

LEARNING CHILD WELFARE SOCIAL WORK WITHOUT LEARNING TO
COLONIZE

LEARNING CHILD WELFARE SOCIAL WORK WITHOUT LEARNING TO
COLONIZE

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BSW

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Social Work

McMaster University

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MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
(2013)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Learning Child Welfare Social Work without Learning to
Colonize

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 69

ABSTRACT

Canadian social work education is founded on, and maintained by predominantly Eurocentric ideologies and discourse, which pose problems for social work educators and students because together they strive for social justice within a climate that perpetuates oppressive practices. Colonization is a core component of Education and Child Welfare therefore this research thesis asks how social work education can create an environment where learners receive the most accurate and helpful information to critically analyze their practice to reduce oppression. My question is narrowed down to focus on the practice of child protection as its aims are to protect children but at that same time has been implicated in the Canadian colonial project. Grounded Theory, social work course outlines and professor interviews were utilized to explore ways students are taught to reduce oppressive practices. Three social work courses that were inclusive of aspects of Aboriginal ideology were chosen for analysis and three of the professors that taught these courses were interviewed. The analysis of the course outlines and semi-structured interviews revealed social work education is a complex environment that not only requires a critical assessment of large social systems, but also a critical assessment of personal attitudes, values and beliefs. Further the study reinforces that an educational system reform is necessary if the missions of social work are to be accomplished. Social works academic space needs to be inclusive of diverse knowledges in order to break down discrimination and oppressive ideologies that inform mainstream practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This journey and process could not have been accomplished without my team of dedicated supporters. The list is long and no words can truly express my gratitude.

First I thank the Lord not only for the ability but also for the people who supported me which includes my husband. Without his help, time management abilities (☺) and continued motivation I would not have made it this far in my education or life's journey.

From the initial thought of this thesis, its progression and formation to the finished product I owe many thanks to my supervisor Dr. Gary Dumbrill. Your ability to not only help me identify what was in my heart, but also to guide me in exploring it in a meaningful way and ability to offer in writing was a task not easily accomplished. Your time, understanding and mentorship will follow me throughout my career. In addition I would like to thank my second reader Dr. Jim Gladstone for taking the time to read and participate in this process.

I would also like to thank my participants. Without your time and commitment this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends. You have all in one way or another provided feedback, editing assistance and a listening ear when I needed it most.

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INTRODUCTION & INVESTIGATIVE LENS

As social workers we depend on our education and on knowledge produced by a variety of disciplines and scholars in our practice. Relying on education can be problematic when its foundation is a predominantly Eurocentric discourse. Eurocentric education has been used to perpetuate class relations, discriminate, dominate and assimilate (colonize), but on the other hand it has also shown to raise awareness, resist and promote social justice. In schools of social work students and professors analyze, criticize and challenge the social norms and dominant ideas through interrogating tensions created by unjust and oppressive practices.

I have found throughout my education that courses offered to social work students have provided an opportunity to discuss current experiences of oppression in society. Although social work education provides a space for critical analysis of unjust practice and oppressive experiences, it does this within a colonial climate that has also perpetuated oppressive practices. I encountered a significant tension as students and professors engaged in discussion regarding colonization and its direct link to oppressive structures, practices and services. The tension or contradiction emerged when critically unpacking the impact child protection has had on the Canadian colonial project. Child protection is implicated in much of the colonial history in Canada, which has significantly targeted Aboriginal Peoples. Child protection's involvement is therefore considered a tool of colonization due to its participation in the colonizing process of Aboriginal Peoples (this will further be explained throughout the thesis). Therefore I wonder how social workers can learn in an environment where they receive the most accurate and helpful information in order to be able to critically analyze their practice in a way that reduces oppression? For example how would a child protection worker be able to strive towards

accomplishing a goal of just practice when the child protection system, and the environment in which social workers learn, is based on colonizing Eurocentric discourse?

I have pondered the above question for some time and decided I would attempt to answer it through exploring a variety of social work courses offered by Ontario Universities that include education about decolonization. Decolonization as a process includes studying the effects and development of colonialism, challenging the manifestations of colonial impact (Reinsborough and Barndt, 2010) and “it requires a complete paradigm shift, and most importantly it requires a partnership based upon acceptance and respect for human diversity” (Victor, 2007, p. 6). Given that decolonizing practices need to incorporate the study of colonialism and require partnership and respect, the courses I selected to analyze are taught from an Aboriginal Perspective and include aspects of child welfare. The decision to choose courses that focus on Aboriginal frameworks was not meant to appropriate, rather to hear about decolonization from the perspective of people who speak with the authority of having experienced colonization firsthand. Additionally I felt Indigenous professors, especially those who also teach from an Indigenous perspective, would have given the ways of teaching child welfare policy and practice in a decolonizing manner considerable thought and might therefore aid in ascertaining my question.

I myself am a product of a Eurocentric education system and have knowingly and unknowingly participated in oppressive practices. As an individual who has received privilege based on my social location it has taken me many years to understand where and how to deconstruct and dismantle the social and individual underpinnings of my privilege. One theory of analysis I found to be helpful in addressing privilege is critical whiteness theory. Whiteness as a study:

Explores the political, social, and historical situatedness of white ethnicities, and the hegemonic processes, which lead to their universalization and normalization... whiteness

studies have been greatly influenced by critical race theory, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies-disciplines that explore themes of race, nation, subjectivity, power, (post)colonialism, and identity. Recent interest in examining whiteness is a response to the fact that studies of race have tended to focus on historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, thereby overlooking “whiteness” as if it is the natural, expected and normal way of being human. (Nylund, 2001, p. 28, 31).

In my attempts to reduce the perpetuation of dominance and colonization in my thesis I use a combination of critical whiteness, decolonizing and anti-racist theoretical positioning rather than limiting myself to only one. Regarding the combination of such theories Williams (2001) explains by only using anti-racist theory for example it misses a critical component; it explores race, says it is unjust but it does not allow for an analysis and explanation of why racism is what it is. In my research rather than a white social worker looking at how they can learn to understand colonialism to do anti-racist practice with Aboriginal communities, I want to be able to look at how social workers are learning about the tensions between social work practices and colonialism, personally and professionally, socially and politically in order to link this to their daily practice. By making the link it allows an opportunity to recognize areas where they, or myself, can problemize the dominance of whiteness in our society and education. These areas of focus will also open up an opportunity to see where change needs to take place in social work education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two prevailing concepts in my thesis; colonization & social work practice. Education plays its role as a common thread throughout my thesis because education has been used to assimilate and colonize, but it is also used to inform, construct, regulate and develop social work practice. The concepts of colonization and social work practice are opposing and interrelated at the same time, which creates tensions for social workers that want to practice in just ways. The tension lies specifically between the fact that tools used to colonize are also the same tools used to teach social workers that are mandated to strive for social justice and do no harm. Tensions are is very evident in child welfare/protection practice in the Canadian context as well as others, because as you will read, it appears the underlying reasons for the removal of children serves more of a political strategy rather than serving the growth and safety of a community. I continue to ask myself how can I strive for social justice and do no harm as a social worker in the child welfare field if this practice is founded within colonizing ideologies.

Much of the research literature regarding the colonization of education emerges from a critical social science framework and utilizes aspects of Anti-oppressive, anti-racist and critical whiteness theory (Baskin, 2002; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Noble, 2004; Pease & Fook, 1999; Pon, 2009; Yee, 2005). The literary goals of understanding how knowledge is created and used to dominate are concerned with bringing awareness to the colonizing structures in society and attempting to bring cognizance to the individuals who perpetuate colonization (Baskin, 2002; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Noble, 2004; Pease & Fook, 1999; Pon, 2009; Yee, 2005). Creating this awareness is accomplished by allowing space for the inclusion of non-dominant knowledge. The emerging themes I found within current research concerning social work education, colonization and child protection tends to focus on the historical actions of the Europeans, the

effect(s) colonization has had on indigenous populations, and how social workers can resist against oppressive practices. The mission of social justice, fair treatment and reciprocal relationships is seen as core concepts for social work as a whole (Fook, 2002).

To understand how a profession striving for human justice can subsequently create a situation of injustice, there needs to be an understanding of what colonization is and how social work practices are implicated in its operation. I will provide a brief literature review of how the European and French colonized the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in order to provide a basic foundation. From there I will move on to explaining how education constructs and impacts both colonization and social work and show where the two converge in social work academia through the use of dominant Eurocentric discourse. Further I will incorporate suggestions already proposed to help navigate tensions in social work education.

What the research says about colonization and its production

Colonization is considered an oppressive process in which dominant groups and practice discourse perpetuates and sustains power over members of a pathologized and discriminated group (Pon, 2009). Vickers (2002) states "Colonialism... refers to the dehumanizing process in imperialism where those "new lands" and inhabitants were considered subjects of the Crown" (p. 242). The reference to 'new lands' includes not only the physical ground we stand on, but also the minds of human kind (Vickers, 2002). Through the process of colonization the actions of the Europeans have shaped the indigenous people of the western hemisphere as "savages" and used the spread of diseases such as smallpox and measles in an attempt to destroy Aboriginal Peoples (Mann, 2006). The initial purpose of the colonization of North America was to utilize land for agriculture, trade, seafood and furs; however this led to conflict and an eventual mission for assimilation to transform the Indigenous Peoples into Christians (Miller, 2000). Hence the initial

contact between the Aboriginal Peoples and Europeans was the beginning of what continues to be the oppression of the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Since its inception the Canadian government has created, amended and maintained policy and legislation to support its act of assimilation. It is important to understand colonization as a process for the reason that it allows one to understand its produced though complicated factors within society that social workers engage and participate in daily. “Canadian policy towards the country’s “First Nations” is a complex web of government and Aboriginal initiatives existing over four centuries of European contact with the original inhabitants of northern North America” (Howlett, 1994. p. 631).

