



**Principles to consider when developing an ethical  
code for forensic social work in South-Africa: a  
rapid review**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree Masters of Social Work in Forensic  
Practice at the North-West University

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Graduation: July 2019  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This study originated from my innate curiosity to discover and explore. The planning, execution and writing of this dissertation became an extreme adventure in self-growth. It was a journey of learning, self-control, discipline and persistence beyond my own boundaries. This journey and adventure would not be possible without the people who continuously motivated, inspired and encouraged me. I would like to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions for their contributions and support:

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## **RESEARCH OUTLINE AND PREFACE**

This dissertation of limited scope is submitted in the article format according to the 2018 General Academic Rules (A4.1.1.1.4 and A4.4.2.9) of the North-West University for the completion of the Masters of Social Work in Forensic Practice degree.

The dissertation is structured in the following three sections:

### **Section 1: Background and orientation to the study**

This section supplies an overview of proposal development, the background and rationale of the study, the methodology applied and the ethical permission granted for the study. The scientific journal selected for submission of the article manuscript is introduced in terms of its editorial policy and guidelines for authors.

### **Section 2: Manuscript in article format**

This section consists of the manuscript of the article titled, *Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa: A rapid review*, as it will be submitted to the indicated journal. It is important to note that this section's stylistic layout and referencing may differ from that of sections 1 and 3 to comply with the journal's editorial policy and guidelines for authors.

### **Section 3: Conclusions, limitations, future recommendations, policy brief and reflection**

The conclusions of this rapid review are presented in Section 3. The limitations of the study and a number of recommendations are indicated for future research, policy makers and forensic social workers. This section is concluded with a policy brief and reflections by the researcher.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, LETTER OF PERMISSION AND DECLARATION**

### **Authors' contributions**

The student is enrolled for the degree, Master of Social Work in Forensic Practice, and was responsible for the development of the research proposal, the execution of the rapid review and writing the research report (dissertation of limited scope). This was done under supervision of Prof Alida Herbst and Mrs. Tasleem Sayed from the Community Psychosocial Research entity (COMPRES) at North-West University. All three will be included as authors of the article manuscript to be submitted to the chosen scientific journal and their contributions are acknowledged as follows:

- Mrs. Ilse Oosthuizen is the primary (first) author, responsible for the research proposal, the execution of the nine-step rapid review process and writing of sections 1-3 presented in this dissertation of limited scope.
- Prof Alida Herbst, primary research supervisor, was responsible for the analytical review of the research process and methodology.
- Mrs. Tasleem Sayed, was the critical reader of this study and independent reviewer of the rapid review process and results.

## DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I, Ilse Oosthuizen, declare that this dissertation of limited scope titled, *Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa: A rapid review*, which I herewith submit to the North-West University as completion for the requirements set for the degree Master of Social Work in Forensic Practice, is my own work and that all the references that were used or quoted were indicated and recognised.

~~*Ilse Oosthuizen*~~

*14 March 2019*

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*SIGNATURE*

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*DATE*

*Ilse Oosthuizen*

*Student number: 22924396*

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS USED**

AUTHÉR – African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research

CASP – Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

CCSA – Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

COMPRES – Community Psychosocial Research Entity

DSD – Department of Social Development (South Africa)

NASW – National Association of Social Workers (United States of America)

NOFSW – National Organization of Forensic Social Work

SACSSP – South African Council for Social Service Professions

## **ABSTRACT**

Worldwide, the social work profession is guided and regulated by various codes of professional conduct or ethics. With the development of specialized fields such as forensic social work, corresponding unique ethical codes were also developed. One example is the code of ethics for forensic social work developed in 1987 by the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) for use in social work practice in the United States of America.

In South Africa, forensic social work only became a registered field of specialization during 2017, but a code of ethics to guide conduct in this field is yet to be developed. Currently there is a generic code of professional conduct applicable to all social workers in South Africa, but it lacks a uniquely defined ethical code directed at forensic social workers similar to that of the NOFSW.

This study used a rapid review methodology to identify principles to consider when developing an ethical code/code of professional conduct for forensic social work in South Africa. The results and recommendations of this study can be used by policy makers and key role players in the field of forensic social work in South Africa to inform and guide such an ethical code.

## **KEYWORDS**

- Forensic social work
- Forensic practice
- Ethical dilemma
- Code of ethics
- Ethical principle(s)
- Professional code of conduct
- Rapid review methodology

## **OPSOMMING**

Wêreldwyd word die maatskaplikewerk professionele gerig en geregleer deur 'n verskeidenheid van professionele of etiese gedragskodes. Vanuit die ontwikkeling van spesialisvelde soos forensiese maatskaplikewerk is daar ook unieke etiese kodes vir sodanige velde ontwikkel. Een voorbeeld van so 'n etiese kode vir forensiese maatskaplikewerk is reeds in 1987 deur die National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) in die Verenigde State van Amerika ontwikkel om forensiese praktyk te rig en te reguleer.

In Suid-Afrika is forensiese maatskaplikewerk eers in 2017 as spesialisveld verklaar en 'n unieke etiese kode om hierdie veld te rig moet nog ontwikkel word. Daar is tans 'n generiese professionele gedragskode waaraan alle maatskaplike werkers in Suid-Afrika onderworpe is, maar 'n uniek gedefinieerde etiese kode, soortgelyk aan die van die NOFSW, ontbreek vir forensiese maatskaplike werkers.

Hierdie studie het 'n snelloorsig (rapid review) metodologie gevolg om die beginsels wat oorweeg moet word in die ontwikkeling van 'n etiese kode / professionele gedragskode vir forensiese maatskaplikewerk in Suid-Afrika te identifiseer. Die resultate en aanbevelings van hierdie studie kan deur beleidmakers en ander sleutelrolspelers gebruik word om die ontwikkeling van so 'n etiese kode toe te lig en te rig.

## **SLEUTELWOORDE**

- Forensiese maatskaplikewerk
- Forensiese praktyk
- Etiese dilemma
- Etiese kode
- Etiese beginsel(s)
- Professionele gedragskode

- Sneloorsig metodologie

## **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

This study was approved by the COMPRES scientific committee as well as the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus. The following approval letter was issued for this study:



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**Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,  
Training and Support**

**Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)**  
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3 December 2018

Dear Prof Herbst

## **APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION BY THE HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

**Ethics number: NWU-00110-18-S1**

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) secretariat.

**Study title: Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South-Africa: a rapid review**

**Study leader: Prof AG Herbst**

**Student: I Oosthuizen- 22924396**

**Application type: Systematic review**

**Risk level: Minimal (monitoring report required annually)**

**Expiry date: 28 February 2020 (monitoring report is due at the end of February annually until completion)**

You are kindly informed that after review by the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, your ethics approval application has been successful and was determined to fulfil all requirements for approval. Your study is approved for a year and may commence from 03/12/2018.

Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report should be submitted two months prior to the reporting dates as indicated i.e. annually for minimal risk studies, six-monthly for medium risk studies and three-monthly for high risk studies, to ensure timely renewal of the study. A final report must be provided at completion of the study or the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences must be notified if the study is temporarily suspended or terminated. The monitoring report template is obtainable from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at [Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za). Annually, a number of studies may be randomly selected for an internal audit.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences requires immediate reporting of any aspects that warrants a change of ethical approval. Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be submitted to [Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECAppl@nwu.ac.za) with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in **yellow highlight** in the amended documents. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment

request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Any adverse/unexpected/unforeseen events or incidents must be reported on either an adverse event report form or incident report form to [Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za). The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating that it is a notification of a serious adverse event or incident in a specific project e.g. "SAE/Incident notification: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". Please note that the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences complies with the South African National Health Act 61 (2003), the Regulations on Research with Human Participants (2014), the Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015), the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

Yours sincerely



Prof Wayne Towers  
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3 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.1

## **SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Forensic social work was declared a field of speciality by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) in 2017. As a newly established field of speciality an applicable code of conduct is required, but currently there are only vaguely defined and fragmented guidelines, rules and regulations to guide conduct in this field. Internationally the field of forensic social work must adhere to set ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. Local research is necessary to inform the development of an ethical guideline and code of conduct for forensic social workers in South Africa.

In the sections to follow the researcher will describe and discuss how literature was rapidly reviewed to meet the goal of this study. The general goal of this study was to provide information and guidelines to the key stakeholders to assist them in creating an ethical code unique to forensic social work which can inform and enrich policy and regulations of a recently established speciality in South Africa

### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Worldwide the social work profession is regulated by professional or ethical codes of conduct. The largest social work organizational member body, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) developed the first international ethical code for social workers (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). It was the seminal work of Muriel Pumphrey, which greatly influenced policy makers and key role players from 1959 onwards to consider continuously educating registrants about ethics (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). Pumphrey's initial work was confirmed by a publication in 2002 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) that listed more than 260 references on the importance of values and ethics in social work

practice (Black, Congress, & Strom-Gottfried, 2002). An ethical code, for the purpose of this study, will refer to a written, apparent, explicit document that consists of principled standards used by professionals to accompany behaviour (Gils, 2003). The term “ethics” is defined as “a set of standards for behaviour that helps us decide how we ought to act in a range of situations. In a sense, we can say that ethics is all about making choices, and about providing reasons why we should make these choices” (Brown University, 2015).

With the development of a number of specialization fields in social work, unique ethical codes for such fields were also developed. One such unique ethical code was developed by the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) in 1987 (Butters & Vaughan-Eden, 2011; NOFSW, 1987).

Currently, there is a generic ethical code applicable to all social workers in South Africa (SACSSP, 2006), but lacks the support of an ethical code directed at forensic social workers. The scope of practice of forensic social work is highly specialized and compelled to meet an immense ethical standard (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). Appropriate consideration is necessary when confronted with matters like role description (Liebenberg, Simeon, & Herbst, 2015), confidentiality (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006) and what is the intended goal for the forensic interview. An understanding of legal requirements, adherence to an ethical code and forensic protocols can be used as confirmation of one’s professional responsibility to an acceptable type of service delivery such as an expert witness in a criminal court (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

According to Kaliski (2006, p. 6) and Swanepoel (2010, p. 856), an unquestioned forensic professional should have at least attended a basic training program and preferably a postgraduate course, focusing on forensic investigation. Not all professionals working with child sexual abuse cases can give a proficient testimony or engage in the forensic investigation (Liebenberg et al., 2015, p. 2). Therefore, the South African Council for Social

Service Professions (SACSSP) and the Department of Social Development (DSD) necessitated a thorough exploration of the feasibility of registering forensic social work as a specialty field in social work (SACSSP, 2003a, SACSSP, 2003b). On 14 July 2017 the SACSSP declared that the preliminary regulations for specialization, as published on 14 October 2016, had been authorized by the Minister of Social Development, the Honorable Bathabile Dlamini, as published on 1 September 2017 (SACSSP, 2017). Therefore, forensic social work is now officially a specialized field of expertise in South Africa. Even though the criteria for registration is still pending, this is a considerable opportunity for South Africa to compete with international standards including the development of an appropriated code of ethics to guide this field.

### **1.3 DESCRIPTION OF KEY CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY**

As part of the contextualization, it is important to describe a number of concepts related to this study; a forensic social worker is described in the Government Gazette (SACSSP, 2017) as a social worker with “accurate, objective and specialized knowledge, skills, training and education”. According to the regulations for forensic social work, published on 1 September 2017, forensic social work is “a specialized field of social work that focuses on the interface between the legal system and the secondary client and is characterized by the primary function of providing expert testimonies in courts of law” (SACSSP, 2017).

Forensic assessments and investigations can be described as the process where forensic expertise, methods and tools are used to gain authentic and factual information to compile a report that could assist the court with criminal cases (SACSSP, 2017). It continues

to say that a forensic social worker is someone who should provide the court with an expert testimony either written or orally (SACSSP, 2016).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) a **Code of Ethics** can be defined as a guideline that provides values, principles, and standards to assist social workers in their daily service delivery tasks (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 2008, preamble). All social workers and social work students are obligated to act according to the Code of Ethics and use this code of ethics to guide them to render professional services to the public.

“In **social work code of ethics**, an **ethical dilemma** is a situation requiring action on part of the **social worker** wherein there is no clean success – that is, two or more **ethical** principles are in conflict with one another” (NASW, 2008, preamble).

**Expert testimony** refers to the written report or oral evidence provided by a trained, skilled and knowledgeable forensic social worker. This evidence would then be used in the criminal court where the expert (forensic social worker) would provide the court with the professional testimony to make an informed decision about the case on trial (SACSSP, 2017).

#### **1.4 ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

The need for an ethical code is warranted by a critical discussion on ethical dilemmas in forensic social work practice. According to a Government notice posted on 1 September 2017, the client in the forensic social work arena would refer to “a court of law or body that commissions a forensic social work investigation” (DSD, 2017) and not the person seeking assistance. Canon 18 of the National Organization of Forensic Social Workers (NOFSW) Ethical Code (NOFSW, 1987) correlates with this and states that “the Forensic Social Work

Practitioner shall clearly identify the source of referral, inform individuals being evaluated or treated of the nature and purpose of the evaluation, and use applicable standards of confidentiality with whom the information will be shared". The primary ethical dilemma in forensic practice usually starts when the term, *client*, is not clearly defined. The forensic social worker is confronted with individuals and families affected by a criminal offence such as sexual assault and such individuals may consider themselves as the client of the forensic social worker, while the court is in actual fact the client.

According to the NOFSW (1987) all forensic social work practitioners should obtain written, informed consent of clients when interviews are recorded for professional or educational purposes. Without the consent of the persons involved, one would not only create an ethical dilemma, but a legal predicament as well. Therefore the dynamics of crimes such as sexual abuse should always be taken into account, especially where intra-familial abuse is investigated. It does happen that a father, sexually abusing his child, will not give consent to a forensic investigation. In that instance the forensic social worker can still give the father the opportunity to voluntarily cooperate and if he refuses, obtain a court order to continue with the investigation.

Ethical dilemmas may further include the interviewer's personal attitude and opinion towards a certain persons or case contents (Gaughwin, 2004). In addition, the cultural and social differences between the interviewer and the interviewee can potentially lead to an ethical dilemma or create a barrier between the parties involved. This may result in bias, victimisation or the possibility of collecting faulty information. For example, canon 17 of the NOFSQ specifies that a forensic social worker is not allowed to victimise any person based on their ethnic group, system of belief, skin colour, age, sexuality, mental or physical state, political opinion, relationship, or legal prominence (NOFSW, 1987).

For all social workers, the availability of supervision develops a deeper comprehension of the practice position and options for intervention (Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers, 2011). This assists the essential professional responsibility of social workers while advancing the best interests of clients by guaranteeing that practice is based on recent knowledge (Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers, 2011). Unfortunately, the availability of supervision and supervisors in forensic social work is limited to the person/institution where training was provided. Since forensic social work in South Africa received speciality status quite recently, the number of educated and experienced supervisors are limited. Therefore, some forensic social workers in South Africa have to render services without the assistance of a supervisor which can lead to less comprehension of the practice positions and options for intervention (Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers, 2011). A lack of proper supervision may result in poor service delivery and a higher risk for unethical practices.

