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An integrative review of Albertina Sisulu and ubuntu: Relevance to caring and nursing

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ABSTRACT

Background: Caring forms the core component of nursing. The history of the nature of caring in South Africa is non-specific and is unknown. The impact of nurse and activist Albertina Sisulu − known as the *Mother of the Nation* − has the potential to offer unique insights into what could be the context of caring for nurses.

Aims: The study aimed at 1) critically synthesising the available evidence of caring as portrayed by Albertina Sisulu within the South African context, and 2) interpreting Sisulu's work within the Ubuntu philosophy as a framework for nursing and caring.

Method: An integrative review was completed using Whittemore and Knafl's framework. Key electronic databases, selected references and web-based search engines were scoured for articles meeting the inclusion criteria. This systematic and iterative approach yielded 18 non-research reports related to Sisulu; eight reports (three research, five non-research) related to ubuntu and nursing. Data was extracted that related to relevant and conclusive new and innovative practices in caring.

Results: The findings provided a context for practice guidelines of caring concerning knowledge and critical thinking about caring by nurses. Two primary factors emerged that demonstrated a culture of caring as seen through the prism of Sisulu's life: *devoted dancer* and *creation of a healing environment*. These factors also reflect African ubuntu principles, where the focus is on the relationships between people and how these relationships could be conducted.

Conclusions: Ubuntu and Sisulu's approach to caring have much to offer for the nursing profession in terms of developing of new directions for nursing pedagogy, curriculum, practice patterns, and policies that emphasise caring constructs.

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1. Introduction

Few women have left such a strong legacy like the South African Albertina Sisulu – nurse, midwife, mother, and activist (Anonymous, 2009, 2011) (see Fig. 1). The struggles encountered by Sisulu were no doubt instrumental in shaping the values she stood for as she worked to create change for a nation. There are few other concepts that have as much relevance to Sisulu's life and work than that of *caring*, a core component of nursing and. midwifery.

The history of the nature of caring in South Africa is non-specific and is unknown. Sisulu's work, however, affords us the opportunity to gain a unique insight into caring from a South African historical perspective. Also, the philosophy of ubuntu plays a role in the history of caring. Roughly translated as "human kindness", ubuntu is often interpreted as "humanity toward others" (Brack, Hill, Edwards, Grootboom, & Lassiter, 2003; Haegert, 2000; Mulaudzi, Libster, & Phiri, 2009; Murithi, 2009) and plays an important role in nursing.

1.1. Sisulu

The need to care for others began early in Albertina Sisulu's life. The impact of the 1918 Spanish flu left her mother weakened and in need of assistance (Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu, n.d). Her service-orientation was further fuelled by her conversion to Roman Catholicism in her teens and a desire to become a religious nun. These events strongly influenced her work, both as a professional nurse and as midwife, as well as her activism.

Initially thwarted by economic hardship in her efforts to finish school and become a nurse, Sisulu took to nursing "like a duck to water" (Sisulu, 2003). A lifetime of caring for others and self-discipline made her well-suited for work as a nurse. Completing her nursing education in 1944, she took a position as a midwife at Johannesburg General Hospital where she worked with Nelson Mandela's first wife, Evelyn, and her future husband's sister, Barbie (Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu, n.d). She received her midwifery qualification in 1954 and was subsequently employed by the Johannesburg Health Department as a midwife. In this position she visited township patients on foot.

Generous to a fault, her work as a nurse allowed her to be the breadwinner and carer for three sons, two daughters, and two adopted children, as well as other extended family and grandchildren. She appreciated education and this value was reflected in the sacrifices she made to further the education of those she loved. Her Soweto home had a garden that has been described as immaculate and supported a determination and generosity to feed every visitor – no matter how little was to be had (Sisulu, 2003).

Later professional work would find Sisulu working in Soweto beside Dr Abu Baker Asvat, a physician and leading anti-apartheid activist who was murdered in 1989 (Layman). They were described as kindred spirits who sought to eliminate apartheid and improve the plight of those suffering under the apartheid state. The relationship between Asvat and Sisulu has been described as that of mother and son (Sisulu, 2003).

Sisulu's adult life was dominated by poverty, sacrifice, self-discipline, racism, relentless persecution, detention, and worry about the health and wellbeing of those she loved (Sisulu, 2003). She quietly but fervently worked for justice and equality and she did so with a belief that women play a clear role in creating social and political change; she called this a

Nontsikelelo Albertina Sisulu was born in 1918 and died in 2011. She was a nurse and a South African anti-apartheid activist who together with her husband, Walter, and friend Nelson Mandela, worked to create the new rainbow nation. A founding member of the Federation of South African Women in 1953, she was also a member of the African National Congress Women's League. Albertina was an organiser of the historic 1956 march against pass laws, among other critical involvement to end apartheid. Her activism efforts resulted in an 18-year ban – longer than for any other South African. She also endured two years in jail. With the end of apartheid, she was elected to the first democratic parliament in 1994, a tribute to her reputation and hard work.