In trying to explain the movement of colonization by the Europeans in Canada I think it is helpful to understand the characteristics and tools used to assimilate and dominate the indigenous people of this land first by understanding how these systems are created. Henry (2000) speaks about colonial cultural systems being organized by core and peripheral cultural systems. A colonial cultural system can only be evident and produced when a core system assumes and produces authority at the cost of the peripheral system (Henry, 2000). In order for colonization of Aboriginal Peoples there needed to be a hegemonic society built. In Canada, this colonial process was completed through targeting Aboriginal Peoples not only physically but also intellectually through socially constructed ideas of race as well as through legitimizing Eurocentric education.

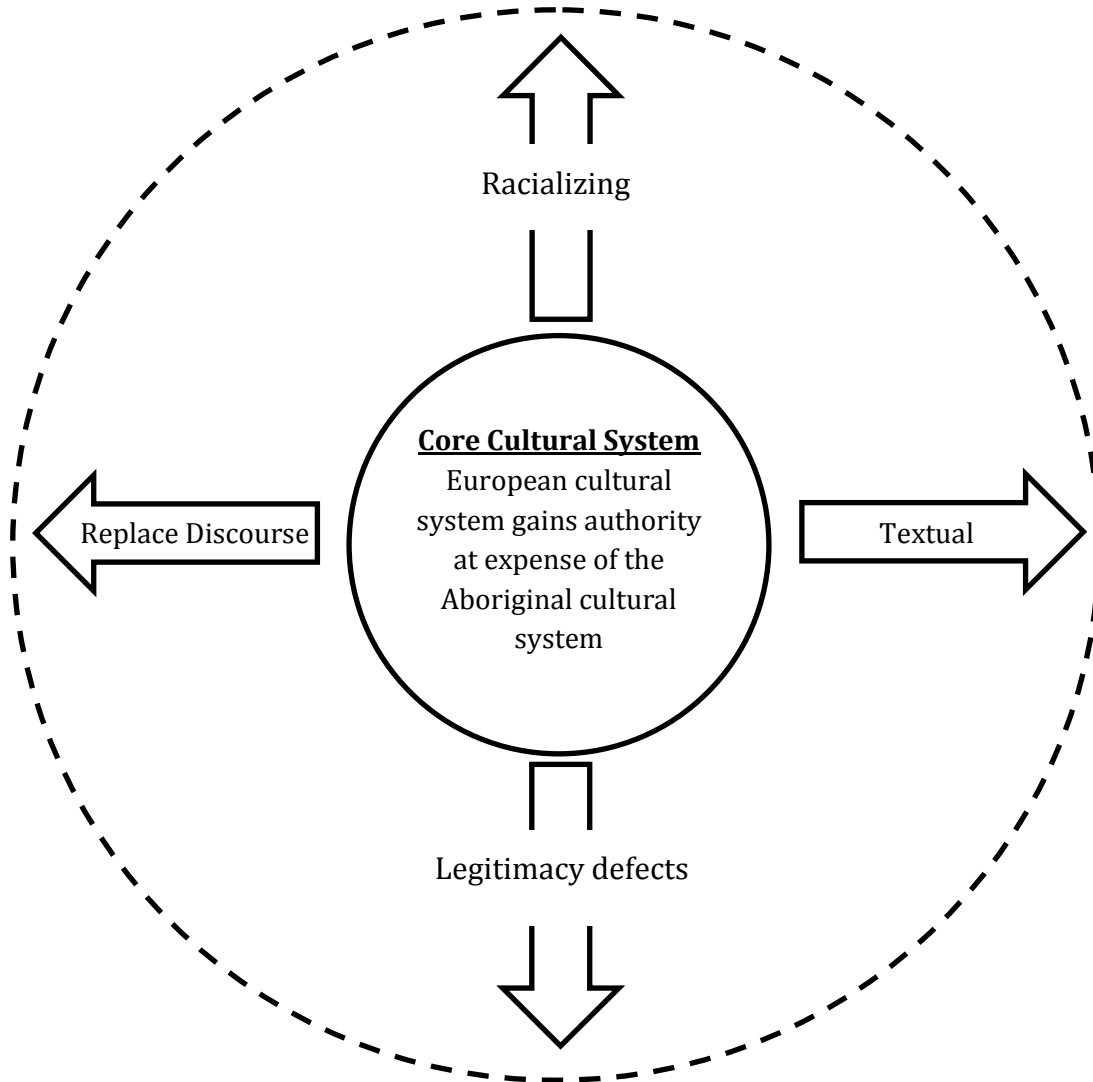
As described by Henry (2000), when explaining the formation of a “core system” there are many specific dominating characteristics which include legitimacy defects, authority over imperial text (authoritative textual documents within religious and economic discourses for example), replacement of Aboriginal discourse with European discourse, defining of identity and racilizing the “other”. According to Henry (2000) legitimacy defects are understood as formations of cultural legitimacys produced by legitimizing colonial symbols and arguments:

The authority of local culture elites is *replaced* by that of the colonial state and group of foreign cultural elites. This hegemonic shift generates major legitimacy problems for the emerging colonial order, as both the colonial states and its cultural elites emerge as illegitimate formations in local political discourses. Yet the future stability of this order requires that these illegitimate formations be made to appear legitimate. This is the contradictory nature of the legitimacy demands that colonial societies make on peripheral cultural systems. From the point of this state, culture is not the consciousness of a distinct existence, but rather a producer and supplier of legitimating symbols and arguments. (p. 10)

These characteristics are acts of manipulating the peripheral systems by constructing it and its ideas, beliefs and values as illegitimate (Henry, 2000, p. 10). This is where the discourse of whiteness is involved. Whiteness, which is understood as assumed privilege constructed by white race, equals legitimacy. For example “racializing” the “identities” of different cultural groups through “dehumanizing” and reducing others to “biological levels”, has allowed for cultural accumulation (Henry, 2000, p. 11). Racial domination was a significant act of the Europeans to assimilate and create the “delusion that the European race was superior to First Nations races in Canada” (Vickers 2002, p. 242). Terms such as dominance, control, standard and judgment are found common within the definitions of colonization and whiteness. Through all of this, social and cultural hegemony utilizes what I consider to be one of the most impactful tools; European Education.

Colonial Cultural System Fig. 1

Peripheral Cultural System: Aboriginal cultural system



The implication of colonization in education

The encounter between the colonizer and colonized subjects disrupted ways of knowing, learning, and teaching for most Indigenous people in the world. It resulted in...the colonization of the minds (Wane, 2008, p. 183).

In Canada one of the major instruments in the process of dominating Aboriginal Peoples is eliminating Indigenous knowledge and culture through the use of education (Dumbrill & Green, 2008). Dumbrill and Green (2008) explain how education was used as a colonizing weapon and further noted that the use of education to colonize was easier than using military domination, although in many ways both amount to the same thing. Through the colonizing process European settlers came to “spread the Christian word” by directions from the Church in an attempt to convert the Aboriginal Peoples into Christians, as the “explorer” Cartier concluded; “the natives ‘would be easy to convert to our holy faith” (Miller, 2000, p. 28 and 34). One way this conversion took place was through the residential school system. Sinclair (2004) shows how social workers were implicated and participated in the residential schools system. She describes how social workers stood alongside police when children were removed from homes on the reserves during the residential school period (Sinclair, 2004). The process of this form of genocide in Canada was done through the government and its outward admittance of its purpose was the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples in order to “civilize” them (Ing, 1990). Governmental policy of Aboriginal assimilation decided that Aboriginal children needed to be removed from their parents and community’s influence, as well as the rest of Canadian society (Ing, 1990).

In a study completed by Ing (1991) with individuals who survived the residential schools, he explains child development from an Aboriginal perspective. According to Ing (1991) Aboriginal children were taught and received their nurturing from community members opposing the idea of a single caregiver. Core values in Aboriginal communities include aspects

of loyalty and sharing, along with oral traditions (Ing, 1991). Training and education consisted of teachings from elders, and children primarily learned by replicating what they see their parents doing (Ing, 1991). Traditionally Aboriginal children are given the opportunity to make their decisions about right and wrong on their own and often humor was used as disciplinary methods (Andres, 1981). Coincidentally Eurocentric worldview on children generally sees them more as a possession and responsibility of the parent themselves, and they find flaws and criticize the Aboriginal approaches sighting psychological abuse (Andres, 1981). In Ing's (1991) study the negative effects associated with the residential school experience directly related to issues with self-esteem. Survival was accomplished through modification of one's cultural behaviours and children developed a sense of shame regarding their culture (Ing, 1991). All of this shaped family members who were once close, as strangers (Ing, 1991, p.108). For a culture that depended on their oral traditions to educate and learn, the prohibition of the use of Native language had a severe impact on their ability to grow within the residential school system and then raising their children when placed back into their community.

Through residential schools children and parents lost their traditional child-rearing skills due to extended time away from family and inability to speak and essentially learn their native language (Ing, 1991). Ing (1991) shows how parenting practices were taught orally and through observation and imitation. Aboriginal Peoples who were affected by the residential school system explain how there was a disconnect when returning to their communities and a loss of foundational practices, especially in child-rearing (Ing, 1991). Children were physically, sexually and psychology abused, separated from siblings, were lacking "healthy parenting role models" and therefore left residential schools with confusion and an inability to reconnect to their historical traditions (Ing, 1991, Trocme', Knoke & Blackstock, 2004, p. 578).