The forensic social worker has to fulfil the role of expert witness in a court of law. In the role as expert witness it is important that the social worker avoid giving an opinion or statement that is outside his/her expertise or scope of practice as it can compromise the authentication of information already provided to court. The NOFSW (1987) confirms with this matter in their ethical code (canon 1) by highlighting that a forensic social worker should be in possession of an appropriate qualification. It is further stated that all unethical and unprofessional behavior must be reported (canon 11) and be referred to another professional if the service delivery falls outside of the forensic social worker's scope of practice (canon 21). Therefore, giving an opinion outside of your scope of work is regarded as an unethical issue.

Dual roles are another one of the ethical dilemmas that are regularly appearing in the forensic field (Liebenberg et al., 2015; Sarnoff, 2004). Working in the justice system is a

demanding area for professionals and many debates have taken place in the psychological field with regards to dual roles (Appelbaum, 1997; Greenberg & Shuman, 1997; Heltzel, 2007). Social workers are equally confronted with dual roles with reference to statutory social work (mainly child protection services), therapy, clinical social work and forensic social work (Liebenberg et al., 2015). For each of these fields of service specific procedures, protocols and techniques are unique to the scope of practice are required (Spies, 2006).

The typical function and affirmation of confidentiality in forensic investigation differ from that of a therapist (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). During a therapeutic intervention one would guard the client's right to privacy and confidentiality since this is one of the key elements of rendering ethically sound services to clients. However, in the forensic social work capacity, there is limited confidentiality throughout the investigation process since all information provided during the intervention may be regarded as evidence in a court of law (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

In a digital era, modern technology poses some risks for the development of ethical dilemmas. Not only is there a chance that modern technology may fail the interviewer (recording of interviews, typing of reports and other related procedures), but digital malware and viruses on computers and other devices put the management of sensitive and confidential information at risk (Swanepoel, 2010).

## **1.5 THE ETHICAL LIABILITY OF FORENSIC SOCIAL WORKERS**

To date, the ethical liability which should govern forensic social workers has received little consideration in South Africa (Van der Walt, 2003) and, as social workers in an upcoming specialty of our profession, it is necessary to “prevent unauthorized and unqualified professionals from doing more harm than good” (SACSSP, 2006). Without an ethical code, forensic social workers in South Africa have little ethical guidelines to follow

during an ethical dilemma, forensic assessments, court procedures and expert testimony (Fouché, & Fouché, 2015; Maschi, & Killian, 2011).

Professional affiliations attempt to direct their members to protect the client systems and themselves (Spielthener, 2015). The question remains whether ethical codes in fact reach this purpose. Researchers and critics have identified a number of restrictions related to ethical codes and reported that professionals do not always adhere to such codes because as a matter of choice on the one hand, or as a matter of ignorance on the other (Dienhart, 1995; Morin, 2005; Schwitzgebel, 2009). According to Spielthener (2015) there is a further risk that “codes oversimplify moral thinking”. Even though ethics are profoundly essential in service delivery (Gaughwin, 2004), Bloch, Chodoff and Green already indicated in 1999 that there is no effortless solution for ethical issues. Furthermore, it is important to point out that not all ethical issues can be “solved” since unchangeable rules and guidelines are simply not accessible (Bloch et al, 1999).

Since 2003 it was suggested that an ethical code for forensic experts in South Africa should be implemented (Van der Walt, 2003) and the development of such a code is long overdue (Robbins, Vaughan-Eden, & Maschi, 2015). Other authors such as Sen, Gordon, Adshead and Irons (2007) have put the development of such an ethical code forward as an urgent matter for forensic social work. It is evident that the development of an ethical code will be in the mutual interest of many professions and service recipients (Spielthener, 2015). Butters and Vaughan-Eden (2011) are also of opinion that forensic social workers are in need of a more appropriate and defined protocol in addition to the functioning ethical codes such as those of the SACSSP and the NASW.

An ethical code specific to forensic social workers in South Africa will not only guide the forensic investigation during ethical dilemmas, but also create a sense of universal unity.

Forensic social service delivery in South Africa will then compete with international standards.

At the moment there are vague or fragmented ethical guidelines, rules and regulations applicable to forensic social workers in South Africa. A clear ethical guideline and code of conduct for forensic social workers in South Africa, in line with the recognition this field of specialization, forms the research gap of this study.

When critiquing the need for an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa there seems to be adequate international literature examining the need for an ethical code to guide specialties like forensic social work. Unfortunately, there is less literature responsive to the South African context. Therefore, more research on this topic in South Africa should be done to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the principles and contents to be considered in an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa.

## **1.6 INVESTIGATIONS INITIATED BY THIS STUDY**

This study investigated several concepts / topics with regards to forensic social work, ethical principles and ethical codes cavingning this field of speciality. These concepts / topics include:

- The most common ethical dilemmas faced by forensic social workers internationally.
- The principles underlying most ethical codes in social work in an attempt to identify those ethical principles most appropriate for dealing with the most common ethical dilemmas in forensic social work.
- Recommendations that can be made for the development of an ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa.
- Inclusion of new knowledge in social work curricula focusing on forensic social work.

- Other studies could be generated from this study. This study may be used in the future by other students or researchers having an interest in this topic or policy makers and key role players in need of more information as portrayed in this study.
- The results of the study can improve professional advancement by providing forensic social workers and policy makers with a universal set of principles when practicing forensic social work.
- In the long run this study and other similar research may benefit all forensic social workers in South Africa by providing them with much needed research on practicing professional forensic social work according to sound ethical principles.

### **1.7 REVIEW QUESTION**

What are the principles to consider in the development of an ethical code for the newly registered forensic social work speciality in South Africa?

### **1.8 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The overarching aim of this study was to review available literature by means of a rapid review on topics related to ethical principles and dilemmas in the field of forensic social work to provide information and guidelines to policy makers and key stakeholders for use in the development of an ethical code unique to forensic social work in South Africa.

### **1.9 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

- To combine applicable evidence on the need and rationale for an ethical code unique to forensic social work and to combine applicable evidence where an ethical code for forensic social workers are already implemented.

## **1.10 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS**

**Ethics** can be defined as “a set of standards for behaviour that helps us decide how we ought to act in a range of situations. In a sense, we can say that ethics is all about making choices, and about providing reasons why we should make these choices” (Brown University, 2015).

**Forensic assessments** refer to the process where forensic expertise, methods and tools are used to gain authentic and factual information to compile a report that could assist the court with criminal cases (SACSSP, 2017). Furthermore, a forensic social worker is someone who can provide the court with an expert testimony in either a written or oral format (SACSSP, 2016).

## **1.11 STUDY DESIGN AND METHOD**

This study was executed by means of a rapid review as a proven and preferred methodology when information was required for new knowledge building in a short time period (MRes & Kleijnen, 2012; Tricco et al., 2015). The review aspired to corroborate, appraise and summarize findings from appropriate articles (Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts, & Stewart, 2014) to inform policy makers, stakeholders and decision makers in a newly established speciality field in social work in South Africa as soon as possible. A rapid review complies with a strict scientific method and serves as an instrument to summarize specific topics with the aim of providing a factual baseline for answering paramount questions in a short amount of time (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2014).

Systematic/rapid reviews furthermore provide researchers with a synopsis of the most satisfactory and suitable evidence and data since more than two million articles are promulgated in over 15,000 journals per year (Kings College London, 2014). The goal of systematic reviews is to provide the most outstanding and accurate information about a

specific topic, is deemed appropriate and can save the researcher valuable time (Boland, Cherry, & Dickson, 2017). Not only are systematic reviews a manner of saving time, but also provides the reader with forthcoming and evidence-based answers to specific questions. According to Garg, Hackam, and Tonelli (2008) a combination of studies, when suitable and done in a scientific manner, is more effective and accurate than only one study.

When taken into account the timeframe of forensic social work being a registered as a field of speciality in South Africa in 2017, it was considered advisable to conduct a rapid review so that scientific based knowledge and information could be collected to provide stakeholders and policy makers with some guidelines in terms of the ethical principles relevant to forensic social workers in South Africa.

This rapid review was done according to the following nine steps (similar to a systematic review) as described by Boland et al., (2014) and Uman (2011). These steps were followed to ensure research quality and are illustrated in Figure 1.

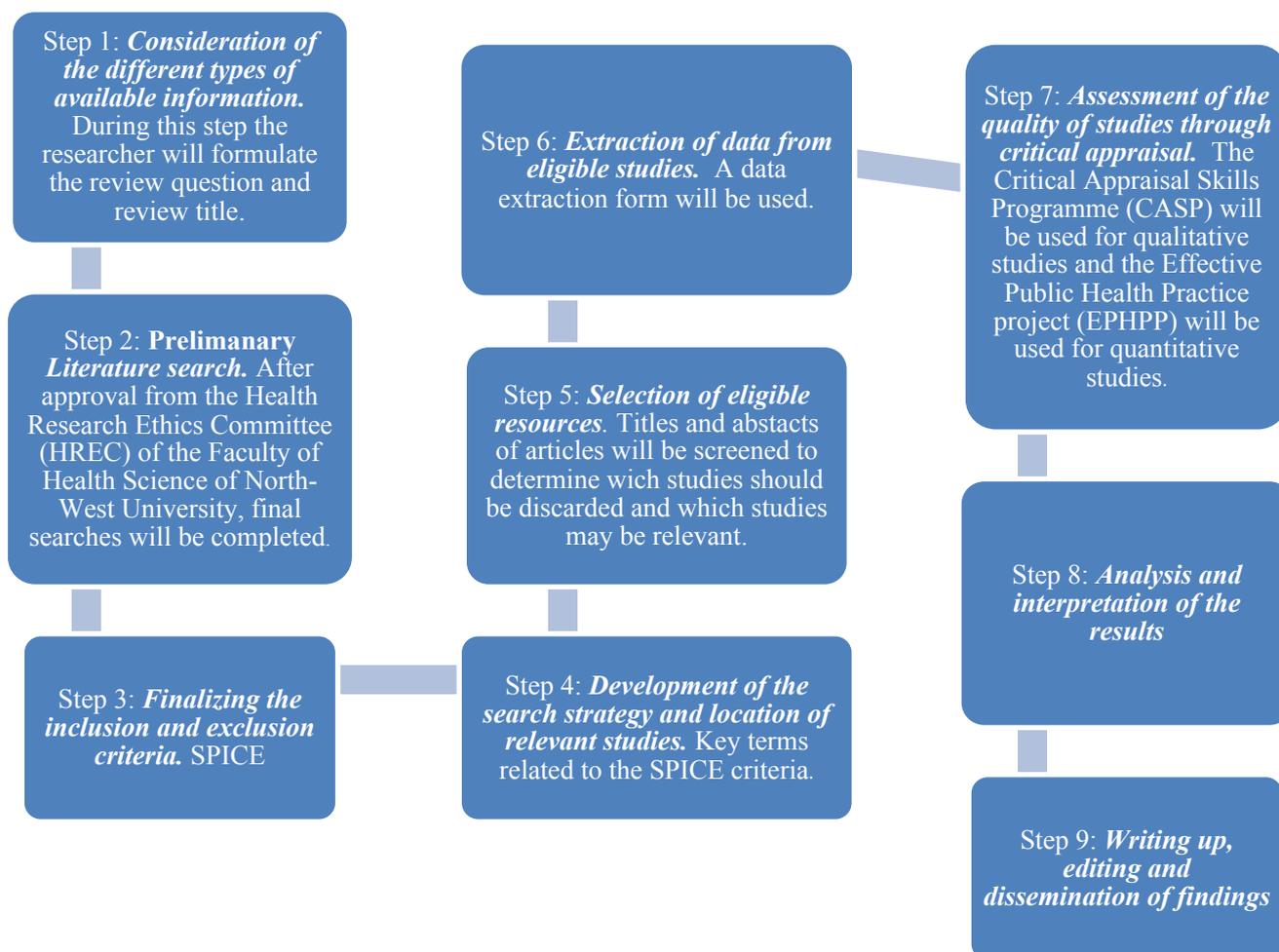


Figure 1: Nine steps of systematic review adapted for a rapid review

### Step 1: Consideration of the different types of available information

The first step included an extensive exploration of current data about this specific “topic”. There are a considerable number of sources containing data and information to be searched, explored and inspected. The researcher made use of manual and electronic search strategies, for example reference lists required searching and browsing by hand (Boland et al., 2014) while databases and research catalogues required it electronically. Uman (2011), states that this step allows the researcher to plan and develop a review question resulting in the establishment of a review title. The question needs to be created and described in such a manner

that the readers and users will find the results valuable and appropriate (Petticrew & Roberts, 2005). In this study, step one (1) resulted in the following review question and review title:

**The review question:** *What are the principles to consider in the development of an ethical code for the newly registered forensic social work speciality in South Africa?*

**The review title:** *Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa: A rapid review*

### **Step 2: Literature search**

The second step involves an extensive search of current available literature and evidence from relevant published literature, as well as so-called “grey literature” to ensure that all relevant evidence is included in the study (Boland et al., 2017). During step two the researcher identified appropriate literature pertaining to ethical principles for forensic social workers in South Africa.

The researcher started with a basic search engine like Google followed by more professional search engines through the institution’s (North-West University) online library. The ultimate goal of this literature search was to determine the need for a rapid review on this specific topic. The final conclusive searches for adequate articles used in this rapid review were identified after the inclusion and exclusion criteria were established.

### **Step 3: Defining the inclusion and exclusion criteria**

A useful manner to ensure that a researcher decided on all key components before starting the review search, according to Uman (2011), was to use the acronym PICOC (population, intervention, comparison, outcomes and context) or PICO (population, intervention, comparison, outcome). However, in addition to PICO and PICOC, other

frameworks such as PICOT (population, intervention, comparison, outcome and timeframe), introduced by Fineout-Overholt and Johnson (2005), ECLIPSE (expectation, client group, impact, professionals and service), SPICE (setting, perspective, intervention, comparison and evaluation) developed by Booth (2004), and SPIDER (sample, phenomenon of interest, design, evaluation, research type), also exist (Davies, 2011). For the purpose of this review, the researcher made use of the SPICE acronym in order to define the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### **Exclusion criteria**

The researcher did not include quantitative studies, but only focussed on qualitative studies indicated in the SPICE criteria summarized in table 1. Qualitative studies may have beneficial approaches and methods other than quantitative studies that may be missed if not included.

### **Inclusion criteria**

Full text journal studies were included as valuable information could have been found from them since a scientific method was used to conduct the search. Peer reviewed studies were also included as such studies had a high possibility to deliver valuable information on the topic of this study as the studies would have been reviewed by different professionals with diverse scientific methods. Non-peer reviewed studies were included as there may have been information pertaining to this study that would be left out if not included.

Mixed-method studies had the potential to render participants' opinions and evidence-based science useful to this review and were therefore included. Furthermore, existing review studies were used for consultation of primary sources and references. PhD theses and Masters dissertations/mini-dissertations were also included since potentially useful recommendations

had been made by international and national post graduate students with regards to ethical principles and ethical codes. International conference proceedings like that of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work Conference were included given the potential of practice-based and scientifically sound information included in such proceedings.

Studies published in languages other than English and /or Afrikaans were also included since translation services were available.

Lastly, existing national and international ethical codes were included given the importance and relevance of such publications to meet the aim of this study.