While now recognised for her quiet activism, less has been written about her work as a nurse. She was a gentle women who believed in creating change through peace. She cared deeply for her family and patients, and it was her caring presence which helped in the birth of a new nation.

Fig. 1 – **Mother of the Nation: nurse and midwife Albertina Sisulu (Sisulu, 2003).**

"petticoat layer" of women leaders (Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu, n.d.). Her abiding concern over the plight of women and children (McGregor, 2011) reflected the ideals of nursing and midwifery.

1.2. Ubuntu

Ubuntu is both a world view and a moral philosophy that historically binds together African communities (Taylor, 2014). The concept of ubuntu is found in diverse forms in many societies throughout Africa (Murithi, 2009). Several different definitions, some of which are contradictory, make it difficult to extract one central definition of ubuntu that would be universally accepted (West, 2014). Irrespective of definition, Taylor (2014) suggests there are two basic aspects to Ubuntu: relationships between people and how those relationships could be conducted.

Critics have suggested that the ubuntu philosophy served as an effective framework which promoted standards for moral behaviour until eroded by Western values such as individualism (Nyaumwe & Mkabela, 2007). At a time when the caring compass of professional nursing is being strained (Scott, 2014), Ubuntu values woven together with the ideals of Sisulu offer a clear lens through which professional expectations may be re-evaluated.

The objective of this study is 1) to bring to the fore the work, life and way of living of Albertina Sisulu in order to create a theoretical basis for further development and application of caring within the discipline of nursing; 2) to compare care from a Sisulu perspective with that of the traditional South African philosophy of ubuntu; and 3) to provide the South African nursing community with greater knowledge for direct application of caring for nursing pedagogy, curriculum practice.

2. Methods

A systematic search of articles written by and about Albertina Sisulu and which related to caring and the impact on the work she undertook was conducted, as well as a search of the literature related to nursing and the philosophy of ubuntu.

2.1. Data sources

2.1.1. Sisulu
A comprehensive search of the literature was conducted using the databases of Ebsco, Cinahl, SABINET, SAepublications, ScienceDirect, Medline, Web of Science, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, WorldCat, and web-based search engines. The search terms included the following: Sisulu, caring, ubuntu, United Democratic Front, apartheid, politics, policy, nursing practice, and health. In the final analysis, however, only "Albertina Sisulu" was used as it was distinctive and captured known key works; the search of other terms yielded citations of little or no relevance. Only sources published in English between 1960 and 2015 were included. Table 2 identifies the 18 relevant sources used in the final review.

2.1.2. Ubuntu
A literature search was conducted using Ebsco, Cinahl, SABINET. Africa-Wide Information, AMED — The Allied and Complementary Medicine Database, Business Source Complete, CINAHL, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Health Source — Consumer Edition, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, Humanities Source, MEDLINE, Political Science Complete and Women's Studies. The search terms used were "nursing" and "ubuntu". An initial search with the keyword "ubuntu" was performed. A further, more refined, search was conducted using the following key phrases: principles of ubuntu, and relation to nursing. Seven sources published in English between 2000 and 2014 were included. The relevant sources are included in Table 2.

3. Analysis

The analysis was guided by Whittemore and Knafl's (2005) updated integrative review method. The revised method, as derived from the expanding work of Ganong, is rigorous and widely used for summarising and analysing data from diverse methodologies. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Pfaff, Baxter, Jack, & Ploeg, 2013).

Key electronic databases, selected references, and web-based search engines were scoured for articles that met the inclusion criteria. This systematic and iterative approach yielded 18 non-research reports related to Sisulu from which data was extracted with relevant and conclusive new and innovative practice evidence detailed, and then this data was compared to findings from the ubuntu search. All 18 Sisulu sources and seven ubuntu sources were included in the review. A systematic and iterative approach was used to extract and reduce the data in order to be able to draw conclusions (Pfaff et al., 2013).

4. Quality scores

All reports were coded for methodological rigour prior to the data reduction. A 3-point scale was used based on the qualitative and quantitative criteria of Letts et al. (2007) and Polit and Beck (2012) respectively. A score out of three was allocated for methodological quality and the topic relevance of the article. An overall final score was allocated to each article (Pfaff et al., 2013). Tables 1 and 2 detail report scores, subconcepts and final concepts.