After the amendment of the Indian Act (1951) and the subsequent closing of the residential schools in approximately 1996 (although there is conflicting information regarding their closure Arthur cites it as late at 1996) there was an *increase* in Aboriginal adoptions by white families (Arthur, 2001). Based on interviews conducted by the Inroads roundtable (2001) with former residents of the residential schools there were two emerging thoughts surrounding the rationale for mass adoptions. Firstly, the rationale for mass adoptions was thought to be an extension of the state's assimilation plan or secondly it was thought to be a result of child and substance abuse on Aboriginal reserves (Arthur, 2001). Either way, it can be considered that these adoptions were a direct result of colonization because colonization created both the conditions of assimilation and the related health disparities (including substance abuse) and unequal access to health services that led to the removal of children. Sinclair (2004) and de Leeuw, Greenwood and Cameron (2009) additionally say that issues such as infectious disease, substance abuse, mental health problems, domestic violence and suicide are a result of colonial projects within Canada. Sinclair (2004) further believes that “almost every contemporary social pathology or health issue in Aboriginal communities can be attributed directly to the fallout of colonialism” (p. 50).

Social works participation in colonization

The actors who physically completed the apprehension of Aboriginal children for adoptions were child protection workers, and these are the same people in the position of authority to do so today. Mainstream child welfare systems maintain custody of Aboriginal children through foster care and adoptions. Sinclair explains how social work has “aligned itself with the assimilation policies manifested in the transracial fostering and adoption of Aboriginal children” (p. 50). To explore how social work participated in the Canadian colonial process I will

look at the role child development plays within child protection and highlight areas of discrimination and colonial practices.

The standards and laws that inform child welfare were constructed with the discourse of child development in mind (Child Protection Standards in Ontario, 2006; Family and Children Services Act, 1990). A service discourse of the ‘psy’ discipline is used in the assessment tools of child protection workers (Healy, 2005). This use of psychological sciences provides applicable methods to understand the reason, and identify certain risks and behaviours in order to reinforce *change* in the client (Healy, 2005). The focus on the ‘psy’ aspect is not used solely by itself in the child protection investigation. As Healy (2005) explained, the shift in social work in the 1950’s brought about new models, which combined social perspectives with ‘psy’ ideology (now known as psychosocial) to direct practice. The tools used during an investigation are based on the Child Protection Standards in Ontario and are found in the Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2006). Eurocentric education sees healthy child development as the accomplishment of children’s ability to meet particular milestones. These milestones consist of such things as language, cognitive development, social and personality development, and the family; things to which the assessments of child protection are based upon (Shaffer, Wood and Willoughby, 2005).

Caraeso (1986) provides a review of the child welfare legislation showing its discrimination towards Aboriginal people. She brings to the light the “circle of life” doctrine and how this has been broken within the Aboriginal communities (Caraeso, 1986). Aboriginal worldview perceives children as “Gifts from the Creator” (Fuchs, McKay, & Brown, 2012, p. xvii) and when children are apprehended from their homes the circle of life, the bond between child, community and parents is broken (Caraeso, 1986). Although Caraeso (1986) made these

points many years ago, discrimination and the historical effects of the child welfare system are still very present and experienced by Aboriginal Peoples in Canada today. Trocme´ et al. (2004) provides a quantitative look at the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care in 2000-2002:

Annual reports from provincial and territorial ministries of child and family services for the years 2000–2002 estimate that 76,000 children and youth are living in out-of-home care in Canada (Farris-Manning and Zandstra 2003). An estimated 40 percent of those children are Aboriginal, or children labeled “Indian” or “Native American” in the United States (Farris-Manning and Zandstra 2003). Indeed, some provinces report that Aboriginal children comprise nearly 80 percent of children living in out-of-home care (foster care, group care, and institutional care; Aboriginal Justice Inquiry–Child Welfare Initiative 2001). Yet, fewer than 5 percent of children in Canada are Aboriginal (Human Resources Development/Statistics Canada 1996). (p. 757-758).

The above quote shows the significant difference between Aboriginal and Caucasian families who were involved with the child welfare system. The research suggested that Aboriginal family systems often were single parents, had prior child protection openings, accessed more social assistance and more commonly had concerns regarding substance abuse, neglect and lack of social supports (Trocme et. al., 2004). Although this is the case there is a discrepancy as “Aboriginal and Caucasian children do not differ to a statistically significant degree on most child functioning variables: emotional or physical harm, depression or anxiety, and self-harm behavior” (Trocme et. al., 2004, p. 588).

The tension between education and social work and justice

“The social worker, as much as the educator, is not a neutral agent, either in practice or in action” (Freire, 1990. p.5)

Although current work in child protection attempts to strive towards AOP and anti-racism practice, it still “preserve(s) systems of dominance” (Dumbrill, 2003, p. 101). “Eurocentric discourse serve the purpose of justifying the neo-colonial agenda, which remains deeply embedded in systems of education that influence current educational approaches at the

international, national and local levels” (Wane, 2008, p. 190). In order to be a “social worker” in the eyes of the state one must be educated by an accredited social work program and registered with a professional body. Given that education informs and influences much of our practice, and emerging thought and theory building focuses on the stories and lived experiences of service users, it is important that we include community voices and infuse reflexivity in how, in what and in why we learn what we do. For academia this includes knowledge of historical events of injustice, inclusion and educational space for non-Eurocentric worldviews.

Dumbrill and Green (2008) explain how European knowledge dominates the social work academy, which further perpetuates colonization. They suggested that other knowledges (particularly Aboriginal ways of knowing) are often (but not always) excluded in social work curriculum by the dominance of the European paradigm (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). “Academic space is not culturally, politically and ideologically neutral and to regard it as such and to uncritically integrate Indigenous knowledge into this framework subjects Indigenous knowledge to these frameworks” (Dumbrill and Green, 2008, p. 493). Current perpetuation of colonization though academia is not necessarily intentional; it is sometimes unrecognizable and invisible to the European academic (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). Before Aboriginal authors began to be included in social work literature, most writings regarding Aboriginal people were written by non-Aboriginal authors and focused primarily on social policy (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996).

I will use the discourse of cultural competency as an example of how social work practice attempts to address tensions regarding culture and oppression, and how to engage in anti-racist practice. The phenomena and prevalence of cultural competency courses was an aspect of education to teach social work students how to become culturally competent practitioners. Cultural competency is informed by standards which include; Ethics and Values, Self-

Awareness, Cross-cultural knowledge, Cross-cultural Skills, Service Delivery, Empowerment and Advocacy, Diverse Workforce, Professional Education, Language Diversity and Cross-Cultural Leadership (NASW, 2001). On the surface these standards appear to be progressive requirements for social work practitioners, and I do agree they add to meaningful practice skill and thought to the academic environment, but as I will discuss this may not always be the case.

One critic of cultural competency, Pon (2009), explains that the educational discourse of cultural competency is a new form of racism since, as mentioned earlier, it does not include the analysis of colonialism in its understanding and practice application. Pon (2009) suggests that through the dominant use of cultural competent practice social work education is creating the “ontology of forgetting”; that being a failure to remember how the nation grew out of colonialism and racism (p. 66). This is important since the development and inclusion of non-white education in social work education constructs new ideologies and skills that can be used to deconstruct and understand power and structural racism in Canadian society. Cultural competency education does encourage awareness of cross-cultural practice, however; “it decentres and creates an imbalance in favor of focusing on difference and not on white privilege and its relationship to racial oppression, power, and inequities in access to resources” (Young and Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 167). The literature suggests that cultural competency lacks the above critical reflection on the influence of whiteness and its effects on structural racism regarding service users (Nylund, 2006). Courses on cultural competency are helpful in identifying where racism materializes in practices including “unlearning racism” however it is still difficult for practitioners to put this into practice (Wahab & Gibson, 2007, p. 426). In the attempt to build on cultural capacity there is a strong association with placing the emphasis of critical analysis on the individual and their clinical practice skills (Sakamoto, 2007).

When considering how whiteness plays its role, Nylund (2006), using a theoretical perspective of diversity theory and critical multiculturalism, presents an interesting point when speaking about pedagogical strategies. The process of cultural competency places the emphasis on the social work student to take responsibility for privilege in order to understand the power of whiteness (Nylund, 2006). If students are unable to identify personal privilege “whiteness as a marker of identity is confined within a notion of domination and racism that leaves white youth no social imagination through which they can see themselves as actors in creating an oppositional space to fight for equality and social justice” (Nylund, 2006, p. 32).

What the literature suggests is that social workers can be taught important aspect of practice but miss an important link if they do not innately think critically. In its infancy the literature on cultural competency courses showed a disconnect and lack of in-depth reflection between self, practice and theory. Only recently has cultural competency begun to include looking at theory and policy within macro level systems (Sakamoto, 2007).

Understanding the complexities of privilege from a position of privilege can be a hard task not only for educators but also more importantly for the individual social workers. Swank, Asada and Lott (2001) completed a study to explore the attitudes of social work students regarding multicultural goals of their education. The study showed that matters of privilege influenced the student’s acceptance (or lack) of multiculturalism, and more positive changes were identified in their perceptions after receiving some diversity education (Swank et al. 2001). An interesting point made about privilege was that when a students felt they would be placing themselves at risk of loss of privilege they were resistant to understanding and accepting elements of multiculturalism (Swank et al., 2001). What is missing is the inclusion of the process

of decolonization; each member needs to understand their past and their power associated in defining “other” in order to understand the process of colonization (Dumbrill and Green, 2008).