Table 1 summarizes the criteria the researcher used for considering articles in this review (the SPICE Criteria):

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>S</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SETTING</b></p>	<p>All social workers who are practicing in the specialty field of forensic social work. The SETTING will be internationally recognized forensic social workers.</p>	<p>According to the SPICE criteria, PARTICIPANTS are replaced with SETTING. The SETTING: the group of individuals that are being included in this study refers to forensic social workers around the world.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>P</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>POPULATION</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Or</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PERSPECTIVE</b></p>	<p>Forensic social workers</p>	<p>The POPULATION of this study will refer to forensic social workers practicing in a field of specialization in the social work profession.</p>

<p><b>I</b></p> <p><b>INTERVENTION</b></p>	<p>Not applicable for this study.</p>	<p>Instead of using INTERVENTIONS, the SPICE criteria’s focus is on the PERSPECTIVE of the study.</p> <p>Not applicable for this study</p>
<p><b>C</b></p> <p><b>COMPARISON/CONTROL</b></p>	<p>Not applicable to this study</p>	<p>Not applicable to this study</p>
<p><b>E</b></p> <p><b>EVALUATION</b></p>	<p>Identification of ethical principles which can guide the code of conduct of forensic social workers.</p>	<p>The researcher is striving to answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are being done for the users, potential participants and stakeholders (policy makers and forensic social workers) to inform guidelines for a code of ethics for a newly established field of specialty in social work in South Africa?</li> <li>• <b>Why has of an ethical code unique to forensic social workers in South Africa not been developed yet?</b></li> </ul>

Table 1: SPICE Criteria

#### Step 4: Development of the search strategy and location of relevant studies

The emphasis to design a thorough list of key terms (i.e., Medical Subject Headings, “MeSH”) pertinent to each integral of the SPICE criteria to be able to determine all applicable articles for the review (Davies, 2011). According to Boland et al. (2014), Boolean operators were used to restrict searches and limit search parameters (Boland et al., 2014). The search methods utilized in the identification of studies are described in the next paragraphs.

The review started with a broad initial search according to the set selection criteria in an attempt to collect the most relevant articles applicable to the goal and objectives of this study. This entailed electronic searches for scoping purposes on the following databases available through the North-West University's online library: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Academic Search Premier, and CINAHL (The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature) with Full Text. These databases rendered the most accurate results with regards to psychosocial behavioural sciences. The purpose of the scoping search was to administer an outline of available literature on the particular research topic. By conducting a scoping search the researcher had a better understanding of the topic being reviewed. Through the scoping review, the expertise and support of an experienced librarian and training provided by the African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUTHÉR), the researcher was able to identify keywords that assisted with refining the literature searched.

The following Boolean operators assisted the researcher during the scoping search to narrow down specific literature which included specific keywords related to this study as indicated in Table 2:

	<b>KEYWORDS</b> (use <u>OR</u> to indicate synonyms, related and <u>NOT</u> to indicate exclusions)	<b>FIELD</b> (Indicate where the key word search should focus on: Title, abstract, or all text)
LEVEL ONE	“Forensic social work”	All text
	OR	
LEVEL TWO	“Forensic practice+”	All text
	AND	
LEVEL THREE	"Ethical dilemma+”	All text

	<b>OR</b>	
LEVEL FOUR	“Ethic+”	<i>All text</i>
	OR	
LEVEL FIVE	“Ethical principle+”	<i>All text</i>
	AND	
LEVEL SIX	“Policy maker+”	<i>All text</i>

*Table 2: Boolean operators used during search*

Lastly, other resources were searched including specific articles from Cochrane reviews, DARE and the Campbell Collaboration were retrieved and secluded for suitable primary articles. Thereafter the researcher manually worked through the bibliographies of such articles to ensure that no relevant studies were omitted during the electronic search.

#### **Step 5: Selection of eligible resources**

During step 5 the titles and abstracts of the articles were screened. The irrelevant titles and abstracts were withdrawn from the study and only titles and abstracts relevant to this study were used in full text to ensure optimal results (Boland et al., 2014).

#### **Step 6: Extraction of data from eligible studies**

During step 6 the researcher made use of the inclusion criteria when browsing full text articles. Articles which did not meet specific requirements for inclusion were excluded (Boland et al., 2014). This was followed by the data extraction phase and the critical appraisal. To ensure that each article reviewed adheres to the same standard and principles the use of an extraction form as a control mechanism is advised (Uman, 2011). The extraction tool assisted the researcher with the evaluation and synthesis of the data collected and served as guide in presenting the information in a similar format (Boland et al., 2014).

The following information was used to extract data and the relevant parts were included:

**Data Extraction Tools- JBI Data Extraction Form for Experimental/Observational**

**Studies**

Reviewer

Date

Author

Year

Journal

Record number

**Study method** RCT Quasi-RCT Longitudinal

Retrospective Observational Other

**Participants**

Setting

Population

Sample size

**Interventions**

Intervention 1

Intervention 2

Intervention 3

**Clinical outcome measures**

Outcome description Scale/measure

**Study results**

**Authors' conclusions**

**Comments**

Any disagreements in data collection were arbitrated by general agreement between the researcher and supervisor in close collaboration with the independent reader.

### **Step 7: Assessment of the methodological quality of studies through critical appraisal**

Once the relevant studies were identified for inclusion in the review, such articles were critically appraised with the assistance of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2006) tool that was adapted to suit the nature of this study (Greenhalgh & Brown 2014). With the assistance of this tool (see Appendix D) the researcher was able to evaluate the trustworthiness of the studies and whether or not the studies support deliberate answers relating to the review question (Boland et al., 2014). The Cochrane Collaboration's risk of bias tool (Higgins et al., 2011) was altered (see Appendix E) in order to calculate the risk of bias (Rajendran, 2001).

### **Step 8: Analysis and interpretation of the results**

Depending on the information collected, it was advised to do a confined synthesis where the different themes were assembled and discussed accordingly.

### **Step 9: Writing up, editing and dissemination of findings**

The researcher made use of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analysis) tool to ensure that the reporting and quality of the systematic review were enhanced. PRISMA consists of a 27 item checklist and a flow diagram (Liberati, Altman, Tetzlaff, Mulrow & Gøtzsche. 2009). This was the last step of the rapid review and are summarized in figure 2.

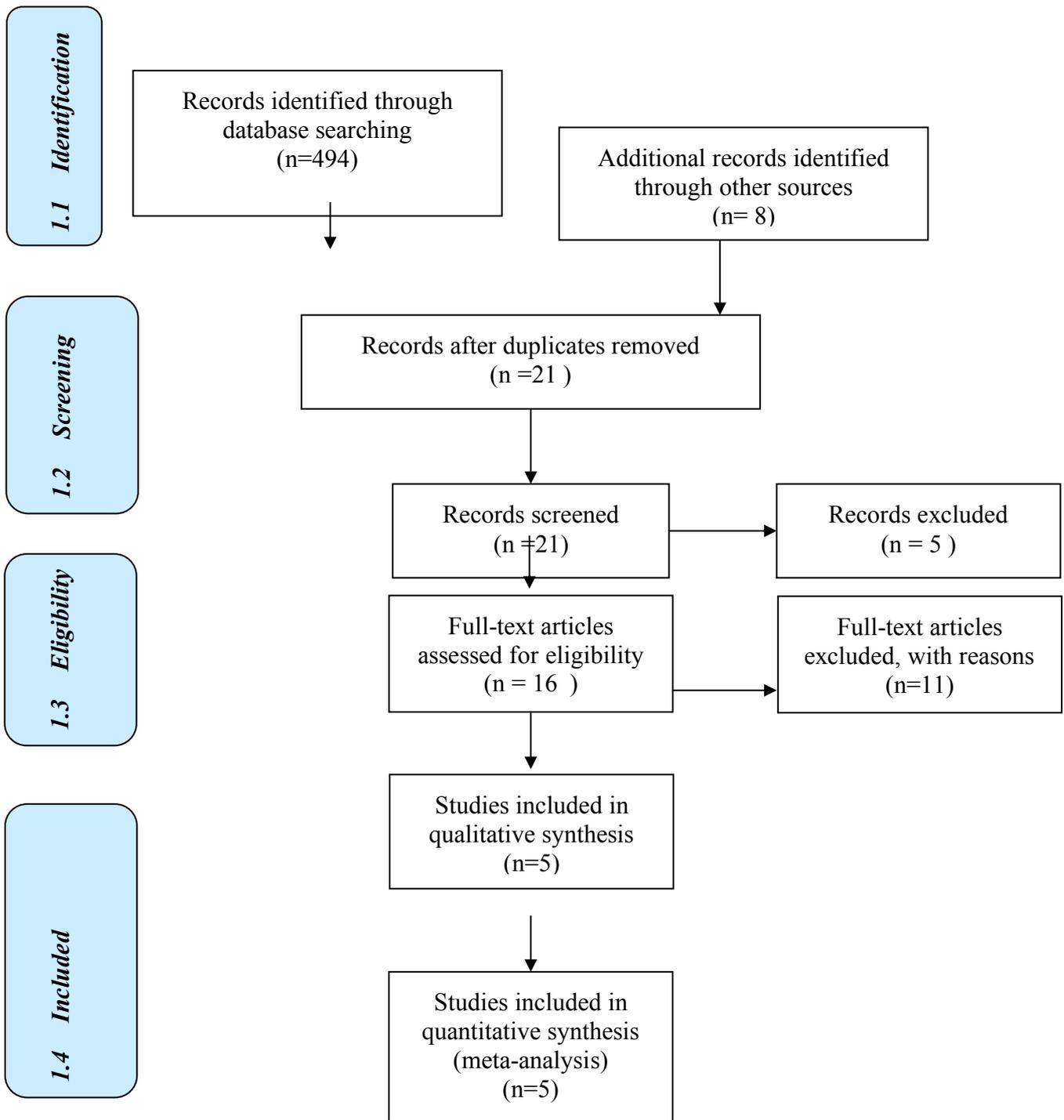


Figure 2: PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram (Liberati et al. 2009).

### **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Even though the estimated ethical risk of this study was low the researcher continuously strived to ensure that the use of disrespectful, insulting, displeasing abusive, offensive or discriminatory language was prevented during the completion of the review.

Acknowledgement to the original authors were given through proper citing of original sources according to the referencing style of the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

The researcher also focused on using the correct data extraction methods (Wager & Wiffen, 2011, p. 133) and administering non bias activities (Cochrane Collaboration, 2006) during the reviewing process.

### **1.13 PUBLICATION**

The researcher will submit the article to the journal, *CARSA*. The article manuscript will be prepared according to the editorial requirements of this journal described on the next pages.

## CHILD ABUSE RESEARCH A SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL (CARSA)

### EDITORIAL POLICY AND AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Child Abuse Research a South African Journal (CARSA), has been published biannually since 2000. *CARSA* is an accredited journal approved by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training and it was SAPSE accredited in 2003 for articles published in the journal from 2004 onwards. This means that CARSA is a peer reviewed, fully accredited, professional journal and academics at higher education institutions receive credits if their articles are published in CARSA.

An article contribution to the editor(s) will only be considered provided it has been edited and is **ready for processing**, namely: language edited, stylistically polished and carefully proofread and to follow the technical format and referencing guidelines as provided below. Manuscripts not following the journal style, referencing technique, technical format and language edited will be returned to author(s) for correction and re-submission before being sent out for refereeing. In submitting an article author(s) acknowledge that it is their own original work and that all content sourced from other authors and/or publications have been fully recognised and referenced according to the guidelines for authors.

#### **Review and refereeing of submitted articles**

According to the Policy and Procedures for Measurement of Research Output of Public Higher Education Institutions, research output is defined as *“textual output where research is understood as original, systematic investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding”* (Ministry of Education, 2003: 3). Therefore, an uncritical synthesis of literature without contributing any new insight to existing knowledge falls outside the scope of this definition. Furthermore, *“peer evaluation of the research is considered a fundamental prerequisite of all recognised output and is the mechanism of ensuring and thus enhancing quality”* (Ministry of Education, 2003: 3-4).

The Journal also subscribes to and follows the peer review principles and guidelines as outlined in the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) document: *National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals* (Assaf, 2008).

Accordingly, the Editorial Team will carefully examine submitted article manuscripts with a view to the selection of appropriate peer reviewers, who should be scholars who have not previously co-published extensively with the author(s), who are for this and other reasons free of known bias in relation to the subject matter, the author(s) and/or their institutions, and who can cover, from a position of authority and peer expertise, the topic(s) dealt with in the article concerned, i.e. are recognised experts in a specific specialist field in the disciplines served by this journal.

The Editor(s) will submit article contributions to referees (in a double blind review process) for evaluation and may alter or amend the manuscript in the interests of stylistic consistency, grammatical correctness or coherence. The refereeing process is always anonymous and the identity of referees will remain confidential. It remains the prerogative of the editors to accept or reject for publication any submission and their decisions are final. They will not enter into any debate or correspondence regarding any decision made. Evaluators agreeing to referee articles are requested to provide, where possible, critical and constructive feedback on the work of their peers. They are requested to make a recommendation based on the following:

1. i Accept for publication in its present form;
2. ii Accept with minor revisions as indicated; or
3. iii Resubmit with major revisions in accordance with critical and constructive feedback provided;
4. iv Reject (unlikely to be accepted even after revision). In this instance it would be senseless to provide feedback and the decision of the editors would be final.

Apart from scientific shortcomings or inconsistencies, the following evaluative criteria are considered:

- The theme is academically significant (timely, important and in need of addressing);
- The theme contributes to an existing (professional) body of knowledge (knowledgeable and useful);
- Author(s)' goals and objectives are clearly stated;
- The article addresses (unpacks) themes logically, consistently and convincingly;
- The article demonstrates an adequate understanding of the literature in the field;
- The research design is built on adequate understanding, evidence, informational input;
- The interpretative potential of the data has been realised;
- The article demonstrates a critical self-awareness of the author's own perspectives and interests;

Holistically, the article is properly integrated and clearly expresses its case measured against the technical language of the field (theory, data and critical perspectives are well structured and the presentation is clear);

Conclusions are clearly stated and adequately tie together the elements of the article;

The standard of writing (including spelling and grammar) is satisfactory;

The APA CARSA adapted reference technique is consistently applied throughout the article;

Sources consulted are sufficiently acknowledged (included in a list of references) and

consistently cited to: supply academically sound **evidence** on which the author's

observations, statements, and/or conclusions are based; enable readers to **consult** original

sources themselves (precisely stating where and/or under which circumstances); and

**acknowledge** the authors (source) from whom information was taken.

Effective and detailed source referencing is of paramount importance. Articles will be

scrutinised and checked for bibliographic references and any proven evidence of plagiarism

(including self-plagiarism where more than one-third of previously published work by the author(s) is being used in the author(s)' submitted article) will result in non-publication.

The authors bear full responsibility for the accuracy of the factual content of their contributions and indemnify SAPSAC or its agent against any loss, damage, cost, liability or expense, including legal and professional fees arising out of legal action against SAPSAC or its agent with reference to actual or alleged infringement of copyright or the intellectual property rights of any natural or legal person. Copyright of all published material is vested in SAPSAC. Please note that the views and opinions expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the editor or SAPSAC and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of SAPSAC. Authors are solely responsible for the content of their articles.