4.1. Data abstractions

This involved an iterative process of reading the sources and embracing the constant focus of the review aim. Examples of essential features of caring from a Sisulu perspective and the relationship to ubuntu were sourced (Pfaff et al., 2013).

Table 1 – Essential features of caring from a Sisulu perspective.			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts/metaphors
Steyn, 1998	1/3	• Strength • United • Ground level • Equality – towards a greater vision	Being there Dignity of others Compassion/empathy Love
Tchervenkov et al., 2009	1/3	Children: • Co-operation • Perseverance • Compassion	Kindness/smile/pleasant Vulnerability Care/nurture/grow Meticulous/cleanliness
Paine, 2000	2/3	• Rebirth • Compassion • Strength • Movement • Being there	Patience/caution Mother/female role Surrogate to others/birth others Grace Sacred duty
Michael, 2004	2/3	• Lives • Doing good • Hagiography	Strength of character Shoulder burden/care for others Perseverance through events (riding out darkness)
Sisulu, 2004	1/3	• Service • Mrs Sisulu's husband – metaphor • Strong work ethic • Perseverance • Extraordinary strength of character • Deep love for children	Tireless Commitment Order/organisation Work ethic Respect for body Disciplined/self-sacrifice
Anonymous, 2011	2/3	• Mother of the nation • Leadership qualities • Maternal instinct • Defining moments of history • *Like a devoted dancer, you cannot separate from the dance* • Education	Service to others Right thing/behaviour matters Responsibility/obligation Preserve life Honour your word Honour tradition/wise sage Watch for things to improve (lights to shine)
Bhana, 2003	1/3	• Highlights – Family	Faith/conviction
Stevens, 2011	2/3	• Change agent • Strong faith, conviction and grace	Change agent Principled/competent
Earl, 2011	2/3	• Support her family • Leading role	Growth/improvement (self as garden) Self-sacrifice
Seggie, 2011	1/3	• Inner "calling" – caring • Characteristics • Racial and gender inequalities	Loyal Family/community connections Justice/equality
Geisler, 2004	2/3	• Egalitarianism (p.70) • Active, sustained participation (p. 70) • Keeping "caring" at the forefront (p. 70) • Need to be strong (p. 72) • Women see world differently – need female model of viewing caring (p. 72) • Need to embrace gender role, nurturing, caring (p. 72): change through softness • Need to transition from practical approach to a strategic approach (p. 72) • Need acute awareness (p. 73) • "Motherist" background – inextricably linked with gender role and caring (p. 78) • "Seizing the hour" – balance between motherists and feminists (conservative and radical activists) (pp. 78–79)	United Movement Standing in silence "struck a rock" (for caring/compassion) Gentle activist Peace/nonviolence Honoured leader/change agent Strategy approach/seize the day Risk for justice Need/value education
Pendergast & Pendergast, 2007	1/3	• Mother's love • Commitment • Kindness • Caring	
Sisulu, 2003	3/3	• Cleanliness • Strong work ethic • Compassionate and empathetic • Preservation of life • Sacred duty • Bounty of the land; importance of growing things….gardening passion (p. 24) • Strong maternal instinct (p. 24)	

Table 1 — (continued)			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts/metaphors
		• Responsible for care of others (p. 24) and took charge • Often chosen as **umkhapi** (maid of honour who led the bridal entourage) (p. 26) • Learned early and appreciated "serving others" — serving food, the community, etc.; Arranged assistance for others (p. 26) • Remembered as responsible (p. 27) • Always took the lead (p. 27) • Disciplinarian, serious-minded (p. 27) • Took great exception when others made fun of those less fortunate (p. 27) — need to treat others with dignity • Need for exemplary behavioUr ….one of her strongest messages: "Your behavioUr is the best teacher….more powerful than anything you say." (p. 27) [behaviour matters; power of behaviour] • Honouring commitment and your word (p. 28) • She was a surrogate mother to many others (p. 29) • Valued "ownership and respect for one's body" and appreciated the virginity inspections ("**ukuhlolwa**") (p. 30) • Honour of self-sacrifice — won a 4-year bursary to high school — had to decline to take care of family (p. 31) • Honoured ritual and tradition (p. 32) • Value of strict discipline (p. 33) • Strong sense of obligation (p. 33) • Kind women with strong sense of serving others (p. 76) • Valued justice and the need to eliminate unjust and oppressive laws (p. 118) • She helped birth a whole new generation of women leaders (p. 152) • Deep revulsion and distain for deliberate in-justices (e.g. hated the Bantu Education) (p. 153) • Sacrifice for principle (e.g. sent kids to 7th Day Adventist schools to avoid Bantu Education) (p. 154) • Standing in silence against pass laws … "you have tampered with the women, you have struck a rock!" • Stood on principle to make things right (p. 168) • Believed in need for resistance against the op-position (p. 172) • "Winds of change" sweeping across Africa (p. 172) • Orlando massacre triggered emotion to "wake up and unite" (p. 173) • "Playing with fire" and peaceful opposition (p. 182)	
Sisulu in Turok, 2006	1/3	• Persistence • Education • Mother's love • Commitment • Kindness	
Sisulu, 2003	2/3	• Bounty (p. 25) • Relished growing things (p. 25) • Strong maternal instincts and felt responsible for care: (p. 25) • Responsible for others, responsible for care (p. 25) • Often led others on horse-entourage to weddings — the umkhapi (p. 26) • Service-oriented — served food to others and sense of service to the community (p. 26) • Arranged assistance to the aged and infirm • Responsible elder who "always took the lead" (p.27)	