Cultural competency values are important to the profession in developing socially just minds; however it must be paired with other discourses and ideologies. Furthermore, if academia wants to produce practitioners that are culturally competent, social workers must be educated in a landscape that includes other knowledges and an in-depth understanding of oppressive participation. As I will show, the literature suggests the current landscape of social work is laden with white Eurocentric knowledges which impact how discourses such as cultural competency practices become commonplace in the field of social work.

Through discussion and by recognizing power (which in its premise incorporates whiteness) created through colonist actions, it unearths and dismantles whiteness whereby disturbing current social work discourse and unlocking an opportunity for resistance (Noble, 2004). Selick, Delaney and Brownlee (2002) explain a tension in social work literature showing a pull at the importance of an ever evolving knowledge system and its unpredictable path and on the other hand a pull to professionalize social work with the backing of science. This idea of knowledge and its tensions has significant effects for practitioners who are attempting to overcome the power dynamics that play out in practice. Selick et al. (2002) suggests that part of this tension is created by the “foundations of our knowledge” (p. 493). Due to the reality that much of the origin of Canadian education is formulated through Eurocentric ideologies this correlates with the reality that the profession has used its power in a way to dominate (Selick et al., 2002). There is a need to problemizing the production of knowledge as it lies within the origins of colonization.

Young and Zubrzycki's (2011) study identifies the need to incorporate critical whiteness theory within social work academics in order to attend to the professions "social justice mission". They further identify how much of the research and curricula out there incorporates aspects of critical whiteness theory as it attends to understanding taken-for-granted Western knowledge, and how this can be translated into many avenues of practice with many racial client-practitioner relationships. Nylund (2006) put it best when stating:

In an effort to denaturalize the idea of whiteness as the "privileged place of racial normativity", critical studies of whiteness have viewed it as a social construction rather than as a "natural" biological category...Such a social constructionist view of whiteness emphasizes that its meanings are produced by "socially and historically contingent processes of racialization, constituted through and embodied in a wide variety of discourses and practices. (p. 31)

Young and Zubrzycki (2011) suggest that indigenous knowledge and critical whiteness theory can be used in partnership to analyze and challenge Eurocentric knowledge and "taken-for-granted knowledge and principals which negatively affect Indigenous Peoples" (p. 159). One area of challenging Eurocentric knowledge is through a critical analysis of colonialism.

Sinclair (2004) introduces a view of how colonization has pathologized the current social context within Aboriginal communities. She explains how the existing theoretical lenses taught in the social work academy (such as AOP) adhere to assumptive ideologies that undermine the effects of colonization (Sinclair, 2004). Suggested by Sinclair (2004) is that decolonizing pedagogy involves utilizing Aboriginal epistemology and requires an amalgamation of self-healing and historical critical analysis. She states:

Aboriginal social work can be described as a practice that combines culturally relevant social work education and training, theoretical and methodological knowledge derived from Aboriginal epistemology that draws liberally on western social work theory and practice methods, within a decolonizing context. (Sinclair, 2004, p. 56)

The above explanation further situates the challenges of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the Eurocentric pedagogical environments (Sinclair, 2004). Suggested however is that Eurocentric knowledge should be threatened and surrender its colonizing discourse (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). The latter idea is important for creating a climate of inclusive knowledge in academia because as it currently stands other knowledges cannot co-exist (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). Further noted is that a lot of emphasis is placed on the Aboriginal teacher as they are responsible to decipher and navigate between students, institutions and Elders (Sinclair, 2004). Sinclair (2004) says that Aboriginal people need to be the ones to insert themselves as the owners and teachers of Aboriginal knowledge and it is my hope that I can support this.

Dumbrill and Green (2008) suggest that dismantling the dominance of Eurocentric ways of knowing should be the focus for inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in social work curriculum. Creating a disruption within the dominant realms of knowledge re-shifts the perpetuation of colonization from being “sensitive to the Aboriginal ways of knowing” to targeting aspects of how whiteness creates and defines the positionality of the “other” and the oppressive structures that informs the “other” (Dumbrill and Green, 2008, p. 490).

Aboriginal knowledge inclusion in mainstream social work education mustn't subjugate or colonize aboriginal learners by forcing them to fit into Eurocentric frameworks, it should share or be a segment of the institution along with other equally representative ways of knowing (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). If indigenous knowledges and cultural ways of knowing other than Eurocentric ways are incorporated and provided space into knowledge production, then these options will be available to all students creating a diverse, inclusive, academic space.

As Dumbrill and Green (2008) explain, an important standard that needs to be established in the classroom is having qualified experts who determine what knowledge is to be taught.

These experts need not be located and identified by the academic institution but by the groups whose knowledge is being taught (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). A key notion here is how power associated with education and credentialism is able to define what constitutes qualification for teaching. The idea of power held within education follows suit with the domination of defining experts and the “qualified” from a Eurocentric lens which must be addressed and analyzed to fully grasp how and why we learn about such large concepts as colonization.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The social work profession has been implicated, historically and presently in colonial practice (Young and Zbrzycki, 2011). I see social work as an ever changing profession and the information we receive to develop our “profession” is also changing based on how society justifies and constructs “problems”. Given that the things social work deals with are related to structurally developed matters, we as social workers have the opportunity to reconstruct social problems and incorporate these new problems into our education and daily practice. The ability to create social problems affects not only intimate practice, but also the way society views and understands problems. Social workers have the power and opportunity to construct the ideologies and realities of society because of the contexts in which we practice and learn.

The literature review shows that Canadian colonial history has oppressed and targeted Aboriginal Peoples. Social work played a significant role in the colonial process through its participation in the oppression of Aboriginal Peoples through child welfare practices. Further the Canadian educational system has also played a key role in the assimilation project from residential schools to its dominant foundational learning environment being Euro-centered. Social work students are therefore placed in competing and conflicting conditions as they are in a field that is striving for social justice however are provided with tools and practices that have done just the opposite. So I come back to the question of how social workers can learn in an environment where they receive the most accurate and helpful information in order to be able to critically analyze their practice in a way that reduces oppression? For example how would a child protection worker be able to strive towards accomplishing a goal of just practice when the child protection system, and the environment in which social workers learn, is based on colonizing Eurocentric discourse?

METHODOLOGY

Epistemology & Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical and methodological approach that fits with my research is Critical Social Science (CSS). CSS is defined as “a *paradigm* distinguished by its focus on oppression and its commitment to use research procedures to empower oppressed groups” (Rubin and Babbie, 2008). I also focus on an anti-racist and decolonizing positioning by utilizing critical whiteness perspectives. Much of the research on social work education comes from a collaboration of Interpretive and CSS focused approaches. It employs its theoretical positioning from AOP, anti-racist and critical theory to guide its interpretation and action for change. The reason I am using these theoretical and methodological approaches is because CSS research allows me to interact with my research based on reflection, action and alliance through which the development of new knowledge is be grown out of the changing research experience (Fook, 2003). The development and analysis of knowledge throughout the research process is important to me given that my overarching goal is to analyze tensions in social work education and knowledge foundation in order to ultimately encourage curriculum change regarding inclusive practice. As the research process is not without its biases the following offers some potential issues and how I have attempted to overcome them.

My power as a researcher allows me to de-construct and re-construct the production of knowledge about my topic. Throughout my research I have ultimately (with the assistance of my supervisor) made many choices as to what is included and excluded from what my data provides and doesn't provide (Sinding, Barnoff, Grassau, Odette and McGillcuddy, 2009). This in and of itself creates its own tensions regarding power within my research such as my positioning as a researcher (who's research is valued and why), and how I have assessed, interpreted and

produced knowledge from the findings I gathered. As a social worker completing a graduate degree I hold an inherent power in having the opportunity for my research to be valued based on my already intrinsic legitimacy due to my educational credentials and ability to obtain them.

Due to my social location as a white researcher including Aboriginal perspectives in my topic poses a potential problem as Boushel (2000) describes, current research is dominated by “white majority-culture samples undertaken by white researchers” (p. 71). The type of research I am conducting therefore presents a risk of appropriation and situating western knowledge in Indigenous space; which in itself is a colonizing process. I have attempted to reduce this potential act of appropriation by researching my topic from the position of a learner and student rather than an expert. Also, given that my study focuses on colonial aspects of child welfare, as mentioned, I felt Indigenous professors, especially those who also teach from an Aboriginal perspective, would be able to present ways of teaching child welfare policy and practice from a non western space. I also hope that my sampling and findings are reflective of the participants’ voices rather than a position influenced by my opinion.

Evident to me is that power and privilege are prevailing issue for research in a Eurocentric dominant western research space (a space which is used to inform a majority of social work practice). It is important for me to come from a critical whiteness lens as my knowledge, values and beliefs hinge on Eurocentric dominated ways of knowing and I receive privileges based on this positionality. I must come from a self-reflective stance and use a critical whiteness approach to assist in identifying my participation in injustice in order to avoid perpetuating dominant Eurocentric ideology and discourse. Some examples of these privileges could be how the color of my skin is reflected in political systems and my western epistemology aligns with mainstream accepted norms. Neglecting to consider the privilege I innately receive

based on these variables would limit the criticalness to which I analyze my data and potentially cause me to overlook factors within my data that are socially and historically constructed (Scheurich & Young as cited in Dumbrill & Green, 2008). Including a critical whiteness position has allowed me to participate in my research through re-conceptualizing my dominant location from a position where I can understand and/or uncover where I hold privilege and perpetuate colonial education and practice (Dumbrill and Green, 2008). Through this process I hope I have identified where students can also learn to take responsibility for participation, awareness or reduce oppressive practice in order to strive towards the avoidance of additional exercises of domination.