Manuscripts for publication or enquiries pertaining to CARSA should be directed to: The Editor-in-Chief: **Prof M Ovens** [ovensm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:ovensm@unisa.ac.za)

## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

### Referencing guidelines

**Notes:** References and citations should be prepared in accordance with the **CARSA adapted APA format** (see below examples of various reference listing types). The 'in-text' referencing format is followed by the Journal with full source referencing information listed under the heading: **LIST OF REFERENCES** (uppercase), which list to be placed at the end of your article. All sources in the List of References must be listed alphabetically by author(s)' surname(s), according to the following examples. Please note the indenting of the second and additional lines of a reference listing when longer than one line. Use of full stops in listing: Generally each separate piece of information is standardly followed by a full stop. A comma only used if part of that one piece of information. Exception being the use of the colon [:] – and not a dash [-] or semi-colon [;] – in a split article or book title and after the place of publication before the name of the publisher.

## Technical and formatting requirements

Articles that are submitted for consideration should adhere to the following minimum standards and technical and formatting requirements before submission:

1. An **electronic copy** (computer disk or document sent by e-mail (to the Editor-in-Chief) in MS Word (or Word compatible software programme) may be submitted. If not e-mailed, the file name of the manuscript must be specified on the accompanying computer disk.
2. **Length:** Contributions must be submitted in English and should preferably not exceed **20** typed A4 pages (electronically minimum word count should not be less than **7,000** words (approx. **15** pages) or exceed **10,000** words of **text** (approx. **20** pages)
3. The **title** of the article (in uppercase) and the **author's full first name and surname**, designation, institutional affiliation, address & contact email should appear on the first page.
4. A **summary/abstract** of approximately 150 to 300 words on the first page of the submitted article must also be included. The abstract to be **italicised**.
5. **Keywords:** Directly below the abstract paragraph insert **Keywords** (maximum of **TEN** (10) – approximately **TWO** (2) lines.
6. If **funding** has been received from your University/Organisation or external funders for the research on which this article is based, such support funding can be acknowledged in the first footnote.
7. **Line spacing:** The document should be typed in A4 format using **SINGLE (1)** line spacing and 'normal margins' selected. No double spacing between words or after full stops and commas. Only single spacing throughout text. No line space to be inserted between paragraphs except between a paragraph and a heading.

8. **Paragraph indenting.** All paragraphs first line to be indented except for first paragraph after a heading. Please do not use the automated ‘space after a paragraph’ or ‘space before a paragraph’ function in MSWord.
9. Font: **Times New Roman 12.**
10. **Page numbers:** are also **TNR 12** font and centred in the **footer** section of each page.
11. **Spelling:** Please make use (choose this as your default option) of the UK spellcheck and NOT the USA one. For example replace the ‘z’ in organization (US spelling) with an ‘s’ = organisation (UK spelling).
12. **Use of quotes and italics:** Long quotes are placed in a separate paragraph and must be indented from both sides

## **1.14 FORMAT OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation was prepared in article format in accordance to the 2018 General Academic Rules (A4.1.1.1.4 and A4.4.2.9) of North-West University and was divided in the following sections:

Section 1: Background and orientation

Section 2: Manuscript in article format

Section 3: Conclusion, limitations, recommendations, policy brief and reflection.

Appendices

Consolidated reference list

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## **SECTION 2: MANUSCRIPT OF JOURNAL ARTICLE**

### **PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL CODE FOR FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA: A RAPID REVIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The social work profession is guided and regulated by various codes of professional conduct or ethics, worldwide. With the development of various fields of specialization like forensic social work, unique ethical codes for such fields were also developed. One example is the code of ethics for forensic social work developed by the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) in 1987 for use in social work practice in the United States of America.*

*In South Africa, forensic social work only became a registered field of specialization during 2017, but a code of ethics to guide conduct in this field is yet to be developed. Currently, there is a generic code of professional conduct applicable to all social workers in South Africa, but it lacks a uniquely defined ethical code directed at forensic social workers similar to that of the NOFSW.*

*This study<sup>1</sup> used a rapid review methodology to identify principles to consider when developing an ethical code / code of professional conduct for forensic social work in South Africa. The results and recommendations of this study can be used by policy makers and key role players in the field of forensic social work in South Africa to inform and guide such an ethical code. [204 words].*

## **KEYWORDS**

Forensic social work; forensic practice; ethical dilemma; code of ethics; professional code of ethics; ethical principle(s); policy maker(s); rapid review

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Ethical principles and professional codes of conducts regulate various professions around the world. The largest social work organizational member body, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) developed the first international ethical code for social workers (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). It was the seminal work of Muriel Pumphrey, which greatly influenced policy makers and key role players from 1959 onwards to continuously consider educating registrants concerning ethics (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). Pumphrey's initial work was confirmed by a publication in 2002 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) that listed more than 260 references on the importance of values and ethics in social work practice (Black, Congress, & Strom-Gottfried, 2002). For the purpose of this study, an ethical code refers to a written, apparent, explicit document that consists of principled standards used by professionals to accompany behaviour (Gils, 2003). The term, *ethics*, is defined as “a set of standards for behaviour that helps us decide how we ought to act in a range of situations. In a sense, we can say that ethics is all about making choices, and about providing reasons why we should make these choices” (Brown University, 2015).

With the development of a number of specialisation fields in social work, unique ethical codes for such fields were also produced. One such unique ethical code was developed by the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) in 1987 (Butters & Vaughan-Eden, 2011; NOFSW, 1987). Currently there is a generic ethical code applicable to all social workers in South Africa (SACSSP, 2006). However, there is a lack of support for an ethical code directed at forensic social workers. The scope of practice of forensic social work is highly specialized and obliged to meet an immense ethical standard (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). Appropriate consideration is necessary when confronted with matters like role description (Liebenberg, Simeon, & Herbst, 2015, p. 137 – 147) confidentiality (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006) and what is the intended goal for the forensic interview. An understanding of legal requirements, adherence to an ethical code and forensic protocols can be used as confirmation of one's professional responsibility to an acceptable type of service delivery like expert testimony in criminal court (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006).

According to Kaliski (2006) and Swanepoel (2010), an unquestioned forensic professional should at least have attended a basic training program and preferably a postgraduate course, focusing on forensic investigation. Not all professionals working with child sexual abuse cases can give a proficient testimony or engage in the forensic investigation (Liebenberg et al., 2015). Therefore, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and the Department of Social Development (DSD) necessitated a thorough exploration of the feasibility of registering forensic social work as a specialty field in social work (SACSSP, 2003a, SACSSP, 2003b). On 14 July 2017 the SACSSP declared that the preliminary regulations for specialization, as published on 14 October 2016, had been authorized by the Minister of Social Development, the Honorable Bathabile Dlamini, as published on 1 September 2017 (SACSSP, 2017). Forensic social work is since then a specialized field of expertise in South Africa. Even though the criteria for registration are still pending, this is a considerable opportunity for South Africa to compete with international standards, including the development of an appropriated code of ethics to guide this field.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overarching aim of this study was to review available literature by means of a rapid review on topics related to ethical principles and dilemmas in the field of forensic social work to provide information and guidelines to policy makers and key stakeholders for use in the

development of an ethical code unique to forensic social work in South Africa. This aim resulted in the following more specific objectives:

To combine applicable evidence on the need and rationale for an ethical code unique to forensic social work and to combine applicable evidence from existing ethical codes for forensic social workers implemented internationally.

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed a rapid review methodology as described by Ganann, Ciliska and Thomas (2010) as a type of literature review following steps and methods to accelerate or streamline traditional systematic reviews to fill research gaps required by users such as policy makers in a shorter period of time. MRes and Kleijnen (2012) and Tricco, Antony, Zarin, Strifler, Ghassemi, Ivory, Perrier, Hutton, Moher and Straus (2015) advised that this is the most suitable method to obtain knowledge in a shorter period of time as it offers a structure of confirmation synthesis that could present more sensible information rivaled with standard systematic reviews (Ganann et al., 2010). Since the development of a unique code of ethics for forensic social work in South Africa became a critical priority following the accreditation of a field of specialization in 2017, a rapid review was selected as the most suitable way to critically review and synthesize available information relevant to ethical principles in forensic social work.

### Search strategy

The researcher conducted a scoping search on the library catalogue of the institution's online library (OneSearch portal) on the 20 October 2017. The OneSearch portal browses 252 databases, but for purposes of this study the following databases were searched and utilized in this rapid review: **eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Academic Search Premier and CINAHL with Full Text**. These databases rendered the most accurate results with regards to Psychosocial Behavioral Sciences. The purpose of the scoping search was to administer an outline of available literature on the particular research topic. By conducting a scoping search the researcher obtained a better understanding of the review topic and managed to clarify the review question. An experienced librarian assisted the researcher with the scoping review and identification of relevant keywords to be used in the refinement of the literature search. Boolean operators assisted the researcher during the scoping search to narrow down specific literature which included specific keywords related to this study. The search strategy followed is summarized in figure 1.

(((("forensic social work" OR "forensic practice+") AND ("ethical dilemmas+" OR ethic+ OR ethical principle+")))) AND "policy maker"
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*\*Figure 1 Search Strategy*

### Selection of studies

The researcher individually secluded titles and abstracts opposed to the inclusion criteria. Thenceforth, a screening of full text was done to conclude whether articles were deemed acceptable and suitable for this rapid review. The researcher manually recaptured the reference lists of all articles retrieved according to the search strategy and inclusion criteria. The aforementioned assisted the researcher to access suitable primary resources which might

have been excluded during electronic searches. Some articles were printed and searched by hand against the inclusion criteria to determine their eligibility. When some full text articles were not made available, the researcher established contact with the library assistant and research supervisors. In cases where an article could still not be retrieved the author of such article was contacted directly. If the author did not respond in a certain timeframe the article was excluded from the study.

### **Quality review and data extraction**

The researcher made use of the quality appraisal for qualitative studies with the assistance of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP Qualitative Checklist, 2017) included as Appendix 1 (Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen & Antes, 2003). After identifying the relevant studies, the researcher examined the quality of each article. Methodological quality appraisal for qualitative studies was done with the assistance of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP Qualitative Checklist, 2017) (Khan et al., 2003). The researcher also used the adapted Cochrane Collaboration's risk of bias tool (Cochrane Collaboration, 2006) to evaluate the risk of bias (Appendix 2).

### **Data analysis and data synthesis**

The researcher re-examined all the articles several times to examine and select the utmost essential and applicable information relevant to the study. The extraction form assisted the researcher to extract the applicable data from the articles after which a thematic synthesis was conducted by clustering of themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008) against the backdrop of the theoretical framework. Qualitative synthesis is a subjective and transparent process (Bearman & Dawson, 2013) that expresses themes between different contexts. The expertise of the researcher is vital in confirming whether understanding had been gained between contexts as suggested by Thomas and Harden (2008). The researcher attempted to reserve the study's context by providing comprehensive and structured summaries of each included article with details on the aims, methods and methodological quality, setting and, sample within the data-extraction table.

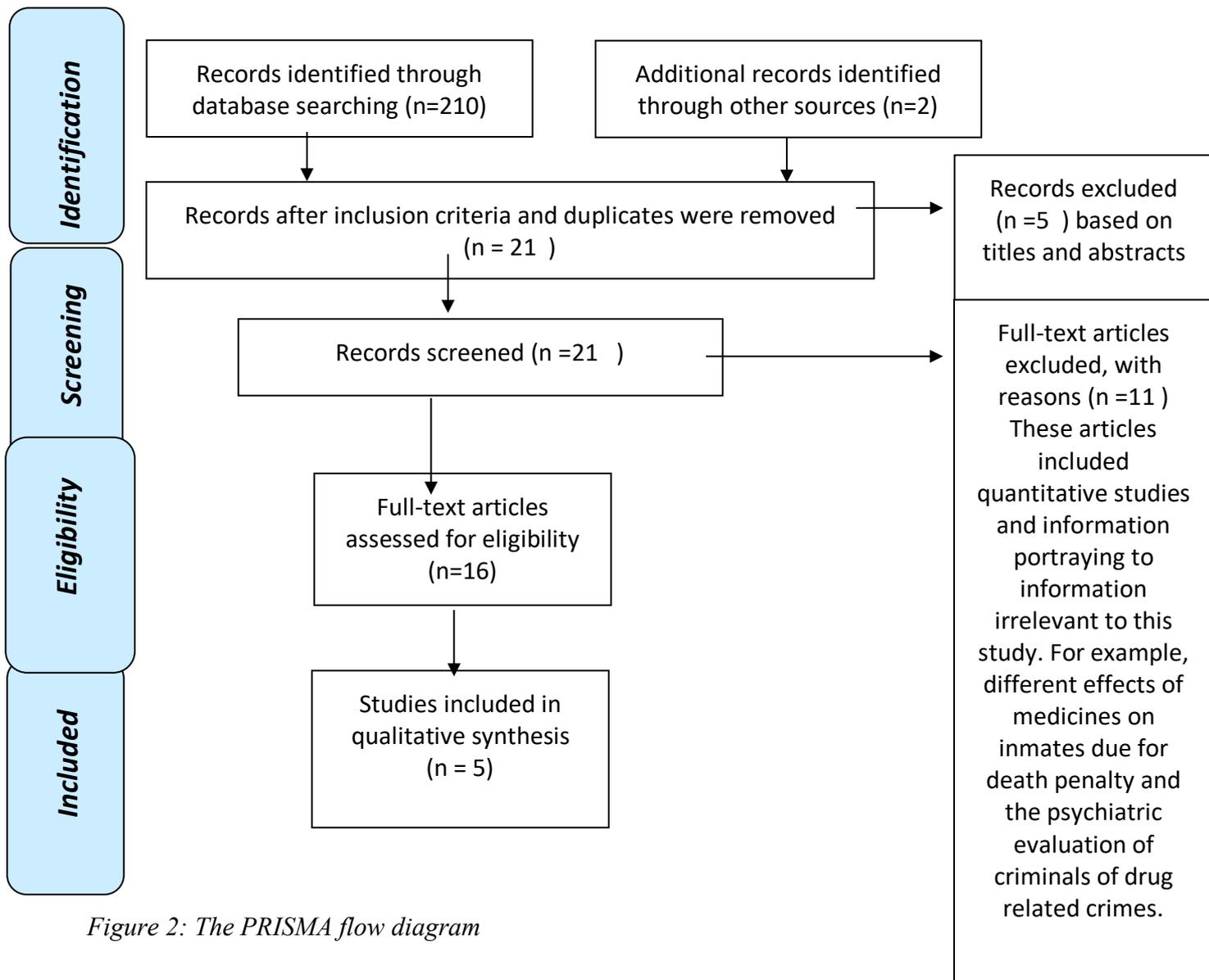


Figure 2: The PRISMA flow diagram

With reference to Figure 2, five articles met the inclusion criteria discussed in the previous section. This inclusion criterion is a fundamental part of the rapid review. The researcher started the search with 210 possible search results. These search results were refined by applying the Boolean operators and electronically excluding the documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thereafter the researcher manually screened the titles and abstracts of 21 articles. Five of these articles were excluded based on irrelevant information not contributing to this rapid review. A further 16 articles remained and 11 articles were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. The researcher did not include quantitative studies but only focussed on qualitative studies indicated in the SPICE criteria.