Table 1 — (continued)			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts/metaphors
		• Disciplinarian, serious-minded (p. 27, 297–8) • Strong sense of need to treat others with dignity (p. 27) • Always reminded others that "behaviour matters" (p. 27) • Behaviour is the best teacher and more powerful than anything you say (p. 27) • Importance of honour, commitment and your word (p. 28) • The need to be a "surrogate" when others are in need (p. 28) • Importance of self-sacrifice (p. 31) • Believed in instilling ownership and respect for body … *ukuhlolwa*. (p. 30) • Raised with and believed in ritual … *izivivane* (p. 32) • Orderly and organised • Strict discipline • Strong sense of obligation • Smiling and pleasant (p. 76) • Served others (p. 76) • Believed in justice — even where it inconvenienced her own family — a price that had to be paid (p. 76) • She was part of the "*winds of change*" that swept across the continent • Fierce opposition to injustice (apartheid) (p. 172) • Stunned and outraged with massacres (p. 173) • International loss of standing because of apartheid (p. 175) • Nonviolence (p. 181) • Need to play with fire to achieve racial equality • Burden of being care provider all alone … shouldered the burden along (p. 193) • Vulnerable when it came to those she loved (lonely and exposed when separated from her children) (p. 196) • Valued those who were highly principled and competent (p. 203) • Understated (p. 203) • Determination to be with those she loved which outweighed any fear (p. 206) • Overwhelmed by loneliness and social isolation (p. 251) • Never complained — stoic (p. 250) • Wrote of the importance of community — of belonging and caring for one another (p. 251) • Highly valued gardening as a source of sustenance; used it as a metaphor in communicating with Walter (p. 268/273) • With Walter in jail, she kept vigil "until the lights of South Africa shine again" (p. 281) • Valued patience and caution to achieve resolution (p. 285) • Importance of family connections (p. 293) • Strong value of education as a way to improve life (p. 294–5) • Watched her son's wedding from her front "garden" (p. 296) • Hard worker — never rested — always busy and cleaning (p. 297) • When times were tough and there was not enough to eat, she would go without so others could eat (p. 297)	

Table 1 — (continued)			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts/metaphors
		• Strict with children (to learn, do their chores, etc.) (p. 297—8)	
		• Unwaivering loyalty — waiting for Walter all that time	
		• Viewed as quiet, wise sage (p. 348)	
		• Rode out the darkness of imprisonment and separation (p. 362)	
		• Hospitality and care to be shown to visitors (p. 558)	
		• Tireless in cause (p. 550—551)	
McGregor, 2011	2/3	• Tampered with women … struck a rock	
		• Quiet, unassuming	
		• Strength, resilience	
		• Endured persecution, hardship	
		• Mother of the nation	
South African History Online, 2015	2/3	• Human rights ideal	
		• Opposed inferior education (Bantu education)	
		• Suffered detention, bannings	
		• Strong maternal instincts	
		• Leadership qualities	
		• Determination	
		• Disciplined upbringing	
		• Took to nursing "like a duck to water"	
		• Caring for others	
		• Frugal	
		• Respect and dignity for all	
		• Equality in education	
		• Unity, solidarity	

Rating: 1 = low.
2 = Moderate.
3 = High.

4.2. Synthesis

A data matrix was applied to facilitate the synthesis phase. Categorisation was done by source, key sub-concepts, main concepts and metaphors, and ubuntu principles to identify patterns and relationships among the data. The researcher enhanced further analysis strategies, noting relations between and among variables, looking for extremes of variant cases and finding intervening factors (Miles, Huberman, & Saldanha, 2012).

4.2.1. Description of caring

Caring forms the core in nursing and comprises the fundamental building blocks of the philosophy and science of caring. Caring of the human weaves together the essence and fibre of the tapestry of human-to-human caring in our profession. Watson (1988:58) describes an event in caring to be the occasion where the nurse and patient encounter and come together in a human care transaction. The enactment of deeper caring in a caring occasion promotes self-actualisation in the person.