There are also embedded power differentials within the relationship between researcher, data, participant and community. It is important to me that social workers are educated in a way where colonization is understood through a lens of whiteness and non-eurocentric perspectives. Boushel (2000) brings to light the discussion presented by a black theorist regarding the importance of moving towards investigating the maintenance of race in specific context rather than just simply explaining it. I hope I have done this through attempting to investigate techniques used in the educational environment that challenge dominant discourses and allows students to analyze how they participate in, and maintain colonizing structures. Grounded theory lends itself well to the barriers I am attempting to overcome through my research process.

Research Design: Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory (GT) initially developed by Glaser and Straus (1967) informs the basis of my study. I chose GT because I am not attempting to test any specific theory or ideas; rather I want to discover and create an emerging hypothesis through the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In addition to this I feel my qualitative research approach fits well with the idea

that the developed theory will be “grounded” within the data (Charmaz, 2012). The intent of my study is to see how social work education navigates the tension between teaching child welfare and other social work approaches knowing that the occupation and its practices are linked to colonization. The process of assessing this tension continues to change as data are gathered and analyzed. With the “actor” being how the tension between child welfare and colonization is taught, it is my responsibility as a grounded theorist to analyze and explore the relationship between “how the actors (tensions) respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions” and “uncover relevant conditions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 5). I have completed a content analysis using course outlines, heard the voices of the professors who teach based on these outlines through interviews, read the additional literature and allowed my research to evolve throughout each of these data. By using a GT approach I am constructing data conclusions by “interpreting, explaining and rendering meaning for defining” (Neuman, p.60) about how to navigate the tensions found when learning about how to reduce oppressive practices in a space that has created them. Grounded theory is concerned with not only how the data constructs its reality, but also how the researcher constructs the reality of the data in formulating concepts and theory (Charmaz, 2012).

Sampling & Recruitment

Purposive sampling techniques are used when a researcher has a specific purpose in mind and looking for a unique informative sample for in-depth investigative purposes (Newman, 2006). Therefore given that I am exploring how social workers can learn to reduce oppressive practices (such as child welfare) while being educated in a colonial climate that perpetuates oppressive practices, it is important that my sample be reflective and inclusive of both child welfare and colonization. I purposively chose specific courses where the outlines include an

understanding of child welfare and the effects of colonization from an Aboriginal worldview. Although I use a purposive sampling technique, I am also using theoretical sampling. “The selection of new cases is guided by theoretical sampling concepts in which new cases are selected that seem to be similar to those generated by previously detected concepts and hypotheses” (Rubin and Babbie, 2008, p. 635). Therefore I identified patterns such as the use of colonization and developed concepts (such as contextualizing colonization) based on these patterns in order to compare and seek out further information from my next piece of data (Rubin and Babbie, 2008).

Primary Source of Information I: Course Outlines

Given the vast amount of schools of social work that offer multiple courses on social work approaches one of my objectives was to choose course outlines that encompassed the examination of child welfare through an Aboriginal lens/approach. The outlines were either requested via email recruitment script (see appendix A) or found online on the Universities website. In exploring it from an Aboriginal perspective I was able to have the opportunity to include leading relevant scholars in this area of education for my secondary data source.

Primary Source of Data II: Professors

An email recruitment script was sent out to each social work professor listed on the outlines as the professor who was teaching the course (appendix A). Professors have direct contact with the institution, students and curriculum development. The professor is able to provide a rich firsthand account of the development of the course outline, information on why specific readings and assignments were chosen and possibly how the students impacted the direction the class took. Through inclusion of the voices of the professors it adds meaningful insight to the explanatory aspect and real life account of how the investigated tensions play out

through the teaching process and life for the people who are affected by colonial practices such as child welfare. Although I am looking at courses which teach from an Aboriginal perspective this does not require the professor to be Aboriginal. Out of the 3 professors who agreed to participate in the study, 1 was non-Aboriginal and 2 were Aboriginal based on their online profile at the schools where they teach.

Secondary source of information: Course readings and text (required & suggested)

A content analysis of the readings and suggested readings listed within the course outline is a secondary source of information for my research. This allows for an examination of what literature is used to inform how the *tension* is explored through text provided by the course. The text helps in understanding historical implications social work occupations have had regarding colonization as well as providing demographics of who is writing about the tension, who is not, and what they are saying.

Data collection & analysis

Within the use of GT my research is more flexible and has the ability for the data and theory to interact together (Newman, 2006). As the data (from any of the sources) are collected I reviewed and coded it and used the concepts I gathered to inform how my next set of data was collected and analyzed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Each data source was coded in the same way while I also ensured my methods followed measures of credibility and procedures to reduce (not omit) biases within my observations and responses (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I kept a journal of reflections as I analyzed the data. For the initial coding of all three data sources I used open coding. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990) this process of interpreting (coding) is done to break down the data for reflection and categorizing. The procedure of open coding can provide the basis for the subsequent reading to generate comparative analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Next all sources of data in this study required Axal coding analysis where I used codes that related to each other to create categories. Axal coding allowed me to find interrelated relationships and conditions to further develop concepts and subcategories found in the open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Content analysis was completed using 3 course outlines from schools of social work in Ontario. The data included in these outlines was: course descriptions, course objectives, teaching methods, course texts and assignments that provided detailed requirements outlined for the teaching process. The analysis of the outlines was completed before and after the interviews with the professors to see where I may have made assumptions, and identify additional information that had changed though the coding process.

I completed 3 semi-structured interviews with 3 different professors. I have provided the interview guide as attached (appendix B). The initial analysis of an interview was done before proceeding to the next as it was used to direct and inform the subsequent interview and ensure any relevant or irrelevant issues or cues were incorporated or omitted (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Before initiating the interviews the letter of information and consent were reviewed and time allotted for any questions the participants had (see appendix C). All interviews were digitally recorded with permission from the participant, than transcribed by a professional confidential transcriber. After transcription the interviews were sent to the participant for review in case there were comments they wanted to retract. I then followed through with the same process of coding as I did with the course outlines. After the interviews were complete a content analysis of 3 required readings listed within the course outline was conducted.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research has been criticized for a lack of rigor and scientific legitimacy and subjected to researcher bias (Bowen, 2009). One way in which qualitative researchers have addressed such criticisms is by demonstrating trustworthiness through an “audit trail” (Bowen, 2009). The audit trail is efficient and includes documents produced by the researcher that describe “chronologically and systematically what they did, how they did it and how they arrived at their interpretations” (Bowen, 2009 p. 305).

According to Bowen (2009) trustworthiness refers to “the conceptual soundness” which is established through “credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability” (p. 306). In order to achieve credibility I have chosen to utilize the method of triangulation. The type of triangulation that fits best with my research is the triangulation of methods or methodological triangulation (Newman, 2006). I conducted a content analysis on two different textual sources as well as transcripts from unstructured interviews. Given that I am drawing from more than two sources of data I am therefore using triangulation. Through this use of triangulation I was able to analyze how the *tension* is taken up from various aspects (Newman, 2006). In addition I use triangulation as a process to be able to look at my research problem from multiple points of views in order to improve accuracy (Numan, 2006).

Many difficulties may be seen regarding situating oneself in the research. Aspects of oneself found within the research creates a potential bias that cannot be escaped; however it can be addressed through providing a detailed description so that decisions and conclusions developed from the data become visible and can be examined by outside sources (Bowen, 2009). Recording the research process delivers a resource to ensure “concepts, themes, and ultimately the theory

can be seen to have emerged directly from the data, thereby confirming the research findings and grounding them in the evidence” (Bowen, 2009, p. 307). One way to guard against researcher bias is to include throughout the entire research process any repeated concept found through all methods of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Repeated concepts assist in protecting against researcher bias as they emerge organically and reduce the change of the researcher including concepts they develop that are not found in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Lastly trustworthiness is accomplished by having a second and third reader. My supervisor completed a second read of my data and concepts, conditions, relationships and observations and a third reader read over the final draft. As stated by Corbin & Strauss (1990), “Opening up ones analysis to the scrutiny of others helps guard against bias” (p. 11).

FINDINGS

Data from the course outlines, interviews and course readings provided an interesting context to learn about how social work's mission for justice is taught within a climate of colonizing systems. The data found that contextualizing colonization was important in informing students about how oppression operates within social work practices. It was found that learning was influenced by the ability of students to critically analyze their own attitudes, values and beliefs and the social location of the professors. Becoming an ally was also an important notion as it relates to how people see themselves as actors of social change as well as how they partner with service users.

The course objectives seem to be based on AOP and critical whiteness theories as the foundational means by which to teach students. AOP influence was important in identifying how colonization is a systems issue and the significance of analyzing our practice from a Macro (large systems), Meso (community systems) and Micro level (individual systems). Critical whiteness played its role in identifying the maintenance of colonial practices and perpetuation of assumptions. Critical whiteness analysis also assisted in providing and examination as to why and how some people participate in continued oppressive processes, even if they are unaware. I concluded this because the participants placed an important emphasis on teaching students how to critically unpack their understanding of attitudes, values and beliefs, clients and social services as a means to understand the production and maintenance of oppression.

