***Question 1:*** *Discuss two different definitions of social work provided in this course and explain how they enhance your understanding of social work as a profession.*

The definition of social work as a profession is often broad and ambiguous as the practice overlaps with other academic disciplines, and the meaning will vary according to the context of the situation. As Chenoweth and McAuliffe (2017:19) suggest, social work "cannot be separated from the society in which it is located."

Howe (2014:123, 125) emphasises the dichotomous nature of social work, suggesting that the profession is a fusion of "reason and emotion, experience and experiment." This elucidates his previous statement "it is not only what you do, but also the way you do it." Social work is not defined simply as a career, but rather a developed mindset in which the theoretical skills and knowledge simply provide a framework for practice. Howe (2014:123) emphasises the importance of authenticity when developing client-relationships as each individual carries a range of factors that affect their situation and it is the practitioner’s role to "fit their practice to the subject” as "the instruments of their own practice". Thus, there is a sense of autonomy that encompasses social work, which distinguishes it from other more academic-based professions, and a critical use of self that is required in order to recognise the best way to help the client.

Chenowith and McAuliffe (2018:26) also highlights the use of one's "emotional resources" as vital to social work- that is, utilising our own existing knowledge and experiences to empathise and engage with the client, however in a professional manner so as to avoid "emotional enmeshment". The definition that Chenowith (et al., 2018:16-17) proposes is somewhat more technical, posing social work as a recognition of duty that one has to address the aspects of society that "cause or contribute to the oppression of human welfare and rights… respond, with passion and hope and care, to human need wherever and however it is manifested". Both definitions draw on the duality of social work, however the latter places specific attention on the role of social workers in society to advocate and create social change, whilst the former focuses on the individual’s ability to exercise critical judgement in their practice. Both authors describe social work as a system of values and beliefs that drives the individual to help others out of genuine care.

These definitions enhance my understanding of social work as a profession that is characterised by its core purpose and values that will both guide and be gained through practice, rather than the theories or knowledge that inform it. Therefore, social work is a focus on the means to achieve an end rather than the end itself.

***Question 2:*** *State the human service organisation you will research this term. Describe the organisation briefly, outlining the purpose and main services provided by the organisation, and the field and context of practice, citing the sources of all information*

Youth off the Streets is a non-denominational community organisation founded by Father Chris Riley in 1991 that started as a single food-delivery van in Kings Cross, Sydney for young people without homes. It has grown to become a major organisation in Australia that provides a wide range of services specifically targeted towards disadvantaged young people (12-25) who struggle with issues like abuse, homelessness or substance use (Father Riley's Story, n.d.). Their primary purpose is to provide resources that empower individuals to realise their own capabilities and take control over their own lives. This is achieved through over 35 different programs that aim to achieve long-term solutions for service users. Services utilise trauma-informed practices such as both crisis and transitional accommodation for youths who are/at risk of homelessness, drug rehabilitation and education programs, one-on-one mentoring support to improve self-esteem and build life skills, and specific cultural support services for Aboriginal youth (What We Do, n.d.).

The role that social workers play in the provision of services range widely, from individual counselling and mentoring, to family casework. One-on-one casework usually involves offering support and resources regarding issues that may affect the individual's mental and physical wellbeing, such as family relationships, drug and alcohol use, accommodation, education and legal matters (Casework, 2018). Groupwork seems to also be a prevalent method of practice in this organisation, as evident through the implementation of a variety of learning centres and outreach programs that "give young people the chance to meet youth workers" (Outreach Activities, n.d.) and also encourages the involvement of families and local communities in reconnecting with the young people.

Youth off the Streets focuses on “strength-based strategies that don’t allocate blame or see kids as the problem” (About, n.d.). Thus, social workers play an important role in not only being crisis intervenors but developing positive relationships in order to allow young people to feel safe and supported enough to achieve their goals.