These articles included quantitative studies and information portraying to information irrelevant to this study. For example, different effects of medicines on inmates due for death penalty and the psychiatric evaluation of criminals of drug related crimes. The remaining five documents were analysed and valuable information was extracted that could contribute to answering the review question.

## Demographic characteristics of included studies

Author	Title of article	Journal	Country	Group status
1. <b>Buchanan &amp; Rodger (2017)</b>	Defining Social work within Holistic Public Defense: Challenges and Implications for Practice	Social Work Volume 62, Number 4	USA	American
2. <b>Brownell &amp; Roberst (2002)</b>	A Century of Social Work in Criminal Justice and Correctional Settings	Journal of offender Rehabilitation	USA	American
3. <b>Sinclair (2002)</b>	Sam Peckinpah's Forensic social work blues: will the tin star keep shining?	The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry Volume 13 No3	UK	British
4. <b>Sheenan (2012)</b>	Forensic Social Work: A distinctive framework for Intervention	Social Work in Mental Health	Australia	Australian
5. <b>Roberts &amp; Brownell (1999)</b>	A Century of Forensic Social Work: Bridging the Past to the Present	National Association of Social Workers Inc.	USA	American

*Table 1: Demographic characteristics of included studies*

Table 1 offers a summary of the demographic characteristics of each article obtained during the search process. According to Table 1 relevant information about forensic social work and the extensive professional service delivery was discussed from five different viewpoints. These articles included information from countries such as the United States of America (USA), Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). The articles have been written in different decades starting at 1999 then jumping to 2002, 2012 and finally 2017. Although these articles were produced over a period of almost 20 years, the core information and themes portrayed in these articles resulted in the following conclusions: forensic social work is a highly specialised field of service delivery that is fast growing and responsive to the needs of society.

## Assessment of methodological quality

The Cochrane Collaboration guidance initiative accentuated a deviation from uncompromising check-lists in relation to an approach concentrating more on methodological characteristics custom-fit to the review subject matter and includes abstract analysis made by the researchers involved (Katikireddi, Egan, & Petticrew, 2015).

The researcher evaluated suitable and acceptable articles that assisted with discussing and answering the review question, as proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008), instead of relying and concentrating on the methodology solely. The researcher critically appraised the suitable articles that were included in this study. Applicable methodological appraisal lists were used for this step. After a second and third reviewer was consulted the Cochrane Collaboration risk of bias tool was adapted for qualitative studies (Rajendran, 2001). Table 2 encapsulates the diverse facets regarding the methodological quality of the enclosed articles.

	<b>Brownell &amp; Roberts 1999 (Article 1)</b>	<b>Brownell &amp; Roberts 2002 (Article 2)</b>	<b>Sinclair 2002 (Article 3)</b>	<b>Sheenan 2012 (Article 4)</b>	<b>Buchanan &amp; Rodger 2017 (Article 5)</b>
<b>Researcher Bias</b>	?	+	?	+	+
<b>Outcome Bias</b>	+	?	-	+	+
<b>Selective Reporting</b>	-	?	?	+	?
<b>Country specific Bias</b>	+	-	+	-	-
<b>Other Bias</b>	-	+	+	+	?

Table 2: Adapted Cochrane Collaboration Risk of Bias Tool

The following key is applicable to the contents of table 2:

<b>Risk factor</b>	<b>Key indication</b>
<i>Low risk</i>	-
<i>High risk</i>	+
<i>Bias unknown</i>	?

The researcher made use of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool to assist with the appraisal and evaluation of the included qualitative studies (CASP, 2006; Brownlee, Rawana, Franks, Harper, Bajwa, O'Brien & Clarkson, 2013).

The CASP tool helped the researcher determine and categorize the articles findings as deemed low, medium or good evidence (CASP, 2006). The articles were then appraised according to the Cochrane Collaboration Risk of Bias tool, which was adapted by the researcher for qualitative studies. No particular scores (percentages/averages) had been allocated to these studies as accomplished in the mentioned Risk of Bias tool, because of the inclusion of qualitative data.

The first article was deemed somewhat biased since the article was centered around the 100<sup>th</sup> year service delivery of social workers, celebration and the whole article was designed around this theme (Brownell & Roberts 1999). However the contents of this article were still deemed appropriate since the resources quoted was in accordance to what the author was writing about. The article, even though written in 1999, had similar predictions and recommendations to the other four articles cited in this review.

The second article, written by the same authors of article one, is deemed less bias than article one. Article two may be more country biased by mostly focussing on social workers from the United States (Brownell & Roberts, 2002). Since the USA is the leading country of social work and, especially forensic social work, the researcher included this article as South Africa can learn valuable lessons from the USA's service delivery system and ethical code for forensic social work.

Article three (Sinclair 2002) was screened as a low level of bias in spite of elements of selective reporting. The article contained valuable information that contributed to the review

question of this study. Article four was deemed low biased when it was screened according to the Cochrane Collaboration Risk of Bias tool (Sheenan, 2012). This article referred to a qualitative study exploring the opinions of a group of forensic social workers about their profession. The findings of this study were found to be in accordance with other resources and showed clear links with the other four articles retrieved from this review.

The last article that was screened for bias was the most recent, dated 2017. This article's main focus was also aimed at the USA, but contained valuable information for developing countries like South Africa (Buchanan & Rodger 2017). This article suggested clear definitions of forensic social work and legislation to guide these professionals.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Author	<b>Brownell &amp; Roberts 1999</b>	<b>Brownell &amp; Roberts 2002</b>	<b>Sinclair 2002</b>	<b>Sheenan 2012</b>	<b>Buchanan &amp; Rodger 2017</b>
Article heading	A Century of Forensic Social Work: Bridging the Past to the Present	Century of Social Work in Criminal Justice and Correctional Settings	Sam Peckinpah's forensic social work blues: will the tin star keep shining?	Forensic Social Work: A Distinctive Framework for Intervention	Defining Social work within Holistic Public Defense: Challenges and Implications for Practice
Published	Published in Social work 44(4):359-69 August 1999	Journal of Offender Rehabilitation Volume:35 Issue:2 Dated:2002	The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry Volume 13, 2002 - <u>Issue 3</u>	Social Work in Mental Health Volume 10, 2012 - Issue 5	Social Work, Volume 62, Issue 4, 1 October 2017
Author conclusion/ summary of article	This article was written in celebration of 100 years of commitment and social service delivery. The Authors concluded that social work and especially forensic social work is a field that needs expert knowledge and skills. They also concluded that the face of social work is changing and that more forensic social workers will be needed for service delivery if drug and violence statistic rises.	The authors of this article examined the history of social work and the professional aspects linked to this service delivery (refer to article dated 1999). They concluded that over the past decades social work service deliver has improved significantly. Progress was made by advocating and educating individuals and groups in the	This article that was published in the Journal of Forensic Psychiatry states that the generic social work service delivery is constantly changing. There are new methods, techniques and technology. Social workers should constantly improve their skills and knowledge framework to adapt to the	In this article (A PHD paper) the author referred to the perceptions of social workers and the way they see their profession. The article further explain that most social workers agree that working in the criminal and justice system needed additional knowledge not only about social work and social functioning but also	In this article the authors stated that social work is constantly growing and changing as the time and eras change. The article focuses on the demand for better definitions of forensic social work, the role of a forensic social worker and the key responsibilities. The authors then also commented on a holistic model of service delivery as seen in the criminal defence system and how social workers and especially forensic social workers should be included in this model. The authors concluded that professionals like forensic social workers should

	<p>This article was written in 1999 and in this era the authors suggested a type of legislation to guide professionals working in criminal courts and the legal arena. The authors then further concluded that more attention should also be paid to upholding core values and principles when working with vulnerable groups including inmates and persons imprisoned for crimes.</p>	<p>correctional and criminal system (offenders). The article further explains that social workers and the professional field of service delivery have improved over the decades by providing the registration for a specialised field like forensic social work. Social workers now have the ability to work together with the legal system (lawyers, advocates, police officers, court personnel) and give an expert opinion within the legal system. The authors then further conclude that forensic social workers are fighting for the rights of vulnerable groups while forensic social workers are the group of professionals that are the most disenfranchised. In a nutshell forensic social</p>	<p>changing world and service delivery area. The author concluded that forensic social work is one of the expertise fields within social work that should preserve “what is good”. The author continues to write in the conclusion that it is impossible to predict the face of forensic social work for the future but by preserving what is deemed “good”, like values and principles, the forensic social work field could improve even more.</p>	<p>the legal arena. Therefore, knowledge about mental health, welfare and the judicial system is needed to render services to children, families and individuals involved with the criminal law.</p>	<p>clearly demonstrate to key role players and policy makers the importance of defining a clear and understandable definition of the service delivery field, the roles and empirical research. Therefore, forensic social workers should emphasise the value of a holistic representation shift, for example within an ethical code, to law makers and policy developers.</p>
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		worker should have more “protection” against their own system.			
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*Table 4: Main findings of the study*

## Discussion

This rapid review intended to review literature that includes ethical principles made by professionals in the field of forensic social work. The overall goal of this review was to combine applicable evidence on the need and rationale for an ethical code unique to forensic social work and to combine applicable evidence from existing ethical codes for forensic social workers implemented internationally.

As summarized in table 4, the results of this rapid review confirmed that professional researchers already acknowledged forensic social work as an expert field of service delivery more than 30 years ago. It was further highlighted that the face of social work is constantly changing and that professionals need to stay updated with international standards of service, delivery and engage in continuous personal in professional development (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). Social work and, especially forensic social work, are acknowledged as professions requiring expert knowledge and skills to render sufficient services to a client system often characterised by high levels of vulnerability. It was already predicted in 1999 that the demand for forensic social workers will increase globally (Brownell & Roberts 1999). Since 1999 there was indeed significant development in the field of forensic social work around the world (Brownell and Roberts, 2002). Sinclair (2002) endorsed this argument by mentioning that generic social work service delivery is dynamic and constantly changing. As new methods, techniques and technology develop, social workers need to improve their skills and knowledge framework to adapt to the changing world and practice requirements. The mentioned dynamics resulted in a higher demand for specialised services such as forensic social work and adoption work (Buchanan & Rodger, 2017). The South African social work landscape followed similar trends resulting in declaring forensic social work as specialised field of service delivery in 2017. The mentioned developments also included the establishment of codes of ethics to guide professionals working in criminal courts and the legal arena.

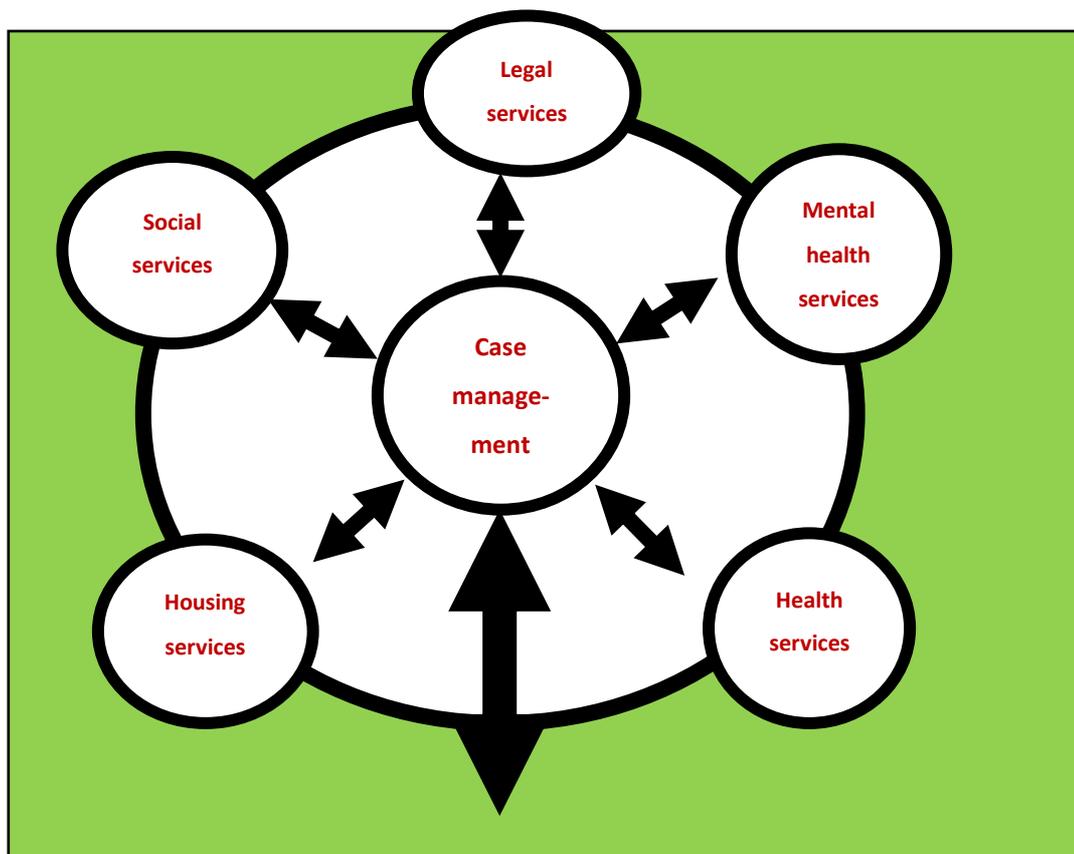
Developments in forensic social work and especially the forensic social work field were characterised by advocating and educating individuals and groups in the correctional and criminal system on the role of the forensic social worker (Brownell & Roberts, 2002). Inmates and professionals involved in the criminal system received education and emphasis was placed on advocacy and promoting social justice in society at large. It can be deduced that forensic social work is considered an acknowledged and essential field of specialisation where social workers collaborate with lawyers, advocates, police officers and court personnel as member of the multi-professional team. Forensic social workers engage in activities such as forensic assessments, forensic investigations and expert testimony in the international legal arena requiring of them expert knowledge and skills.

Involvement in this field of expertise also brings along the responsibility to act ethically when rendering expert services. Existing codes of ethics mostly contain the following underlying elements and principles: specialised training in forensic social work; additional registration with a professional body and/or statutory council; acknowledging the court as the primary client for service delivery; a high sense of social justice and advocacy for vulnerable groups in society. The authors, Brownell and Roberts (2002), cautioned that while forensic social workers are fighting for the rights of vulnerable groups through their expertise to assist the court system, forensic social workers are at risk of being disenfranchised. This group of professionals require clear professional guidelines when serving the court and legal system with their expert knowledge and skills. The legal arena has a strict set of rules and regulations in which the forensic social worker is required to confidently demonstrate expertise in terms of social work service delivery while contributing towards the court system.

Direct participation in the legal system may leave the forensic social worker more vulnerable and open for legal complications and ethical dilemmas. An ethical code directed at the principles and practices underlying forensic social work are essential for the protection of the client system, ensuring high levels of professionalism in service delivery and setting a universal standard of service. Sinclair (2002) emphasises forensic social work is one of the fields of expertise in social work that should preserve *what is good and fair*. Values such as social justice, respect, responsibility, integrity can be considered some of the relevant values and principles that should guide forensic social work (Sinclair 2002).