The essence of being there for the individual and sharing the moment of enlightenment and movement to a deeper connection with self takes place during the caring moment. Life and living comprise many encounters during which there is a connectedness between people, sharing of a common space, an exchange of energies that can bring about change,

regardless of how miniscule or deep these changes are. Caring affects the life of all people and a shared space for the authentic meaning-making and unveiling of the inner purpose and vision of the caring moment is central to the critical caring moment (Hills & Watson, 2011).

5. Findings

5.1. Sisulu

A review of sources reveals Sisulu's deep commitment to creating a *culture of caring*. This culture was based on a *way of being* in a *healing environment* (see Table 3).

5.2. Way of being in a healing environment

5.2.1. The devoted dancer

During her lifetime Albertina demonstrated a presence of engagement in all aspects of community which can be compared to the synergy between dance, music and dancer. Her intuitive awareness of the needs of her community and the wider population placed her in a unique position to provide the caring and help exactly where it was required. Sisulu had a heightened awareness of the vulnerability of the people in a variety of situations and applied extreme care in her decisions and actions. She listened to the inner music of her

Table 2 – Ubuntu philosophy: primary concepts.			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts
Brack et al., 2003		- Personhood - Humanity - Humaneness - Morality - Group solidarity - Belongingness "seriti": life force or potential "umhlangano": interactive discussion without rank - Trust - Respect/equality - Have voice "imbizo": gathering to cleanse the past "shosholoza": work as one - teamwork	- Humanity toward others - Human kindness - Sharing that connects humanity "a person is a person through other people" 'Other' as uniqueness and difference - Redistribution of wealth - Need for redemption - Value for dignity, compassion, respect - Open and available to others - Affirming others - Harmony, equality in relationships - Does not feel threatened that others are able and good - Protective of the vulnerable - Knowledge that one belongs to a greater whole - Self-assurance that is diminished when others are humiliated - Making others around you better
Beets, 2012		- Reflective practice - Ethics - Compassion - Ethical caring (vs natural caring): defined as a state of being in relation with the other characterised by receptivity, relatedness, engrossment (Noddings, 2002) - Community	
Haegert, 2000		- Compassion + care = foundation of morality - Gentleness - Humanness - Strength for the weak - Need to remember humanness of person - Community, collectivism (a community society) - Belongingness - Wholeness - Value of the individual - Fair, tolerant - Giving the gift of personhood - Person is central - Need to nurture - Protective of the vulnerable - Love from caring - Giving to all patients - Freedom to act - Respect - Dignity - Obligation	
Mulaudzi et al., 2009		- Compassion - Caring - Complementing others - Sharing - Respecting - Kindness - Warmth - Understanding - Reaching out - Wisdom "Ubuntu": "a way of living that allows our goodness to come forth" - Humanness - Embrace community/neighbourliness - Responsibility - Unity - Tolerance - Conscience	

Table 2 — (continued)			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts
Taylor, 2014		- In Ubuntu philosophy: an action is right if it promotes cohesion & reciprocal value - Collection of people - Humanness - Communalism - Consciencism - Ubuntu has 2 basic aspects: 1) relationships b/t people, and 2) how those relationships should be conducted - Connection with ancestors/sages/wise ones - Connectedness, ongoing fellowship - Ubuntu community is comprised of the dead, the living, the yet-to-be born - Respect - Dignity - Empat\hy - Cooperation - Harmony - Scope suggests "the right way of living" - Honouring relationships of sharing a way of life - Caring for others' quality of life - Sharing - Warmth - Understanding - Mutual obligation to "do good" - Shared identity - People as individuals—as well as connected to larger society	
Murithi, 2009		- Unity of humanity - Empathy, sharing, cooperation 5 stages of peace-making process in ubuntu societies: - Acknowledging guilt - Showing remorse & repenting - Asking for and giving forgiveness - Paying compensation or reparations as a prelude to reconciliation - An approach to human relationship-building - Ubuntu can "re-inform and educate the nursing community across the globe…." - Unity through diversity - Ubuntu as generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, compassionate - We "belong to a bundle of life" - My humanity is inextricably caught up with yours - I am human because I belong, I participate, I share. - Open, available to others, affirming - I am humiliated when others are humiliated or diminished….and my belonging is diminished when others are not treated well - As a human, my being is defined through interaction with others "in the process of dehumanising another, the perpetrator is being inexplorably dehumanised" - Reciprocity, inclusiveness, sense of shared destiny	

Table 2 — (continued)			