Conceptualizing colonization: the Canadian context

An analysis of course outlines showed that an explanation of colonial history within the Canadian context was important and part of initial teaching for students. In order to understand

and learn about colonization's impact and effects, along with the tensions created within its process through child welfare, all of the outlines suggested that understanding the colonial history of Canada and how it links to oppression as a main objective. Further it was important that this contextual explanation was grounded within an Aboriginal framework:

Outline #1: To connect institutional and structural oppression to the history and current impacts of colonization upon Aboriginal Peoples and communities... History from Aboriginal Perspectives, Values, Terminology

Outline #2: Gain an understanding of the historical implications of colonization in Canada and how it impacts the health and welfare of Aboriginal people

Outline #3: Learn (or be reminded of) the history of residential schools, the sixties scoop, the ongoing overrepresentation of First Nations children in state care, and the current underfunding of First Nations child welfare services and communities. Students will learn to make connections between these events and patterns of child welfare involvement with multiple marginalized Peoples such as racialized groups, immigrants, refugees and people living in poverty.

Thomas and Greene (2007) also suggest that understanding the “history of colonization is vital to understanding the contemporary lives and subjective experiences of Indigenous Peoples, and the ongoing relationships between Indigenous people and the Canadian settler State” (p. 93).

In keeping with the idea of learning about colonial history in Canada the participants followed up this claim with explanations that identified colonial history as important in being able to understand current colonizing practices. When explaining the importance of a historical account from an Aboriginal perspective one participant suggested:

“When I talk about child welfare basically when I go through ... Canada's story from an Aboriginal perspective... it's looking at ok so what did our world look like prior to colonization”

It was important to note that the historical account did not only equate to colonial tools and specific events such as the sixties scoop and residential schools, it also included how times were before colonial hegemony and how history maintains its colonial barriers and power in its

expressions today. Conceptualizing colonization from an Aboriginal Perspective based on the participant's statement also included being able to compare post-colonial life to how the People lived before colonial contact. In understanding this comparison it provides an opportunity to analyze the oppressive rationale behind assimilation by uncovering discriminatory and stereotypical policy and procedures that benefitted the colonialist and attempted to destroy a culture that was well-established and thriving.

The following participant also suggests it is important for students to see the way Aboriginal Perspectives of social work are based on Aboriginal cultural norms before the British and the French arrived, linking the pre-colonial way of life to mainstream society:

“And then looking at ok sort of coming full circle, so how is it that today communities, child welfare agencies that are Aboriginal and so on, how is it that they're going back to those original teachings about how we care for children and families right and implement in today's world right”

One outline suggested an objective of the course was to:

Understand child welfare policy and practice in a historical and political context... a critical review of the ways child welfare systems have developed in English and French speaking nations.

The teaching of the historical process of colonization within these courses is not merely the telling of history, it is interacting with the history from a critical lens. In this educational context courses and professors are attempting to tell the historical story through critical analysis, as it re-evaluates ideologies based on pre-colonial practices from a position of Aboriginal focused epistemology (Sinclair, 2004).

Colonization has developed and changed over time and we see its operation in today's social systems. As social workers we are not just looking at how it historically has impacted people, we are looking at how it continually impacts people and practices. One participant reflects on how education played an important role in learning about oppression as they stated:

“the more courses that I took the more I started to learn, the more I started to realize how significant oppression was. And so without that educational background I don’t think I would have recognized in working with people how much oppression and how much colonization impacts how we work today and how we do what we do”

Another example of how current oppression is linked to historical acts of colonization is presented in one of the required course readings. The Prophecy of the Seven Fires (The Circle of Turtle Lodge, 2013) is an Anishnabe teaching about how history is connected to the present. The prophecy, which is conceptualized as truths, provides the student with an account of predictions made by prophets in the past regarding colonization, which have been carried down through the generations by Elders. The reading of The Prophecy of the Seven Fires states:

“They (prophets) came at a time when the people were living a full and peaceful life on the northeastern coast of North America. These prophets left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of these prophecies was called a Fire and each Fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. Thus, the teachings of the seven prophets are now called “The Seven Fires”.

Above is an example of how Aboriginal epistemology about colonization from an Aboriginal perspective is shared with students. The inclusion of Aboriginal teaching in this context is important because it provides students with an opportunity to see the operation of non-Eurocentric ideology as it relates to oppression.

The participation of social work practice

The purpose behind understanding history throughout the courses tied into connecting how social work systems have oppressed, continue to oppress and how one might be participating in them. Furthermore, professors ask students to reflect on how these things change or might change how they do, and or will, practice. One participant notes:

“So that there’ll always be you know bringing in colonization and it’s impacts when need be but it’s not just you now learn this history, learn the impacts - and then what do you do right?”

The idea of interconnectedness followed throughout the interviews, and included self-reflection and its connection to oppressive practices and participation. As one participant notes:

“I kind of think it (teaching) in 3 ways; first step is there’s this history, next step well this history hasn’t stopped, the next step is people understanding that they’re a part of that, they’re implicated in that”

It was important to explain to students the current goals of child welfare from an Aboriginal perspective and the history helps in understanding these goals from a critical framework, as stated by one participant:

“2 objectives is to keep our children within our territory and community number one and number two is keep our children with our families and that means extended family or even beyond that into a clan which is an extended extended part of the family.”

The historical account explained to students as suggested by one participant:

“if a child could not live with his or her parents at any particular time really you think there was no family member nowhere? There was no community person anywhere? There was no Aboriginal family or person anywhere in the country that could have cared for this child? That’s ridiculous right. But the idea was to deliberately take those kids and put them into non-Native adoptive and foster homes like all over the world”

These statements show the value of family and how family from an Aboriginal perspective is inclusive of a larger extension of community. Ing (1991) states that “In native cultures several members of the extended family and the community are involved in child-rearing” (p. 69) and the story by the participant shows how this was not taken into account throughout history. The participants account might also suggest that they are providing an opportunity for a learner to be able to critically look at the impacts of the child welfare system in a rationalizing way, as the participant notes not being able to find an Aboriginal home for a child was “ridiculous”.

It was further suggested that the sixties scoop and residential schools are just a small part of the Canadian assimilation project but have significantly impacted on the maintenance of the

child welfare system and assimilation which carries on today. A statement by a participant explains:

“I kind of walk them (students) through colonization and with the overview of if you wish to destroy people’s cultures then it makes very good sense to target children because they’re the future ...survivors of residential schools didn’t learn how to parent appropriately and are filled with a great deal of pain and unfortunately a lot of that will come out on their own family relationships and children... a lot of children have been apprehended due to that. There is some truth to that but it's just a small part of the truth in my opinion because I think it's a much bigger picture, I mean the policy, the legislation was still very much the same as that of the residential school - get the kids, take the kids out there, out of the communities, out of the families, assimilate them into mainstream society. And you know they were taken you know ... scooped like they say in the 60s scooped, they were just scooped all over the country... the idea was to deliberately take those kids and put them into non-Native adoptive and foster homes like all over the world. So I think that's how, like I kind of walk them (students) through history because I want them to understand how that is all connected and why kids and don't make it an individual family kind of thing because it just it isn't because it's way too big for that...”

The participant asks students to consider when working with an Aboriginal family that you are working with an interconnected system of families who have experienced an interconnected system of oppressive treatment.

Canadian legislation and participation in the maintenance of colonialism specifically attacked Aboriginal people through a means of destruction of body, mind and community, and implicated in this was social works child welfare field (Thomas and Greene, 2007). An important idea regarding child welfare’s operation, and why this tension exists, from a legislative position is commented on by one participant:

“I think that we made a a big mistake by mandating Aboriginal family services organizations with the child welfare mandate before or without creating an Aboriginal Family and Child Services Act. So and that’s what we’re seeing, here’s the problem right whereas if we had, if we created an Aboriginal Family and Child Services Act then we could have our world views and values embedded in it and then try to put that into practice but that’s not how we’ve done it. To me we’ve done it backwards and I think that’s why we’re having, there’s so many tensions right in terms of how to do it. There is no yet one single Aboriginal mandated child welfare organization in Canada that is able to really ... do it from an Aboriginal perspective”

The above statement spoke directly to my thesis question. Given that legislation mandates are Euro-dominated, practicing social work from a non-Eurocentric perspective encounters several barriers. Firstly the legislation, which informs social work practice, has been established to create a Eurocentric system. Furthermore, the educational system that produces social workers to practice in the field is also created to maintain a system of Eurocentric discourse. With this understanding those who seek to participate in non-Eurocentric ways and those who seek to become allies are left trying to negotiate practices through emancipatory methods. Understanding the development of child welfare systems in combination with the assimilation plan and taking this idea of the current barriers suggested by the participant may suggest that the government strategically enacted the systems to create the identified barriers. So the next question leads to how we can strive towards change. We learn about child welfare and how to conduct our practice in these settings, but how can we make changes in injustices?

The change process: Attitudes values and beliefs

Social work students come to the learning environment to learn just ways of practice which includes AOP and cultural competency as seen in the literature review. Sinclair (2004) notes that use of AOP and cross-cultural approaches in social work education should be done with caution, as they don't fully address the impact of oppression and the destruction of cultures. Sinclair (2004) proposes that the needs of the future generation is what's required when developing models of teaching through a decolonizing pedagogy and the importance of Aboriginal educators to reclaim, reconstruct Aboriginal epistemologies and pedagogies. The courses chosen for this thesis represented the idea of teaching through decolonizing pedagogy is seen within the outlines objectives regarding understanding Aboriginal practices in social work:

Outline #1: To encourage the student to gain an understanding of Indigenous knowledges and worldviews as applied to the helping professions

Outline #2: Know how to integrate critical, decolonizing, anti-racist/anti-oppressive and Haudenosaunee perspectives into policy and practice

Outline #3: Students will have an opportunity to develop a professional analytical framework that is sensitive and respectful to the working relationship of Aboriginal people (practice and policy).