Sheenan (2012) agrees with both Sinclair (2002) and Brownell and Roberts (2002), while exploring and describing the opinions provided by social workers about the forensic social work field. In this study it was established that social workers in the criminal and justice system must have a very wide generic knowledge base of social work and human social functioning coupled with additional knowledge of and experience in the legal arena. The conclusion was that forensic social workers should have specific knowledge of mental health, human development and the broader welfare and the judicial systems to enable them to render professional services to children, families and individuals affected by criminal law.

The primary conclusions in the work of Buchanan and Rodger (2017) firstly speak to a clear, universal definition for forensic social work, proper guidelines to clarify the role of forensic social worker and a clearly stated scope of practice. Secondly, this study highlighted the importance of a holistic model of service delivery (see figure 3) in the criminal defence system in which the forensic social worker should be acknowledged and included as key role player.



### Service user outcomes

Figure 3: The holistic model of service delivery

Integrated service delivery indicates a number of different professions working jointly to collaborate and plan their support services and interventions rendered to clients. The focus of a holistic model is usually aimed at complex needs of clients requiring diverse professional services. Usually such clients are in need of a specific system consisting of different fields of expertise and in which different disciplines collaborate in a team to coordinate and provide holistic and optimal solutions to complex clients' needs and challenges. The ultimate goal of integrated service delivery approaches is to enhance and improve client outcomes. Different methods will be used to improve each client's situation as each client may have different needs and circumstances. It is therefore recommended that ethical codes for forensic social work should outline holistic service delivery while giving direction and support to principles and values such as teamwork, respect for different professions, clearly defined scopes of practice and accountability.

### **Conclusions related to ethical principles relevant to the development of an ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa**

During the completion of the study the researcher, besides continuously asking the research question, *What are the ethical principles to consider?*, kept on asking if an ethical code was indeed needed. Some research, as stated earlier, suggested that researchers and critics have identified a number of restrictions related to ethical codes and reported that professionals do not always adhere to such codes due to a matter of choice on the one hand, or a matter of ignorance on the other (Dienhart, 1995; Morin, 2005; Schwitzgebel, 2009).

According to Spielthener (2015) there is a further risk that "codes oversimplify moral thinking". Even though ethics are profoundly essential in service delivery (Gaughwin, 2004), Bloch, Chodoff and Green already indicated in 1999 that there is no effortless solution for ethical issues. Further it is important to point out that not all ethical issues can be "solved" since unchangeable rules and guidelines are simply not accessible (Bloch, Chadoff, & Green, 1999). However, after reviewing the extracted articles as described in the main discussion, it can be concluded that adhering to an ethical code has more advantages than disadvantages and can supplement a professional with rendering a more conclusive service (Brownell & Roberts, 1999/2002; Sinclair, 2002; Sheenan, 2012; Buchanan & Rodger, 2017). Additionally, Van der Walt (2003) states that a code unique to forensic social workers in South Africa is essential and the development of such a code is long overdue (Robbins, Vaughan-Eden, & Maschi, 2015).

Other authors such as Sen, Gordon, Adshead, and Irons (2007) put the development of such an ethical code forward as an urgent matter for forensic social work. It is evident that the development of an ethical code will be in the mutual interest of many professions and service recipients (Spielthener, 2015). An ethical code specific to forensic social workers in South Africa would not only guide the forensic investigation during ethical dilemmas, but also create a sense of universal unity. Forensic social work practice in South Africa will then be aligned with international standards. Although there are a variety of fragmented rules and regulations applicable to forensic social workers in South Africa, the research gap that this study attempted to fill was to identify specific principles to consider when a formal ethical code for forensic social work in South Africa is developed. Butters and Vaughan-Eden (2011) are of opinion that forensic social workers are in need of a more appropriate and defined protocol in addition to the functioning ethical codes such as those of the SACSSP and the NASW.

Australia and the United States of America, which are classified as first world countries, successfully implemented a code unique to forensic social work that received high status (Butters & Vaughan-Eden, 2011). The most prominent and respected international ethical code, guiding forensic social workers, remains the code of the NOSWF (1987). South African policy

makers and the South African Council for Social Service Professions will be able to draw valuable guidelines from this code. Since forensic social work is highly specialised and compelled to meet an immense ethical standard (Kalmbach & Lyons 2006) the researcher would like to provide the following principles gathered from the findings of this study that could assist in developing an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa:

- Generic social work in South Africa have similarities with forensic social work, but as a speciality, additional ethical guidelines will be required and a clear scope of practice and role clarification are essential principles to consider in the formulation of such a code of ethics. Primary and continuous training and professional development activities on ethics should be non-negotiable (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006).
- Forensic social workers should hold a primary Bachelor degree in social work after which a post graduate course, focusing on forensic investigations and practice, should be completed at an accredited academic institution (Liebenberg et al., 2015). A master's degree should be regarded as the standard entry level for rendering forensic social work services. It could be considered unethical to practise forensic social work without the needed additional training and experience or without a validated graduation from a postgraduate degree or equivalent training. This can prevent “unauthorized and unqualified professionals from doing more harm than good” (SACSSP, 2006).
- The scope of practice in forensic social work differs from generic social work and should be taken in consideration when an ethical code is developed (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). A generic social worker does not have the ability or skills to perform a forensic investigation and should be liable for disciplinary actions should he/she conducts forensic social work investigation without registration / licensing to do so.
- Role description in forensic social work should be clearly communicated and understood by forensic social workers and any other social service professionals. A forensic social worker should not take on the role as forensic investigator while continuing in a therapeutically role with the same individual/family. It is recommended that a forensic social worker should exclusively render the services associated with the forensic social work field of expertise (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). Other matters related to role description and clarification refer to the role of the forensic social worker in court, the role of the court, the role of the law and the role of the child witness.
- In general, social service delivery refers to the client as the person/family receiving a service, while the client in forensic social work the client will always be the court. Even though the third parties such as lawyers, schools, the police and family members are consulted during forensic investigations, they are not considered the clients of the forensic social worker. The forensic social worker should refrain from building meaningful relationships with individuals involved in investigations to avoid being biased in court.
- Another principle to consider when developing an ethical code is most certainty confidentiality. Since information extracted and collected during the investigation

should always be managed and processed with the utmost respect and professionalism, it can only be regarded as confidential information up until a certain point. Since the information collected during the forensic investigation is for the purpose of the court proceedings confidentiality is limited (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). A forensic social worker who adheres to full confidentiality may withhold important information from the court that could assist with successful prosecution and should be regarded as unethical in the field of forensic social work.

- An understanding of the law, legal systems and processes should also be included in code of ethics for forensic social work in South Africa. Since forensic social work is based in the legal arena the forensic social worker should adhere to applicable legal requirements as set out by the jurisdiction of every service delivery area (Kaliski, 2006; Kalmbach & Lyons 2006; Swanepoel, 2010).
- The concept of forensic social work and forensic investigation (within the social work arena) could be governed by the following:
  1. Referral, preferably from either the court or third party like an attorney's office.
  2. Forensic investigation
  3. Forensic report
  4. Expert testimony in court

It should preferably be regarded as unethical to render a forensic investigation without providing the forensic report with the methods used and concluding statements. Furthermore, it could be regarded as unethical to provide a forensic report but with the refusal to testify in court (Liebenberg et al, 2015).

- According to the NOFSW (1987), all forensic social work practitioners should obtain written informed consent of clients when interviews are recorded for professional or educational purposes. Without the consent of the persons involved one would not only create an ethical dilemma, but a legal predicament as well. Therefore the dynamics of sexual abuse should always be taken into account, especially where intra-familial abuse took place. It may happen that a father, sexually abusing his child, would give consent to a forensic investigation. In that instance, the forensic social worker can still give the father the opportunity to voluntarily cooperate and if he refuses, obtain a court order to continue with the investigation.
- Another principle to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa is personal attitude. An ethical dilemma may develop if the interviewer's personal attitude and opinion towards a certain person or case contents are biased (Gaughwin, 2004). In addition, the cultural and social differences between the interviewer and the interviewee may lead to an ethical dilemma or create a barrier between the parties involved. This may result in bias, victimisation or the possibility of collecting faulty information. Canon 17 of the American Code of Ethics for forensic social workers specifies that a social worker (thus including a forensic social worker) is not allowed to victimise any person based on their ethnic group, system of belief, skin colour, age, sexuality, mental or physical state, political opinion, relationship, or legal prominence (NOFSW, 1987).
- The principle of supervision should also be included. For all social workers, the availability of supervision develops a deeper comprehension of the practice position and options for intervention (Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers, 2011). This assists the essential professional responsibility of social

workers while advancing the best interests of clients and guaranteeing that practice is based on recent knowledge (Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers, 2011).

- The expert witness in court should avoid giving an opinion or statement that is outside his/her expertise or scope of practice. This could compromise the authentication of information already provided to court. The NOFSW (1987) agrees with this statement in their ethical code (Canon 1) by highlighting that a forensic social worker should be in possession of an appropriate qualification. This ethical code further states that all unethical and unprofessional behaviour must be reported (Canon 11) and be referred to another professional (Canon 21) if the service delivery falls outside of the forensic social work scope of practice. Therefore, giving an opinion outside of your scope of work is regarded as unethical.

## CONCLUSION

This rapid review was directed at identifying the principles policy makers and influencers have to consider when developing an ethical code for the newly established field of forensic social work as speciality in South Africa. The aim of this study was to review literature that included information on ethical dilemmas, ethical principles and recommendations made by professionals in the field of forensic social work. Therefore the general goal of this proposed study was to provide information and guidelines to the key stakeholders to assist them in creating an ethical code which can inform, guide and enrich policy and regulations of a recently established speciality in South Africa.

From the five studies that were critically reviewed it could be concluded that 19 years ago researchers and professionals in the field of mental health and social work (including forensic social work) highlighted the importance of an ethical code to guide professionals when delivering a delicate service like forensic social work (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). The researcher can further conclude that from these articles (Brownell & Roberts, 1999; Brownell & Roberts, 2002; Sinclair, 2002; Sheenan, 2012 and Buchanan & Rodger, 2017) the authors additionally referred to the face of forensic social work evolving as the years, decades and society change. The face of social work has matured in many forms making more specialities within the field of social work available.

The generic code of ethics for all fields of social work in South Africa could be seen as a baseline of values and principles associated with the profession. Given the specific scope of practice of forensic social work, the generic code of ethics and professional conduct should be expanded to include the unique principles underlying this speciality. This is already practice in countries such as the United States of America where the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) identified the need for an ethical code for forensic social workers more than 31 years ago (Butters & Vaughan-Eden, 2011; NOFSW, 1987). Although forensic social work is fairly young in South Africa and mandatory registration as a forensic social worker is in process, many valuable lessons can be learned from the existing international codes of ethics.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

When illustrating the outcome and the analysis of this rapid review it is imperative for the reader (s) to understand that the researcher endorses some limitations and constraints that emerged during this rapid review.

Only five articles met the inclusion criteria of this review. The researcher started the search with 210 possible search results. These search results were refined by applying the Boolean operators and electronically excluding the documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thereafter the researcher manually screened the titles and abstracts of 21 articles. Five of these articles were excluded based on irrelevant information not contributing to this rapid review. A further 16 articles remained and 11 more were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. These articles included quantitative studies and information portraying as irrelevant to this study. For example, different effects of medicines on inmates due for death penalty and the psychiatric evaluation of criminals of drug related crimes. The remaining five documents were analysed and valuable information was extracted that could contribute to answering the review question.

This rapid review had a particular target and a bounded scope only related to ethical dilemmas and ethical codes. Due to this scope of focus some articles had to be excluded from the study and can be seen as a limitation.

It is fundamental to remember that very few resources in South Africa referred to this scope of research. Therefore the researcher focused on international resources. The reader must take into account that even though no articles from South Africa were used in the reviewing phase of this study, some articles written by South African professionals were taken into account to complete the study as a whole.

The researcher acknowledges that another limitation of this study relates to cultural differences and diverse types of service delivery universally. For instance most countries defining forensic social work include service delivery to inmates, however for the South African context forensic social work only refers to forensic social work as “accurate, objective and specialized knowledge, skills, training and education” and “a specialised field of social work that focuses on the interface between the legal system and the secondary client and is characterised by the primary function of providing expert testimonies in courts of law” (SACSSP, 2017). Therefore conducting specialised investigations with the possible victim, family members and limited contact with the alleged perpetrator form part of investigations only and do not include any other interventions. Furthermore, with the investigation a written report should be completed and finalised with an expert testimony in court. In other countries the scope of practice includes interventions with inmates after conviction. Therefore some information may be lost due to this limitation in scope of practice.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings and conclusion from this rapid review are valuable and essential for forensic social workers internationally, forensic social workers in South Africa, the South African Council for Social Service Professionals and any other role players including, but not limited to, policy makers, policy influencers and decision makers within the field of social work in South Africa. The aforementioned people and future researchers should take into consideration the essential need for an ethical code when establishing a specialty field in social work like forensic social work.

The generic social work ethical code could serve forensic social workers in South Africa up until a specific point and thereafter specialized guidelines are needed to assist the professional to deliver a service that is of specialised nature. The researcher also acknowledges that the international ethical code implemented by National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) would greatly assist a forensic social worker in South Africa but due to some cultural and service delivery differences it is still recommended that a unique code for forensic social workers in South Africa be implemented to ensure the best possible service delivery.

Due to the limitations of this study it is essential for more research with different aims within the scope of forensic social work can contribute to more accurate findings, better understanding of the problem and more recommendations for improvements. Further research could also compliment this review by highlighting the critical need for an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa.

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## APPENDIX 1: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP Qualitative Checklist)



### 10 questions to help you make sense of qualitative research

#### How to use this appraisal tool

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a qualitative study:

- Are the results of the study valid? (Section A)
- What are the results? (Section B)
- Will the results help locally? (Section C)

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions.

There is some degree of overlap between the questions, you are asked to record a “yes”, “no” or “can’t tell” to most of the questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. Record your reasons for your answers in the spaces provided.

These checklists were designed to be used as educational pedagogic tools, as part of a workshop setting, therefore we do not suggest a scoring system. The core CASP checklists (randomised controlled trial & systematic review) were based on JAMA ‘Users’ guides to the medical literature 1994 (adapted from Guyatt GH, Sackett DL, and Cook DJ), and piloted with health care practitioners.

For each new checklist a group of experts were assembled to develop and pilot the checklist and the workshop format with which it would be used. Over the years overall adjustments have been made to the format, but a recent survey of checklist users reiterated that the basic format continues to be useful and appropriate.

**Referencing:** we recommend using the Harvard style citation, i.e.:

**Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2017). CASP (insert name of checklist i.e. Qualitative Research) Checklist. [online] Available at: URL. Accessed: Date Accessed.**

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## APPENDIX 2: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP Qualitative Checklist)

### Appendix F. Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool

Use the modified Cochrane Collaboration tool to assess risk of bias for randomized controlled trials. Bias is assessed as a judgment (high, low, or unclear) for individual elements from five domains (selection, performance, attrition, reporting, and other).