Table 2 – (continued)			
Source	Rating	Key sub-concepts	Main concepts
van Dyk & Nefale, 2005		• Ubuntu can culturally re-inform nursing practice • Trust • Emphasis on essential unity and inter-dependence of humanity • Those with traditional beliefs believe sickness is retribution from the gods • Can only get rid of the punishment through traditional sacrifice • Ubuntu works with individual AND family/community (connectedness) • Community is above individual • Inner state of humanisation • Authentic human existence • Emphasis on collectiveness and inter-dependent inseparable whole • Strong emphasis on world view • Respect for human beings • Respect for human dignity and human life	
Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013		• Collective sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interde-pendence, & communalism • Community providing relational context • Emphasizes sharing, compassion, un-derstanding, reciprocity, kindness, soli-darity, sensitivity	

heart and the vulnerability of the people led her to care, nurture, and proceed with patience and caution. Elinor Sisulu noted the following:

> I never failed to be amazed by the way Albertina coped with a workload that would exhaust most people half her age. After a full day at the surgery, she would return home to find local activists waiting to see her. Most days of the week, she would face another three to four hours of meetings before going to bed. Her weekends were also mostly taken up with meetings and frequent interviews with local and overseas journalists, many of whom were interested in the mobilisation of women under apartheid.

"Ma Sisulu" as Albertina was affectionately known, infused her life with the beauty of caring of people – a gift that nurtured and guided healing to nourish humanity and to be part of the greater civilization, living together harmoniously (Watson, 2012).

Birthing of newness and for others by "the mother of the nation" lead to transformation within her community. Sisulu was an activist and a professional nurse, who led a selfless and courageous life during which she showed an unwavering commitment to a non-racial philosophy of human equality and dignity for all.

5.2.2. Caring through softness and gentleness

Connectedness and being part of a wider community played a critical role in Sisulu's life. The mothering role was fittingly bestowed upon her. She was affectionately known as *Ma Sisulu* throughout her lifetime. In the world of caring and nursing it would be Sisulu who provided the connectedness to the persons in need of care and hope. She instilled hope, trust and provided the most excellent and competent care possible in those critical moments of engagement with her family and extended community. Caring involved a compassionate sharing of love, heartfelt empathy and dignity.

Ma Sisulu extended her caring to her community, cultivating a culture of interpersonal sensitivity in which each individual was valued and respected (Smith, Turkel & Wolf, 2013). The continuation of caring existed in being present with a smile, an act of kindness, and showing an openness to the pain or joy of the other person. The acts of caring from the heart of Ma Sisulu happened in an enabling environment of caring and respect of the individual (body). Such care was also reflected in her passion and belief in the importance of growing things – "gardening" being an apt metaphor for her approach to life. The caring environment enabled the person with whom Ma Sisulu came in contact with to grow and actualise themselves so as to maintain and grow within themselves (Smith, Turkel & Wolf, 2013).

Nursing and caring was lived by Sisulu and formed an important societal part of her being in the enhancement of human dignity and the preservation of humanity (Watson, 2012). Her passion and sense of responsibility for the sacred duty of caring for others was a defining feature of her life.

5.3. Creation of a healing environment

5.3.1. Seize the day

Sisulu's life reflected extraordinary strength of character, discipline, and self-sacrifice – all requisite behaviours needed to *seize the day* if the shackles of apartheid were to be removed

Table 3 – Integrative review of literature related to the life and times of Sisulu: a culture of caring.			
Ways of being		Healing environment	
Devoted dancer	• Being there • Vulnerability • Care, nurture, grow • Patience, caution • Surrogate • Birth others • Grace • Sacred duty • Family/community connections	Seize the day	• Strength of character • Discipline, self-sacrifice • Shoulder burden • Care for others • Service to others • Order/organisation • Work ethic • Justice/equality • United • Stand in silence
Caring through softness, gentleness	• Dignity of others • Compassion, empathy • Love • Kindness, smile, pleasant • Meticulous, cleanliness • Mother, female role • Respect for body • Preserve life • Self as guardian • Loyal • Gentle activist	Riding out the darkness	• Perseverance • Tirelessness • Commitment • Right thing to do • Behaviour matters • Responsibility, obligation • Honour word, tradition • Faith, conviction • Principled, competent
		Winds of change	• Watch for things to improve • Change agent • Movement • Need/value of education
		Play with fire	• Risk for justice • Honoured leader

and desperately needed during the delivery of nursing services. Those engaged in the creation of change couldered the burden for those for whom they cared, standing in a united silence as they worked for justice and equality. Perhaps the best example of this was Sisulu's work in Soweto with Dr Asvat where the needs of all — regardless of political stance or personal characteristic — were served. Effectively creating change required order and organisation, a clear work ethic, and a quiet resolve to "stand in silence" – but like a rock – for needed change despite the hazard in pushing against prevailing beliefs (Motshekga, 2011).