One participant offered a suggestion about how students are taught about how decolonizing pedagogy and diverse practice can be implemented:

“hopefully that’s what’s you know kind of coming across to students right that things like family group conferencing and community care councils around child welfare like these kinds of things that Aboriginal Peoples are putting into practice, that students be knowledgeable about these different ways and how they work and be able to implement them in the work that they do. So even though they have this mandate right how can the mandate be carried out in different ways”

Another participant speaks about decolonizing pedagogy in the classroom environment:

“different approaches to make the learning environment hopefully a better place for the students. And not just from those students at _____ but also for the community too and for the clan mothers to feel comfortable within the class environment. So I thought of things like ...food was important to have the different times when we had food involved to open up”

Emerging from the interviews it appeared the ability for change could be initiated within the classroom as change begins with our attitudes, values and beliefs. Attitudes values and beliefs are identity formations that are influenced by our environment; therefore our environment in the classroom needs to be inclusive and diverse. One participant explains:

“it shouldn’t be like ok go here and take Aboriginal stuff and then the rest of your courses will be on all the important stuff. Cause that’s the impression that’s given right? So I really like the idea of no matter what the course is instructors have a responsibility to bring in Aboriginal content just like they would in any other population and so on right. If you’re teaching research then you bring in research methodologies that are from Aboriginal people”

I believe the point the participant is making is that the current way the education system is set up, Aboriginal content is not only segregated, but also potentially considered as

insignificant when compared to dominant Eurocentric educational content. However, when Aboriginal content is included there is a potential risk of situating it in a way that is used to re-colonize and assimilate. Some knowledge cannot be part of the classroom due to the risk of re-colonization and potential of marginalizing content. One participant suggests:

“even though we’re all trying to do the right sort of thing you can still marginalize content”

Furthermore not only is particular content at risk of being marginalized, a risk of appropriation of knowledge is also found. Maracle (1996) asks readers to consider the idea that, “the appropriation of knowledge, its distortion and, in some cases, its destruction, was vital to the colonial process” (p.89). In understanding how easy it can be for a student to have a distorted understanding of a concept that could potentially be oppressive one participant offered an example of how complex this can be:

“there’s a debate and decolonization in some people’s eyes think it is just more or less doing away with colonization but from an Indigenous perspective we see it as recolonization”

The participant explains how understanding the word decolonization, a term used often in academia can potentially be at risk of recolonizing. Its important to understand what colonization is based on non-Eurocentric perspectives, and how the understanding and usage of *decolonization* can be an act of colonization in itself. The term presents issues as the participant conceptualizes it:

“...recolonizing the knowledge or recolonizing aspects of Indigenous knowledge. So ... we, I believe that we have to use that term ... with a lot of caution because we don’t want to recolonize or colonize Indigenous knowledge to suit our needs because that knowledge has been brought to Indigenous people way beyond ... it derives from I guess Indigenous epistemology and ways of knowing that has come to us from the Creator, so something greater than us, and to recolonize or colonize it is not doing us justice”

In following with the idea of understanding how terms which are used carry aspects of potentially re-colonizing it was interesting that one course required for its second class a reading on appropriate terminology list. Noted in this reading developed by The National Aboriginal Health Organization was that the definitions of terms relating to Aboriginal Peoples were defined by the People themselves, minus terms that stemmed from legal definition:

“The authors of this guide have tried to use current names and definitions that have been selected and defined by Aboriginal Peoples themselves. However, some of the terms listed here have strict legal definitions. They may seem outdated, but they are still necessary in certain contexts (The National Aboriginal Health Organization Terminology Guidelines, 2013)”.

The fact that it was important to the course that students understand how terminology relates, to and is described by Aboriginal Peoples, speaks to aspects of self-determination and efforts to accomplish respectful ways of knowing how words effect and create identity. Understanding the impact and proper use of terminology as defined by the people who are being described may assist social work students in identifying where they have participated in discrimination or oppression. Although this process of awareness may unearth unidentified oppressive actions, barriers regarding identifying oppressive practices still exist.

One significant barrier addressed in the course readings focused on the impact social workers beliefs have on their judgments. The course reading explained that we as social workers often seek out evidence, which confirms our judgments, and tend to ignore things that negate or do not fit with our attitudes and beliefs. The course reading states:

We selectively remember information that endorses our beliefs (Kahneman et al., 1990, p. 150). We look for evidence to confirm not disprove our views (Wason, 1960). We adopt different critical standards for evidence depending on whether it confirms or challenges our beliefs: supportive information tends to be taken at face value while potentially disconfirmatory evidence is subjected to highly sceptical scrutiny (Lord et al., 1979). (Munro 1996, p. 800)

The suggestion this course reading is implying is that we need to ask where did our beliefs and values come from and to what extent are they effecting and impacting others in a way that oppresses. These courses ask a person to look at their beliefs, values and see how these effect attitudes and if the answer is that we are oppressing then we need to look at why and how in order to change this because it does not fall in line with our mission of social justice.

Another example of untended beliefs and values that may oppress can be found within the context of classroom itself. These values might stem from Western ideologies that are considered classroom norms and go un-noticed by the Eurocentric thinker. One participant noted:

“...some of the behaviours some of the students had, being competitive within the classroom ...we would have had probably a cultural sensitivity workshop before going into the (Aboriginal) community so that the... non-Native students would understand what they were going into and know that it is different, even though we’re centralized in Southern Ontario, it is a different community feel in regards to the learning environment... ...Indigenous students that were in the classroom... struggled with that and felt dishonoured by those actions of other people.”

The statement above provides an example of how the value of competition can be seen as an opposing value to Aboriginal students. It also provides a potential resolution in suggesting that a cultural sensitivity workshop might be helpful for non-Aboriginal students. Another participant suggests when considering how they might change the course for the next time:

“I think a preparation course for students when they go there (Aboriginal Community where course was held) so that they learn about going as a visitor not as a landlord. So ... so some preparation for students before they go on the course”

Above is a presumptive statement that students from non-Aboriginal communities entered the learning environment in a way that was dominating or owning, which lines up with competitive characteristics. The statement leads to questions surround whether students who are

immersed in a Eurocentric educational environment can be aware of the impact of potential oppressions such as competitiveness.

There are boundaries that need to be established when a person is learning the pedagogy of a group they are not a member of to avoid re-colonizing knowledge. The preservation of knowledge is also important to reduce the potential of both re-colonizing and appropriating Aboriginal content. One participant explains:

“Keeping that knowledge (Aboriginal) in honour ... in our own way... Like through our ceremonies and through our cultural practices, through our own social structures, through our government structures, through those means and ways that we know how to respect it and preserve that knowledge.”

Bringing in diverse ways of teaching and learning from different perspectives has been an important notion throughout this thesis. Important to this idea is the knowledge and perspective that is delivered by the professor. The social location of the professor plays an important role in the teaching of knowledge.

The significance of the professor’s social location

Sinclair (2007) makes a point to explain that neither the student nor teachers are neutral when it comes to colonial influence in social work education. When speaking to the participants regarding the risk of re-colonization within the classroom and how the social location and identity of the professor affects the class one participant explained:

“I have the lens of an ally which is what we’re going to be talking about but I’m going to be bringing in Aboriginal guest speakers, simulators, all the readings are by Aboriginal people”

This particular participant was non-Aboriginal and explained the follow of how they were able to use their identity in a way that services a decolonizing method:

“Unpack dominance... I do it in a way that doesn’t really leave them anywhere to hide cause if I’m declaring that this part of the location I’m being white, being male and being heterosexual brings these advantages and I’m doing that from the middle it’s difficult for

someone who occupies a similar location to argue otherwise. They do but it's ... but it's really difficult for them to do that. So that's how I pick it up. I'm really careful not to speak on behalf of or for people in the margins. So really what I'm speaking is not about marginalization but the flipside of the coin about domination and how we need to dismantle that."

The above explanation is inclusive on how critical whiteness is tackled in this course.

Sinclair (2004) believes that one of the issues in contemporary social work cross-cultural education is it creates an analysis upon which the "other" is examined and neglects to consider how working with white clients is also cross-cultural of non-white social workers. The above explanation by this participant sheds light on how the analysis of whiteness can potentially offer students an opportunity to reflect on their whiteness and its impact rather than categorizing the "other" and trying to understand how to work with "them".

Operational definition of becoming an Ally

Maracle (1996) speaks about education explaining that the foundational concept is *change* and Thomas and Greene (2007) further suggest that this change can only be initiated after understanding and "engaging the effects of where we have come from and knowing and engaging the effects of where the children and families we support have come from" (p. 96). A common theme throughout the interviews was the power, implication and operation of ones attitudes, values and beliefs and how this plays into the assumptions and actions we chose to portray as social workers. Our values, beliefs and attitudes are formed from where we come from. Fook (2002) believes that domination is not only structural but also internal. During my initial interview the idea of becoming an ally was presented, which was a concept I had not thought about when considering my research question. The following quote by a participant was the first time this idea was presented:

"so then what about when we're talking specifically about Aboriginal children and families... what is the same and what is different in terms of AOP practice... and if you

want to be an AOP practitioner and an ally of Aboriginal Peoples then how will it look similar? How will it look different? What are we going to do with this?... What are the values and then how does those values impact on how we think about things... and then of course from attitudes in terms of how we think then what is the behaviour”

The first participant brought up the idea of becoming an ally when it came as a result of asking about the requirement of students doing self-reflection. The concept of becoming an ally emerged throughout each interview although it was not explicitly noted in the course outlines.