***Question 3:*** *Discuss Whiteness and Decolonisation of Australian social work, outlining the impacts and implications of colonisation and discussing the concept of Whiteness. Explain why the profession needs to re-think social work in Australia*.

Aboriginal people have continuously been affected by British colonisation of Australia in 1788, as the enforcement of oppressive policies not only forcibly removed them from their land, people and ways of living, but have left a legacy of disadvantage and trauma that remains unaddressed today. Despite having occupied the land for over 50 000 years (Australian Association of Social Workers 2016:2) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up less than 3% of the population today (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016). Efforts such as Closing the Gap have been made to reduce the disadvantages Indigenous people face, however the *way* in which groups are going about it prevents further healing.

Green and Benett explain that the reason why Australian social work isn't effective in addressing the issues surrounding Aboriginal clients is because "we are working on the wrong end of the problem, rather like treating the symptoms rather than the cause" (2018:262). The problem lies within the very existence of the social work profession and its white origins. The knowledge and values base of social work is rooted in colonialism and its impact still permeates through whiteness and white fragility.

Whiteness theory in Australia refers to how Anglo-European Australians are rarely ever associated or identified according to their race and are automatically able to assume the title of 'Australian' by virtue of a structural system created by colonialism. This results in an "invisible norm" (Moreton in Walter and Baltra-Ulloa, 2019:70), where the whites automatically assume that their standards of conduct represent everyone's ideology and perceptions, and any other forms of cross-cultural knowledge are appropriated.

Social work methods surrounding cultural awareness are inherently flawed as they are "underpinned by assumptions of culture and power relations." (Walter et al., 2012:76) Cross-cultural knowledge is "one-directional", in that the whites determine exactly what learning about Indigenous people entails, particularly focusing on what they can learn instead of reflecting on why/how they are going about it. Bonilla-Silva refers to this as "colour blind racism"(in Walter et al. 2019:71) - although individuals may not actively exert racist qualities, the impact of race is denied, thus allowing structural inequalities to remain.

Social work in Australia thus needs to be reformed, by undergoing a process of decolonisation in which the profession recognises that colonialism is entrenched in Australian society today and this very structure is the problem that requires fixing (Green, et al. 2018:262)- “’Every gesture of justice forces us to face our injustices,’” (Dowd in Willis, 2012:91).

***Question 4****: Select and describe ONE theory for social work, outlining several key concepts, main theorists, how it is used in social work and evidence that supports or upholds the theory.*

Psychodynamic practice is derived from Freud's psychoanalytic theory and central to it is the "unconscious mind"(Chenowith & McAuliffe, 2010:155), which refers to "mental processes that are inaccessible to consciousness but that influence judgments, feelings, or behaviour" (Wilson 2002:23). Psychodynamic therapy thus explores and brings to light aspects of the self that the client may not have previously been aware of or been avoiding, and by addressing these parts they are able to better understand the nature of the issue at hand (Shedler, 2010:98). Psychodynamic theory (PDT) focuses on the individual’s views of self and others, whilst social environmental factors are given less attention, which critics may consider as contradictory to social work values that emphasise social change and justice (Payne, 2014:99).

PDT emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships in shaping an individual's social and personal identity and practitioners reflect this through developing strong relationships with their clients over time (Ibid). Psychodynamic approaches in social work practice are thus often applied in counselling and therapy, particularly with clients who deal with psychological problems and are seeking long-term solutions, versus requiring immediate intervention. (Chenowith & McAuliffe, 2010:156)

The aim of psychodynamic therapy is to encourage the client to express their thoughts freely, in order to identify recurring themes in their relationships or past experiences that may be negatively impacting them currently (Shedler, 2010:99). The social worker becomes the object of ‘transference’; whereby the client's behaviour and responses to their relationship with the therapist reflect the dynamics of their other relationships (Harvard, 2010). The therapist's response to this, or counter-transference, can vary according to their own emotional experiences, but the primary aim is to draw the client's attention to these unconscious reactions in order to help them recognise patterns of behaviour that may be either harmful or positive (Cooper, 2008:7). By understanding the cause and effect of specific conflicts, the client and practitioner can then work together to "foster the positive presence of psychological capacities and resources" (Shedler, 2010:100).