5.3.2.   Winds of change

The need for education provided the foundation for creating the framework for effective change. Education provided the foundation whereby knowledge and skills could be taught in order to weave the fabric of the much needed societal change. Effective change required movement, acute awareness and astute observation to ensure that things were improving. During all the years during which her husband was imprisoned, Sisulu kept vigil "until the lights of South Africa shine again" (Sisulu, 2003:281). She was part of the "winds of change" that swept across the subcontinent during a period where little pride could be found in the system.

5.3.3.   Riding out the darkness

In times of enormous burden, sorrow, and suffering, Sisulu was tireless in her efforts to do the right thing to improve the health, education and welfare of others. She possessed perseverance and an enormous sense of responsibility and obligation to eliminate the injustices she faced during her life. Believing that behaviour matters, Sisulu sent a strong

message that "behaviour is the best teacher…more powerful than anything you say" (Sisulu, 2003:27). Her behaviour demonstrated her faith and conviction that things could be different. In working to create change, she was committed to honouring tradition as well as honouring her word, having been raised with and strongly believing in ritual. Sisulu was both principled and competent and determined to *ride out the darkness* — those defining moments of history.

5.3.4.   Playing with fire

Perhaps the most powerful and influential effort by Sisulu focused on the need to risk oneself for justice and to act as an honoured leader, i.e. to *play with fire* in order to achieve equality. Risk involved liaising with others who could help to create change and who had the fortitude to see it through. She had a strong sense of revulsion and distain for deliberate injustices and she believed in resistance against the opposition. At the core of Sisulu's work to create change was her belief in those who were "highly principled and competent" (Sisulu, 2003, p. 203). She believed in justice, even if it inconvenienced her own family — it was the price she was willing to pay at all times (Sisulu, 2003, p. 76).

5.4.   Ubuntu

When examining the sources related to ubuntu and nursing, several key concepts were identified in the literature (see Table 2). These relate to a primary emphasis on humanity, the importance of kindness and a sharing that connects humans. Ubuntu embodies a clear value for humanity, respect, and dignity with demonstration of openness and availability to others while recognising the uniqueness and differences of

others. Mulaudzi et al. (2009) has commented that, "Ubuntu is a way of living that allows our goodness to come forth."

In the philosophy of ubuntu, caring that is compassionate serves as the foundation for connecting with individuals who are protected where vulnerable.

I am humiliated when others are humiliated or diminished....and my belonging is diminished when others are not treated well. (Murithi, 2009)

Care emphasises sharing, understanding, reciprocity, kindness, solidarity, and sensitivity (Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013).

Ubuntu is a guide for living and offers a framework for right action. Taylor (2014) states, "An action is right insofar as it promotes cohesion and reciprocal value amongst people. An action is wrong insofar as it damages relationships and de-values any individual or group" (p. 338). Ubuntu is a frame-work to understand culture (Boon, 1997) and can serve to shape social conduct (Brack et al., 2003). There is an obligation to *care about* because *I must* (Beets, 2012).

5.5. Sisulu's caring & ubuntu principles

The two basic aspects of ubuntu philosophy, i.e. relationships between people and how those relationships are conducted (Taylor, 2014), are requisite to both ways of being and creating a healing environment. Ubuntu emphasises humanness, connectedness, cohesion, and conscience — all characteristics embraced by Sisulu, as well as respect, empathy, cooperation, harmony, sharing, and warmth. In ubuntu, an action is right if it promotes cohesion and reciprocal value; thus emphasising "the right way of living". And, connection with ancestors and those who are wise, as well as understanding and caring for the quality of life of others are central to both ubuntu and Sisulu's work. There is thus a mutual obligation to "do good".

Combining Sisulu's values and beliefs with those of ubuntu provides a useful framework for guiding nursing practice. Such a framework focuses on caring as a central construct within the discipline of nursing. The values, knowledge, and implications for practice are directed toward the life world of the experiencing person; the framework is thus anchored in an existential–phenomenological field (Ranheim, Kärner & Berterö, 2012:80). This ties in with the idea that nursing could teach one that the best way to understand another human being is to subjectively appreciate the inner world of the experiencing person (Watson, 1979:207).

