved as presented under themes 2.1 – 2.7.
3	To identify the socio-economic challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA.	This goal was achieved as presented under themes 3.1 – 3.4.
4	To explore the coping strategies adopted by the CYCWs in SA to deal with the psycho-social, professional and socio-economic challenges in practice.	This goal was achieved as presented under the following sub-themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-social strategies (1.6.1 – 1.6.4 of chapter 7) • Professional strategies (2.8.1 – 2.8.3 of chapter 7) • Socio-economic strategies (3.5.1 – 3.5.5 of chapter 7)
5	To formulate strategies that will contribute towards ensuring that CYCWs' working conditions are improved.	This goal was achieved through a summary of recommendations in sections 8.4.1 – 8.4.5 of this chapter

8.6 CONCLUSION

This study has revealed and confirmed an array of challenges experienced by CYCWs in SA. The researcher hopes that this work will prompt others to ask more

questions so that further research can be conducted in other areas of CYC. It is through research such as this that CYC as a field can continue to grow. All spheres of the CYC field need to be informed by research so that new and relevant knowledge can be generated. These efforts will contribute to better working conditions for CYCWs, as well as quality services to children, youth, families and communities.

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