A key criticism that PDT faces is the lack of empirical evidence that prove its effectiveness. However, various meta-analyses support the efficacy of the practice, even after initial treatment (Harvard 2010). For example, a study published by the Cochrane Library compared 1,431 patients with a range of common mental disorders, and over 23 randomized-controlled studies found short-tern psychotherapy to significantly improve symptoms, with the effect increasing after a long-term follow-up (Shedler, 2010:103). Thus, although psychodynamic theory has been contested over time, there is no doubt of its continual influence in social work practice and knowledge today.

Reference list:

Australian Association of Social Workers, 2016, Preparing for culturally responsive and inclusive social work practice in Australia: Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, accessed 1 March 2020 <https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/7006>

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION, 2016, Cat. no. 2071.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, accessed 1 March 2020

Chenoweth, L. and Mcauliffe, D. (2018). *The road to social work & human service practice*. South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia.

Cooper, A. 2008, Social Work: an introduction to contemporary practice, Pearson Education, e-book, accessed 2 March 2020, <http://cfswp.org/perch/resources/papers/doingpsychodynamicsocialwork.doc>

Green, S. & Bennett, B. 2018, "Wayanha: A Decolonised Social Work", Australian Social Work, vol. 71, no.3, 261-264, accessed 1 March 2020, from Taylor and Francis Group, 10.1080/0312407X.2018.1469654

Harvard Health Publishing 2010, Merits of psychodynamic therapy, Harvard Medical School, accessed 2 March 2020, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\_article/merits-of-psychodynamic-therapy>

Howe, D. (2014). *The compleat social worker*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, Ny: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lesley, C, & Donna, M 2017, The Road to Social Work and Human Service Practice with Student Resource, Cengage Australia, e-book, accessed 1 March 2020, from ProQuest Ebook Central

Payne, M 2014, Modern Social Work Theory, Palgrave Macmillan, e-book, accessed 1 March 2020, from ProQuest Ebook Central

Shedler, J. "The Efficacy of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy", American Psychologist, vol. 65, no. 2, pp. 98-109, accessed 2 March 2020, from American Psychological Association, DOI: 10.1037/a0018378

Walter, M. And Baltra-Ulloa, J. 2019, Our voices: Aboriginal social work, Red Globe Press, e-book, accessed 1 March 2020 <https://www.booktopia.com.au/our-voices-2ed-bindi-bennett/book/9781352004090.html>

Willis, J., 2012. Tangled up in white: The perpetuation of whiteness in Australian national identity and the Northern Territory Intervention. Macquarie Matrix, 2(1), pp.81-94., accessed 1 March 2020

Wilson, D. 2004, Strangers to ourselves, Harvard University Press, e-book, accessed 2 March 2020 <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=W4yzugYjz08C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\_ge\_summary\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=mental%20processes%20that%20are%20inaccessible%20to%20consciousness%20but%20that%20influence%20judgments%2C%20feelings%2C%20or%20behaviour&f=false>

Youth off the Streets, 2018, *Casework,* HSBC, accessed 27 February 2020 <https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/programs/casework/>

Youth off the Streets, n.d. *Outreach Activities,* HSBC, accessed 27 February 2020 <https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/what-we-do/growth/lifeskills/outreach-activities/>

‌Youth off the Streets, n.d., *About Youth off the Streets,* HSBC, accessed 27 February 2020 <https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/about/>

‌Youth off the Streets, n.d., *Father Chris Riley’s Story,* HSBC, accessed 27 February 2020 <https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/about/father-rileys-story/>

‌Youth off the Streets, n.d., *What we do,* HSBC, accessed 27 February 2020 <https://youthoffthestreets.com.au/what-we-do/>

‌