Nightingale (in Hills & Watson, 2011) describes nursing as the "finest of fine arts". Where caring is threaded between nursing as an art and science, human caring science emerges (Hills & Watson, 2011). The nurse is viewed as a co-partner in the practice of nursing. The co-existence of the nurse and the person sharing the caring moment is of utmost importance. The focus for the nurse is on health, healing, and caring in the patient's experience. Sisulu thus stands at the centre of the caring moment and co-partners nurse and patient for healing. Her focus provides a foundation for nurses to create an epi-centre of caring for professional practice with patients, sharing human experiences, happenings, and encounters in a conscious interaction of *now*. Incorporating Sisulu's principles

within the context of ubuntu moves the "good" to the wider practice field of caring. The philosophy of human freedom, living the choice of caring in a mindfulness in everyday living is thus important.

6. Limitations

This study was limited to the written works about Albertina Sisulu. All were secondary accounts, and no efforts were made to verify the accuracy of writings. Oral history sources were not available but would have enriched the study with a deeper understanding of the struggles, values, and beliefs of Sisulu. More research is thus required in this area.

Similarly, there is no definitive work regarding the philos-ophy of ubuntu. While widely embraced in southern Africa (Taylor, 2014), there are variations in interpretation which, over time, may have created a drifting away from the original cultural intent. This study precluded the verification of the practical implementation of ubuntu within the context of South African culture.

7. Recommendations

There is much overlap between caring and ubuntu. Basically, ubuntu espouses that a person can only be a person through others and stresses two aspects: relationships between peo-ple, and how those relationships are conducted (Taylor, 2014). Sisulu most certainly embraced ubuntu and these beliefs are central in developing a *culture of caring* for nursing in South Africa. The *raison d'être* of nursing is the care of patients, and the implications for nursing education, practice, research, and public policy are clear.

7.1. Recommendations for nursing education

Nursing curricula provide important guidelines in terms of developing professional nursing and midwifery. It is thus important to restructure these curricula in terms of how we educate nurses, emphasising the strong need for morality and ethics in nursing. Students need clear guidelines on what to expect and they need to be guided by examples of caring behaviour so that they imbibe a sense of the importance of relating to others and how to go about relating to others. Nurses need to learn to give attention to patient needs (Scott, 2014). Strategies must be developed for nurturing the sense of moral compassion in neophyte professionals. One such strategy could be to provide strong mentoring from more advanced students (Mulaudzi et al., 2009).

7.2. Recommendations for nursing practice

Perceptions, ideas, and beliefs determine the way we act to-ward others, and beliefs show themselves in action (Haegert, 2000). The current crisis in nursing (Scott, 2014) requires a reassessment of services with clear guidelines with regard to expectations and execution of care in terms of ubuntu and the principles followed by Sisulu. Professional staff need support and nurturing (Haegert, 2000) to maintain virtue and character

while delivering quality and compassionate care that is based on core caring competencies (Watson, 2012). Such care needs to reflect a partnership with the patient through shared decision-making (Friesen-Storms, Bours, van der Weijden, & Beurskens, 2015).

7.3.   Recommendations for nursing research

While widely referenced, little is known about the empirical referents for caring. More research is needed to ascertain how nurses behave in a caring manner (Mulaudzi et al., 2009). This research could be taken further by funding agencies who appreciate the need for caring models with a demonstration of the outcomes confirming the enactment of caring principles. Compassionate care could be prioritised and patients could be recognised as key stakeholders in further research studies.

7.4.   Recommendations for health policy

A health policy is needed for restructuring healthcare delivery systems to ensure adequate staff and resources. Such restructuring needs to focus on systems where nursing services consistent with caring principles are prioritised. Nurses could be included as equal partners when health policy decisions are made to ensure caring is at the forefront of healthcare. Healthcare that is organised, coordinated, and emphasises shared decision-making for patient care preferences requires nurse participation in order to ensure a meaningful policy that improves quality (Lee & Emmanuel, 2013). Caring, inspired by Sisulu and ubuntu, could form the cornerstone for change in healthcare delivery and evaluation of nursing services.

8.   Summary

Albertina Sisulu worked to address the racial injustices in South Africa (Earl, 2011). She helped to grow a "whole new generation of women leaders" (Sisulu, 2003); her leadership in terms of ubuntu has provided a blueprint for helping to give birth to a whole new generation of nurse carers. Just as Sisulu felt deep distain for deliberate injustices, today's nurse could also feel deep distain for the deliberate failure to give clear and compassionate care.

Commitment to caring as seen from Sisulu's perspective affords nurses the opportunity to engage in a new way of being, of being transformed into a devoted dancer with a soft and gentle presence which is essential if nursing is to assume its rightful place as leaders in care. The time has come for nurses and midwives to seize the day, and play with fire and move with the winds of change. It is only by embracing the principles espoused by Sisulu and ubuntu that nurses will ride out the darkness that is so apparent in nursing today.

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