#### AUB KQ1 Risk of Bias Assessment (Reference ID # )

Domain	Description	High Risk of Bias	Low Risk of Bias	Unclear Risk of Bias	Reviewer Assessment	Reviewer Comments
<i>Selection bias Random sequence generation</i>	Described the method used to generate the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to allow an assessment of whether it should produce comparable groups	Selection bias (biased allocation to interventions) due to inadequate generation of a randomized sequence	Random sequence generation method should produce comparable groups	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Selection bias Allocation concealment</i>	Described the method used to conceal the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to determine whether intervention allocations could have been foreseen before or during enrollment	Selection bias (biased allocation to interventions) due to inadequate concealment of allocations prior to assignment	Intervention allocations likely could not have been foreseen in before or during enrollment	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Reporting bias Selective reporting</i>	Stated how the possibility of selective outcome reporting was examined by the authors and what was found	Reporting bias due to selective outcome reporting	Selective outcome reporting bias not detected	Insufficient information to permit judgment†	High Low Unclear	
<i>Other bias Other sources of bias</i>	Any important concerns about bias not addressed above*	Bias due to problems not covered elsewhere in the table	No other bias detected	There may be a risk of bias, but there is either insufficient information to assess whether an important risk of bias exists or insufficient rationale or evidence that an identified problem will introduce bias	High Low Unclear	

\* If particular questions/entries were pre-specified in the study's protocol, responses should be provided for each question/entry.

† It is likely that the majority of studies will fall into this category.

Assess each main or class of outcomes for each of the following. Indicate the specific outcome.

**AUB KQ1 Risk of Bias Assessment (Reference ID # )**

Outcome:

Domain	Description	High Risk of Bias	Low Risk of Bias	Unclear Risk of Bias	Reviewer Assessment	Reviewer Comments
<i>Performance bias Blinding (participants and personnel)</i>	Described all measures used, if any, to blind study participants and personnel from knowledge of which intervention a participant received. Provided any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.	Performance bias due to knowledge of the allocated interventions by participants and personnel during the study.	Blinding was likely effective.	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Detection bias Blinding (outcome assessment)</i>	Described all measures used, if any, to blind outcome assessors from knowledge of which intervention a participant received. Provided any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.	Detection bias due to knowledge of the allocated interventions by outcome assessors.	Blinding was likely effective.	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Attrition bias Incomplete outcome data</i>	Described the completeness of outcome data for each main outcome, including attrition and exclusions from the analysis. Stated whether attrition and exclusions were reported, the numbers in each intervention group (compared with total randomized participants), reasons for attrition/exclusions where reported.	Attrition bias due to amount, nature or handling of incomplete outcome data.	Handling of incomplete outcome data was complete and unlikely to have produced bias	Insufficient reporting of attrition/exclusions to permit judgment (e.g., number randomized not stated, no reasons for missing data provided)	High Low Unclear	

## **SECTION 3: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, POLICY BRIEF AND REFLECTION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section of the dissertation contains critical reflections on the research process, the findings and final conclusion. It reviews the goal and objectives of the study and whether it was achieved while acknowledging the limitations experienced in this study. A policy brief aimed at the Council for Social Service Professionals recommending the ethical principles to consider in the development of an ethical code for the newly registered forensic social work speciality in South Africa. The researcher intend to accomplish last mentioned by providing combined applicable evidence where an ethical code for forensic social workers are already implemented with newly discovered information from this study.

The general goal of this rapid review is to combine applicable evidence on the need and rationale for an ethical code unique to forensic social work and to combine applicable evidence from existing ethical codes for forensic social workers implemented internationally. The combined evidence can then be utilised by policy makers and influencers to create an ethical code unique to forensic social workers in South Africa.

### **Conclusion**

This rapid review was directed to reflect the principles policy makers and influencers have to consider when developing an ethical code for a new speciality field in South Africa, like Forensic Social work. Therefore, the overall goal of this proposed study is to provide information to the key stakeholders to assist them in creating an ethical code unique to forensic social workers which can inform and enrich policy and regulations of a recently established speciality in South Africa.

During this study the Integrated Service Delivery approach indicated a number of different professions working jointly to collaborate and plan their support services and interventions rendered to clients. The focus of the holistic model is usually clients who have convoluted needs that require professional service delivered from a number of different professionals. Frequently these clients are in need of a specific system that consists of different fields of expertise and therefore forces different disciplines to work together in a team to coordinate and provide a holistic and optimal solution to the client's needs and problems. The fundamental goal of integrated service deliver approaches is to enhance and improve outcomes for the clients. Different methods will be used to improve the client's situation as each client's needs will differ from the next.

Buchanan and Rodger (2017) further explained that professionals like forensic social workers should clearly communicate to key role players and policymakers the importance of formulating a clear and understandable definition for this specialist field of service delivery field and clear role descriptions are essential.

From the five studies that were critically reviewed, it could be concluded that 19 years ago researchers and professionals in the field of mental health and social work (including forensic social work) highlighted the importance of an ethical code to guide professionals when delivering a delicate service like forensic social work (Kalmbach & Lyons, 2006). The researcher can further conclude that from these articles (Brownell & Roberts 1999, Brownell & Roberts 2002, Sinclair 2002, Sheenan 2012 and Buchanan & Rodger 2017) the authors additionally referred to the face of forensic social work evolving as society and service delivery change. The face of social work has matured in many forms making more specialities within the field of social work available.

Therefore, a generic code for all fields of social workers in South Africa could be seen as a baseline on values and principles that needed to be upheld universally. However, since the scope of practice within forensic social work differs from generic social work (in this study refers to the 4 year Bachelor degree without specialty) there are some code of conduct that needs to be followed by forensic social workers differently from that of generic social workers.

Another standard for acknowledging a need for an ethical code unique to forensic social work within South Africa is by following the example of developed countries in the world. One of these examples is the National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW). NOFSW identified the need for an ethical code for forensic social workers more than 31 years ago (Butters & Vaughan-Eden, 2011; NOFSW, 1987). Although forensic social work has been available in South Africa for many years, it has only recently received specialty status with the mandatory registration as a forensic social worker.

Therefore, the content of recommendations made both internationally and nationally, as discussed in this review, should be considered when a specialised field like forensic social work is introduced in South Africa.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

In the description and discussion of the analysis and outcomes of this rapid review it is imperative that the researcher acknowledge some limitations and constraints that emerged during this rapid review:

- Only five articles met the inclusion criteria as discussed in the previous chapter. The researcher started the search with 210 possible search results. These search results were refined by applying the Boolean operators and electronically excluding the documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thereafter the researcher manually

screened the titles and abstracts of 21 articles. Five of these articles were excluded based on irrelevant information not contributing to this rapid review. A further 16 articles remained and 11 articles were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. These articles included quantitative studies and information portraying to information irrelevant to this study. For example, different effects of medicines on inmates due for death penalty and the psychiatric evaluation of criminals of drug related crimes. The remaining 5 documents were analysed and valuable information was extracted that could contribute to answering the review question.

- This rapid review had a particular target therefore a bounded scope only related to ethical dilemmas and ethical codes. Due to this scope of focus some articles had to be excluded from the study and may only be seen as a limitation.
- It is fundamental to remember that very few resources in South Africa referred to this scope of research. Therefore the researcher focused on international resources. The reader must take into account that even though no articles from South Africa were used in the reviewing phase of this study, some articles written by South African professionals were taken into account to complete the study as a whole.
- The researcher acknowledge that another limitation to the study is due to cultural differences and different types of service delivery universally. For instance most countries defining forensic social work include service delivery to inmates, however for the South African context forensic social work only refers to a forensic social work as an “accurate, objective and specialized knowledge, skills, training and education” and “a specialised field of social work that focuses on the interface between the legal system and the secondary client and is characterised by the primary function of providing expert testimonies in courts of law” (SACSSP, 2017). Therefore conducting specialised investigations with the possible victim, family members and

the alleged perpetrator. For optimal neutrality and objectivity the investigating time spent with the alleged offender should equal the amount and energy spent with the non-offending parties. Furthermore, with the investigation, written reports should be completed and could be finalized with an expert testimony in court, however the forensic social worker is not in the position to decide if one party is guilty or innocent that is solely the role of the court . Whereas in first world countries, the scope of practice include interventions with inmates after conviction.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

During the completion of the study the researcher, besides continuously asking the research question, *What are the ethical principles to consider?*, kept on asking if an ethical code was indeed needed. However, after reviewing the extracted articles as described in the main discussion above, it could be considered that adhering to an ethical code has more advantages than disadvantages and can supplement a professional with rendering a more conclusive service (Brownell & Roberts, 1999/2002; Sinclair, 2002; Sheenan, 2012; Buchanan & Rodger 2017).

Additionally, authors like Van der Walt (2003), Sen, Gordon, Adshead, & Irons (2007), Robbins, Vaughan-Eden and Maschi (2015) and Spielthener (2015) highlighted the essential need for a forensic code unique to forensic social workers and could benefit the professional.

An ethical code detailed to forensic social workers in South Africa would not only direct the forensic investigation through ethical dilemmas, but also create a perception of universal unity. Countries like Australia and the United States have already implemented an ethical

code for forensic social workers and the results, as seen in The National Organization of Forensic Social Work (1989), have been positive.

Since a field like forensic social work is highly specialised and obliged to meet an immense ethical standard (Kalback & Lyons 2006) the researcher would like to provide the following principles from the beginnings of this study that could assist in developing an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa:

- Forensic social work is a specialty where additional ethical guidance is needed.
- Forensic social workers should attend a basic training program in social work followed by a specialised post graduate education..
- Specialised post graduate education (like a Master's degree or similar) at a licenced and registered academic institution should be encouraged.
- The scope of practice in forensic social work differs from generic social work and should be taken in consideration when an ethical code is developed
- Role description in forensic social work should be clearly communicated and understood by forensic social workers and all other social service professionals.
- In forensic social work (South Africa) the client will always be the court.
- During the forensic investigation confidentiality is limited as the outcome of such investigations will be made available for court proceedings.
- Since forensic social work service delivery is mostly in the legal arena, the forensic social worker should adhere to additional legal requirements as set out by the jurisdiction of every service delivery area.
- A written report combining the findings of the forensic investigation should be provided after the investigation is completed. The professional should also be able to testify on the information provided in the report as expert witness in a court of law.

- Written consent before starting the forensic investigation is of utmost importance.
- Supervision should be available for all forensic social workers in South Africa.

The researcher concedes that the universal ethical code implemented by National Organization of Forensic Social Work (NOFSW) would significantly support a forensic social worker in South Africa, but due to some cultural and service delivery variances it is still recommended that a unique code for forensic social workers in South Africa be instigated to ensure the best possible service delivery.

## **POLICY BRIEF**

Policy briefs are shortened written communications displaying current discoveries and forthcoming suggestions for more studies. Policy briefs are endorsed to an extensive audience as an instrument for disclosing research findings to policy and decision makers (Young & Quinn, 2007). This policy brief is aimed at the Council for Social Service Professions recommending the principles to consider in the development of an ethical code for the newly registered forensic social work speciality in South Africa. The researcher intends to accomplish the fore mentioned by providing combined applicable evidence where an ethical code for forensic social workers are already implemented with newly discovered information from this study. The general goal of this rapid review is to combine applicable evidence on the need and rationale for an ethical code unique to forensic social work and to combine applicable evidence from existing ethical codes for forensic social workers implemented internationally. The combined evidence can then be utilised by policy makers and influencers to create an ethical code unique to forensic social workers in South Africa.

The policy brief is presented on the following page.

# Policy Brief

January 2019

## Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South-Africa: a rapid review

As a profession, social work is regulated worldwide by various codes of professional conduct or ethics. The largest social work organizational member body, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) developed an international ethical code for social workers (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006).

Currently there is a generic code of conduct applicable to all social workers in South Africa (South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP), 2006), but lacks the support of an ethical code directed at forensic social workers.

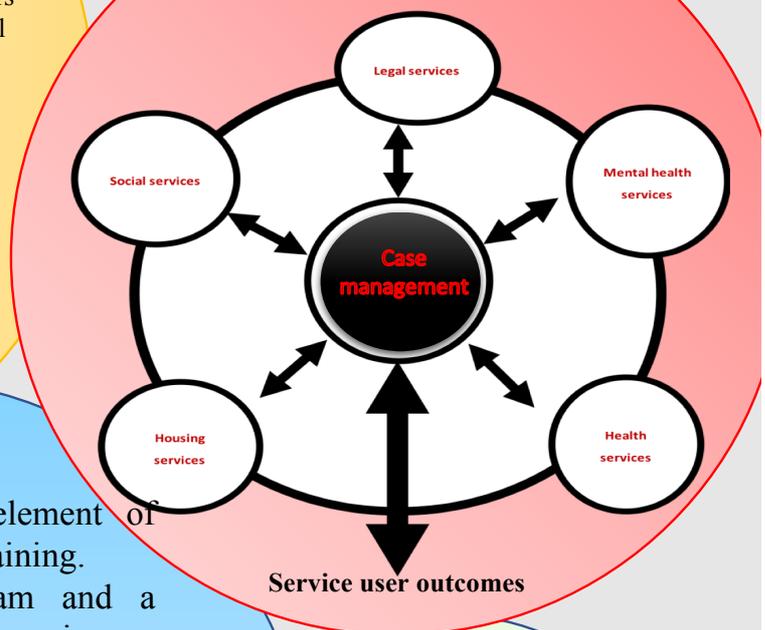
### Results:

- Ethics are the key element of forensic social work training.
- Basic training program and a postgraduate course focussing on forensic investigation
- A clear scope of practice
- Clear role description
- The client system is always the court
- Limited confidentiality
- Referral party must be clear
- Written informed consent is key
- No biased /personal attitude
- Supervising by superior
- Opinion outside of scope of practice

**“Live one day at a time emphasizing ethics rather than rules.”**

*Wayne Dyer*

### Holistic model of service delivery



### Recommendations

More research with different aims within the scope of forensic social work can contribute to more accurate findings, better understanding of the problem and more recommendations for improvements. Further research could also compliment this review by highlighting the critical need for an ethical code for forensic social workers in South Africa.

## RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL REFLECTION

*“My favorite animal is the turtle. The reason is that in order for the turtle to move, it has to stick its neck out. There are going to be times in your life when you’re going to have to stick your neck out. There will be challenges and instead of hiding in a shell, you have to go out and meet them.” – Ruth Westheimer.*

Coming to the end of my study journey, I want to take time to reflect upon my growth and learning adventure. I am appreciative of having favourable circumstances and the privilege to further my education through post graduate studies in social work with specialisation in forensic practice. During this time, I experienced extensive growth and development in both my professional and personal life.

On my path to the completion of this study I encountered several researchers, mentors and friends both, nationally and internationally who enriched my life and assisted me to complete the course work section as well as this dissertation of limited scope. It was not always an easy journey..... Frustration, fatigue, uncertainty and being extremely scared but some of the multitude of emotions I experienced. At the same time this was one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my life. The following words of Winston Churchill really kept me going: *Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.*

When I started with this journey my research competency was weak, immature and I lacked confidence and skills. Halfway during the journey I left my beloved country and moved to China. Adapting to a totally new environment further highlighted my weakness in self-control and immaturity in problem solving, but it also opened my mind to experience the world from a different perspective. I was both a post graduate student and ambassador for my country. I had to work twice as hard to stay focused to continue with this journey when all odds were against me. I had to discover my personal strengths, rebuild self-confidence and

engage in a journey of self-development while trying to enhance my research skills to the point that I felt confident and motivated enough to complete my study.

I am thankful for a variety of resources and support structures that contributed towards my growth: my supervisor, the independent reader, friends, colleagues, workshops on systematic review methodology offered by the NWU, books, journal articles and attending webinars presented by established researchers.

In spite of these resourceful encounters I still felt insecure and overwhelmed by actually completing the task at hand. I took it upon myself to pursue and to continue moving towards my goal no matter how many failures I experienced during the journey. With the assistance from my mentor and supervisors I started to develop my research proposal which assisted me to pinpoint the key elements of my study, the goals of my study and how to achieve them. It is indeed a special moment to be in right now: finalising my dissertation for examination!

## **MY LEARNING EXPERIENCE.**

I can still clearly remember the feeling I had when I decided to apply for this master's degree. My inner attitude was hopeful to be accepted but my outer attitude was more "if it happens, it happens". Maybe as a defense mechanism. However, I was in ecstasy when I received the letter of acceptance. But suddenly I felt extremely pressured.

I felt that family members, friends and colleagues were watching me with hawk eyes. They had extreme high expectations of me and the completion of my study. I must admit this made me procrastinate more than what was needed. However, I continued to stay focused on my end goal. I wanted to expand my knowledge base, I wanted to create a better life for myself.

My first class with the 9 other forensic social work students were amazing. I instantly knew that is where I belonged. I started planning my future; registering as a forensic social worker, starting my own practice, having more financial freedom and starting a family. However, a Greater Power knew I was destined for more. Instead of finishing my study in South Africa I was granted the opportunity to travel to Asia. China, Thailand, Bali, Japan. Broadening my vision on life and quite frankly, my study. I had to take another path than planned but that is exactly how it was supposed to be. Without traveling my research would probably be completed within the time frame provided however I would not have been enriched with international friends, mentors and even an editor. The experiences I had internationally contributed extremely to me completing this master's degree. Even though my timeframe was shifted and adjusted it kept me motivated and focused to continue and fight until the end.

I have no idea how I ended up here or how I even managed to come this far. Putting this study to paper was the most challenging part. Most of the time, I did not know what I was doing but I just knew I had to continue until the end product was submitted. So even though this process was a struggle of too many nights of watery eyes, plenty of coffee, too much junk food and "study music", I finally succeeded in my goal. I wanted to do a rapid review about ethics in forensic social work in South Africa and I did. Like the turtle I had many challenges along my way but I stuck out my neck and faced every single challenge in a positive attitude. This journey has changed something within me and has sparked the curiosity to never stop learning and growing.

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## *APPENDICES*

## Appendix A: Proof of language editing

Herewith I, Ruby Leslie, declare that the Masters dissertation titled, *Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South-Africa: a rapid review* was proofread and edited by I, Ruby Leslie, with all editorial work finalized on 9 March 2019.

If any questions or concerns please contact me at:

**Phone Number:** 1-(403)- 470-1290

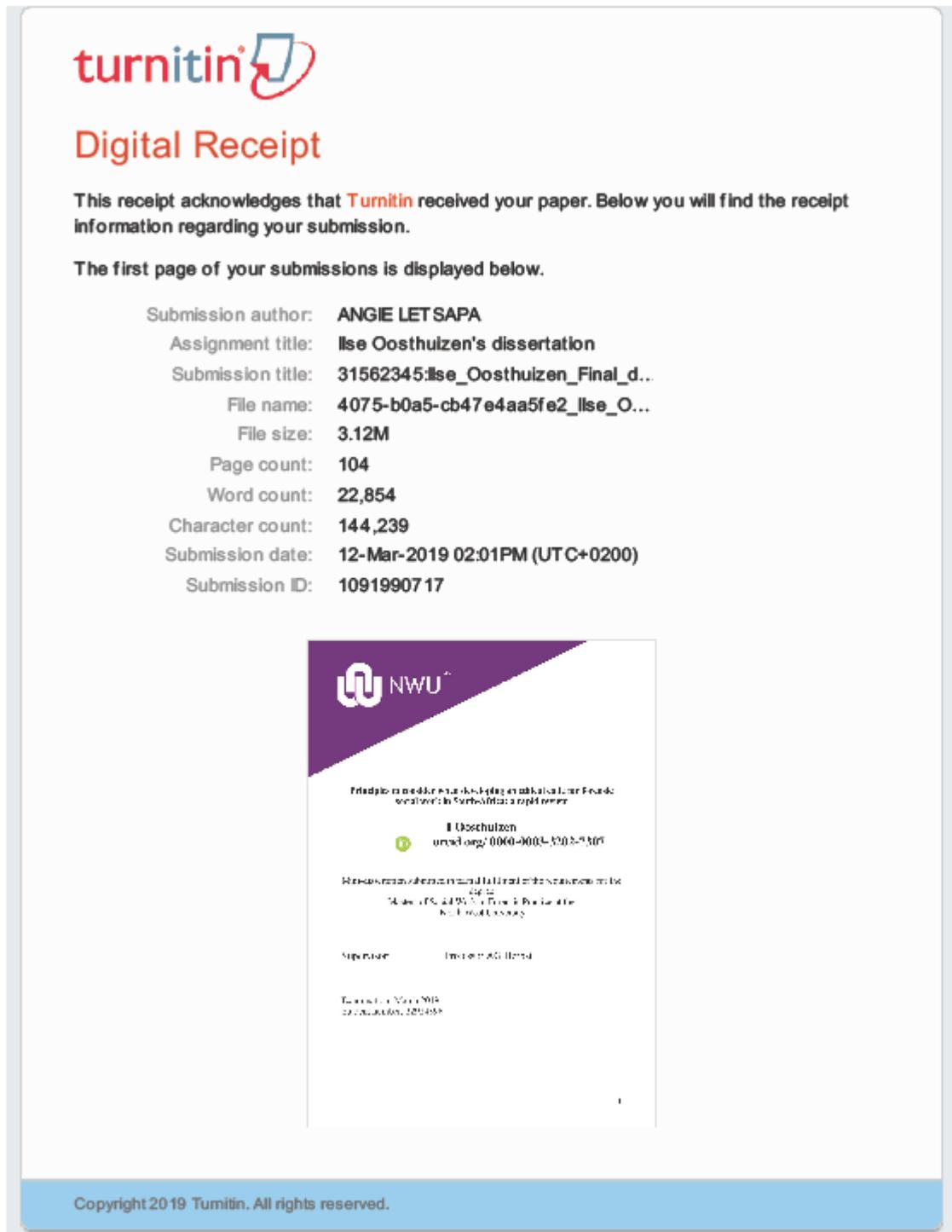
**Email:** [ruby.leslie@hotmail.com](mailto:ruby.leslie@hotmail.com)

**Signature (Printed):** Ruby Leslie

**Date of Completion:** 9 March 2019

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruby Leslie".

## Appendix B: Turnitin digital receipt



The image shows a Turnitin digital receipt for a submission. At the top left is the Turnitin logo. Below it is the title "Digital Receipt" in orange. A paragraph states: "This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission." Another paragraph says: "The first page of your submissions is displayed below." A list of submission details follows, including author name, assignment title, submission title, file name, file size, page count, word count, character count, submission date, and submission ID. Below this is a thumbnail of the first page of the submission, which is a document header for NWU. The header includes the NWU logo and name, a title in Afrikaans, a reference to a document on the NWU website, and a date of 12-Mar-2019.

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## Appendix C: Ethical approval



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Training and Support**

**Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)**  
Tel: 018-285 2291  
Email: [Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Wayne.Towers@nwu.ac.za)

3 December 2018

Dear Prof Herbst

### **APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION BY THE HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC) OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES**

**Ethics number: NWU-00110-18-S1**

Kindly use the ethics reference number provided above in all future correspondence or documents submitted to the administrative assistant of the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) secretariat.

**Study title: Principles to consider when developing an ethical code for forensic social work in South-Africa: a rapid review**

**Study leader: Prof AG Herbst**

**Student: I Oosthuizen- 22924396**

**Application type: Systematic review**

**Risk level: Minimal (monitoring report required annually)**

**Expiry date: 28 February 2020 (monitoring report is due at the end of February annually until completion)**

You are kindly informed that after review by the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, your ethics approval application has been successful and was determined to fulfil all requirements for approval. Your study is approved for a year and may commence from 03/12/2018.

Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation. A monitoring report should be submitted two months prior to the reporting dates as indicated i.e. annually for minimal risk studies, six-monthly for medium risk studies and three-monthly for high risk studies, to ensure timely renewal of the study. A final report must be provided at completion of the study or the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences must be notified if the study is temporarily suspended or terminated. The monitoring report template is obtainable from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at [Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za). Annually, a number of studies may be randomly selected for an internal audit.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences requires immediate reporting of any aspects that warrants a change of ethical approval. Any amendments, extensions or other modifications to the proposal or other associated documentation must be submitted to the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences prior to implementing these changes. These requests should be submitted to [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za) with a cover letter with a specific subject title indicating, "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". The letter should include the title of the approved study, the names of the researchers involved, the nature of the amendment/s being made (indicating what changes have been made as well as where they have been made), which documents have been attached and any further explanation to clarify the amendment request being submitted. The amendments made should be indicated in **yellow highlight** in the amended documents. The *e-mail*, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a *specific subject line* indicating that it is an amendment

request e.g. "Amendment request: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". This e-mail should indicate the nature of the amendment. This submission will be handled via the expedited process.

Any adverse/unexpected/unforeseen events or incidents must be reported on either an adverse event report form or incident report form to [Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECIncident-SAE@nwu.ac.za). The e-mail, to which you attach the documents that you send, should have a specific subject line indicating that it is a notification of a serious adverse event or incident in a specific project e.g. "SAE/Incident notification: NWU-XXXXX-XX-XX". Please note that the HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.

The HREC, Faculty of Health Sciences complies with the South African National Health Act 61 (2003), the Regulations on Research with Human Participants (2014), the Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes (2015), the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki (2013).

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support at [Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

Yours sincerely



Prof Wayne Towers  
HREC Chairperson



Prof Minrie Greeff  
Ethics Office Head

Current details: (23239522) G:\My Drive\9. Research and Postgraduate Education\9.1.5 Ethics\NWU-00110-18-S1\9.1.5.4.1\_AN\_NWU-00110-18-S1\_03-12-2018.docm  
3 December 2018

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## 10 questions to help you make sense of qualitative research

### How to use this appraisal tool

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a qualitative study:

- Are the results of the study valid? (Section A)
- What are the results? (Section B)
- Will the results help locally? (Section C)

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions.

There is some degree of overlap between the questions, you are asked to record a “yes”, “no” or “can’t tell” to most of the questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. Record your reasons for your answers in the spaces provided.

These checklists were designed to be used as educational pedagogic tools, as part of a workshop setting, therefore we do not suggest a scoring system. The core CASP checklists (randomised controlled trial & systematic review) were based on JAMA ‘Users’ guides to the medical literature 1994 (adapted from Guyatt GH, Sackett DL, and Cook DJ), and piloted with health care practitioners.

For each new checklist a group of experts were assembled to develop and pilot the checklist and the workshop format with which it would be used. Over the years overall adjustments have been made to the format, but a recent survey of checklist users reiterated that the basic format continues to be useful and appropriate.

**Referencing: we recommend using the Harvard style citation, i.e.:**

**Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2017). CASP (insert name of checklist i.e. Qualitative Research) Checklist. [online] Available at: *URL*. Accessed: *Date Accessed*.**

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## Screening Questions

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- What was the goal of the research?
- Why it was thought important?
- Its relevance

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
- Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal?

## Is it worth continuing?



Detailed questions

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher has justified the research design (E.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use?)

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected
- If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
- If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- If the setting for data collection was justified
- If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
- If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
- If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, or did they use a topic guide)?
- If methods were modified during the study, if so, has the researcher explained how and why?
- If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc)
- If the researcher has discussed saturation of data

6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?  Yes  Can't tell  No

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during
  - (a) Formulation of the research questions
  - (b) Data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
- How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design

## Appendix E: Risk of Bias tool

## Appendix F. Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool

Use the modified Cochrane Collaboration tool to assess risk of bias for randomized controlled trials. Bias is assessed as a judgment (high, low, or unclear) for individual elements from five domains (selection, performance, attrition, reporting, and other).

### AUB KQ1 Risk of Bias Assessment (Reference ID # )

Domain	Description	High Risk of Bias	Low Risk of Bias	Unclear Risk of Bias	Reviewer Assessment	Reviewer Comments
<i>Selection bias Random sequence generation</i>	Described the method used to generate the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to allow an assessment of whether it should produce comparable groups	Selection bias (biased allocation to interventions) due to inadequate generation of a randomized sequence	Random sequence generation method should produce comparable groups	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Selection bias Allocation concealment</i>	Described the method used to conceal the allocation sequence in sufficient detail to determine whether intervention allocations could have been foreseen before or during enrollment	Selection bias (biased allocation to interventions) due to inadequate concealment of allocations prior to assignment	Intervention allocations likely could not have been foreseen in before or during enrollment	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Reporting bias Selective reporting</i>	Stated how the possibility of selective outcome reporting was examined by the authors and what was found	Reporting bias due to selective outcome reporting	Selective outcome reporting bias not detected	Insufficient information to permit judgment †	High Low Unclear	
<i>Other bias Other sources of bias</i>	Any important concerns about bias not addressed above*	Bias due to problems not covered elsewhere in the table	No other bias detected	There may be a risk of bias, but there is either insufficient information to assess whether an important risk of bias exists or insufficient rationale or evidence that an identified problem will introduce bias	High Low Unclear	

\* If particular questions/entries were pre-specified in the study's protocol, responses should be provided for each question/entry.

† It is likely that the majority of studies will fall into this category.

Assess each main or class of outcomes for each of the following. Indicate the specific outcome.

**AUB KQ1 Risk of Bias Assessment (Reference ID # )**

Outcome:

Domain	Description	High Risk of Bias	Low Risk of Bias	Unclear Risk of Bias	Reviewer Assessment	Reviewer Comments
<i>Performance bias Blinding (participants and personnel)</i>	Described all measures used, if any, to blind study participants and personnel from knowledge of which intervention a participant received. Provided any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.	Performance bias due to knowledge of the allocated interventions by participants and personnel during the study.	Blinding was likely effective.	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Detection bias Blinding (outcome assessment)</i>	Described all measures used, if any, to blind outcome assessors from knowledge of which intervention a participant received. Provided any information relating to whether the intended blinding was effective.	Detection bias due to knowledge of the allocated interventions by outcome assessors.	Blinding was likely effective.	Not described in sufficient detail	High Low Unclear	
<i>Attrition bias Incomplete outcome data</i>	Described the completeness of outcome data for each main outcome, including attrition and exclusions from the analysis. Stated whether attrition and exclusions were reported, the numbers in each intervention group (compared with total randomized participants), reasons for attrition/exclusions where reported.	Attrition bias due to amount, nature or handling of incomplete outcome data.	Handling of incomplete outcome data was complete and unlikely to have produced bias	Insufficient reporting of attrition/exclusions to permit judgment (e.g., number randomized not stated, no reasons for missing data provided)	High Low Unclear	