One participant stated:

“how will you be an ally?... I think at the beginning (of the course) it's this kind of thing well they're thinking that they're going to do direct practice with Aboriginal people and that's not necessarily what it is at all, it could be for sure and that's one part of the teachings but the other part of the teachings around being an ally is how do you make you know broader change? How do you take the knowledge that you've gotten out of this course let's say and put it in into the world out there? Who do you talk to? What do you say? What's the difference in looking at it in that kind of a way? Being able to challenge people on stereotypes and that kind of stuff”

One outline followed this up:

Students will examine the importance of worldviews, identity, and values of Aboriginal Peoples and themselves in the provision of human services. Aboriginal perspectives on the role of “helper”, “healer” and “ally” will also be taken up

Sinclair (2004) explains this idea of educators, social workers and students having a responsibility of taking the values and ethics that are learned from Aboriginal perspectives and live them out in their lives. The oppression of information and the stereotypes created in the Canadian society regarding Aboriginal Peoples impacts people's beliefs and is reflected in their actions. As a result even in cases where we know there is something wrong with, for example our practice, we are unequipped in being able to deal with and challenge dominant ideologies and behaviors. According to Fook (2002) the inability to challenge dominant ideologies is because often students have not learned in an environment of intolerance and un-acceptance of oppressive practice and have not had the opportunity to point out contradictions (Fook, 2002).

Bishop (2002) suggests that allies are those who understand structural oppression. The understanding of allies understandings by Bishop includes knowing one cannot solve oppression but can do something in order to be part of the resolution and “look for what they can do, with others, in a strategic way, and try to accept their limitations beyond that” (Bishop, 2002, p. 110). Emerging in the data from this thesis I gained a deeper understanding of an aspect of becoming an ally that attempts to reduce the threat of re-colonization that one might encounter based on Bishop's (2002) understanding, as explained by one participant:

“they (students) have to contribute to ways in changing those structural oppression and racism. But also that they can't do it for Indigenous people, Indigenous people have to do it for themselves. They can't just run into a Native family or community or something and say well I'm going to fix it for you. We've had that. Been there, done that and it still hasn't worked. It's still a form of colonization. So it's more or less trying to teach those students to stand back and let Indigenous people come up with the solutions... or use our ways that we have had for thousands of years or to learn those ways that we have had for thousands of years to empower ourselves to be able to and so that those students learn how to become true true allies”

Another participant suggested that becoming an ally could be seen differently than walking alongside people who are oppressed, or working “with”:

“There's a web site... they're allies, they're non-Native people that have been in existence for a little over 10 years and they were seeing what was happening to the Indigenous _____ people and they wanted to be allies but not to to ... they wanted to support Indigenous people but take on the issue. They wanted to stand behind that issue supporting the Indigenous people to what they wanted to do but also educate other non-Native people in regards to that”

In keeping with this idea of becoming an ally through standing back another participant stated:

“The way I approach becoming an ally has changed over the years and, because I used to have an ally sticker on my door and I took it down because I decided that it wasn't for me to decide I was an ally it was for other people and so I will act in a certain way and do certain things andif I am (an Ally) people will then discover that. So I think social work goes through this thing where ‘I will say something, that makes it so’. But if you put the ally sticker on your door well what are you actually doing behind the door or out in the world”

The above statement was an important factor when the data revealed how to become an ally. The data offered an option that the designation of becoming an ally be established by the recipient of the attributes offered by the ally. Its by invitation that one can be considered an ally, not for the one who wants to be the ally to enforce such a title. The idea of allyship through invitation fits in with the idea of attempting to reduce potential re-colonization.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

“Both the educator and the student must involve themselves in the process of healing, learning, and developing along a path guided by Aboriginal epistemology”. (Sinclair, 2004, p. 55)

The premise of my thesis is that social work practices such as child Welfare are part of and taught in a ‘colonial climate that perpetuates oppressive practice’ which led to my questioning how social workers can learn in an environment where they receive the most accurate and helpful information to critically analyze their practice in a way that reduces oppression. One important aspect regarding this learning environment was inclusion of non-Eurocentric perspectives. I found throughout gathering my information for this thesis that social work education is making strides to produce anti-oppressive and decolonizing practices, however it has a long way to go. Social works educational progress in producing anti-oppressive and decolonizing practices is not necessarily hindered by its lack of ambition or motivation. Its lack of progress relates more to the impact colonialism has on maintaining power over social systems and practices and the exclusion of diverse ideologies and how we strive overcome these obstacles.

The courses examined in the study are inclusion of non-Eurocentric pedagogies showing these courses are available to students; however the findings suggest that when non-Eurocentric ideologies are the focus of a course there is a lack of understanding about how they fit and how they are supposed to be executed in practice. A lack of understanding is a result of the dominant force colonialism and Eurocentric education has had on social work practices in Canadian society. Colonization has been such a destructive force and so ingrained in social systems that it can be hard to identify the oppressive practices and understandings it has created. The intended and unintended consequences are that when students learn about another’s culture the risk of

appropriation is significantly heightened. Currently the data showed in tackling these issue students are provided opportunities to critically examine their own values, attitudes and beliefs. Through this analysis participants expressed that students identify where they participate in oppressive practices and are offered opportunities to learn how to avoid and/or reduce negative impacts.

A colonial climate in social work education was identified in one way or another by all of the participants. Its identification was found within analyzing historical underpinnings that link oppressive colonial practices to current mainstream social work. This colonial climate of education was also identified through the acknowledgement of social works' insufficiencies in providing an environment of diverse knowledge's to students. Participants also concluded that because the educational system is predominantly Eurocentric, when given the opportunity to learn within diverse ideologies students may be unequipped in being able to utilize this learning in a way that reduces oppression.

Currently as noted the educational environment appears to be insufficient in providing diversity in the knowledges it offers to students and this has the potential to manifest itself into producing social workers that perpetuate oppressive practices. The lack in inclusion of diverse knowledge can be seen as result of the colonial systems attempt to assimilate. To deconstruct colonial practices and the influence colonialism has on education, social workers need to understand how social systems grew out of the colonial process and that the very nature of their learning and practicing is also a result of this oppressive system. The struggle with learning about how to participate in decolonizing practices relates to the consequence of the educational system being dominated by Eurocentric ideologies. An analysis of oppressive practice needs to be communicated and understood through non-Eurocentric education in order to reduce

recolonizing knowledge. The idea behind being able to assess and deconstruct practice in a way that is decolonizing requires inclusion of diverse knowledges and the ability to critically examine social and personal ideologies. The indication throughout the data analysis suggests that efforts for inclusion of diverse practice is one way in which to breakdown the colonial hold on social work education.

I have identified child protection/welfare as one of the main practices for analysis due to its complex and competing interests in the social work field. All participants identified child protection as a practice that grew out of the governments' assimilation plan, and still maintains this position today. The information gathered in this study confirmed a significant tension found in social work courses when trying to learn about child protection and how to practice it in a way that strives for social justice. Systems such as child protection have been developed in such a way that non-Eurocentric worldviews and ideologies cannot be amalgamated with current policies and legislation. As one participant explained there is no Aboriginal Family and Child Services Act that can be used to inform Aboriginal Family and Child services. The omission of an Aboriginal Family and Children's Act creates a barrier for Aboriginal Peoples to carry out practices that fit and respect Aboriginal culture. There was no clear resolution to this tension found, however the findings suggest that students can find justice in emancipatory practices in how they understand, view and work within these oppressive structures.

Key to understanding how social workers can engage in practices that reduce harm is through becoming an ally. The production of becoming an ally as described in the research was significantly impactful for me. In understanding I cannot generalize my conclusions, I do believe that how one becomes an ally should be further investigated. Coming away from this research, I feel how I identify as an ally has changed. My initial understanding was that the essence of

becoming an ally was being able to working ‘with’ clients and fight ‘for’ them. I have move from this principal now to a space where becoming an ally should be an identification earned, rather than assumed.

The idea of including diverse pedagogies is not simply suggesting that social work offer students a choice to take non-Eurocentric focused courses; the suggestion is that social work education endorse a variety of epistemologies as foundational pedagogy within the system. It is a request that academic space be a balance of knowledge that constructs practices as holistic and inclusive of diverse cultures. This may appear to be an idealistic request; however if viewed as inconceivable I argue that one should take stock, challenge and analyze their own personal values and beliefs.

Very important to this study was having the opportunity to interview Aboriginal Professors. The insight they were able to provide in the ways they engage in decolonization offered many of the above conclusions on how students can learn about how colonization has affected child welfare practices. The suggestions and information they provided might help other students and teachers learn ways to take up these issues and tensions in social work practice.

Social work education is a large system that offers a wide range of study topics that may, or may not participate in decolonizing approaches, which creates limitations for studying it. There are several limitations in this particular study and I have chosen to identify three. First, having only included Aboriginal Perspectives for analysis of non-Eurocentric pedagogy subsequently omits other important diverse cultural practices and knowledges that are excluded in education. No additional perspectives were researched or part of this study but many are equally important to addressing inclusion in social work education. Secondly, ideas surrounding the forfeiting of power for Eurocentric focused curriculum were identified but not analyzed in

depth or addressed with the participants. Further study regarding this idea of loss of power would be beneficial and I feel required to move forward in addressing and incorporating diverse ideologies in social work education. Researching the surrendering of power would potentially identify target areas that need to be addressed to break down current dominating barriers. Lastly the study was missing an analysis, or recommendations regarding the future plan for social work education. Although we cannot predict what the future holds, researching what is proposed for future social work education would lend itself to figuring out how we can move forward with diversity of knowledges in a practical way.

Conclusion

The evolution of mainstream social work education in Canada has been dominated by Eurocentric education and has created a ‘colonial climate that perpetuates oppressive practices’. It is enviable that tensions arise when students want to learn how to practice in decolonizing ways, as it is a contradiction to the nature of education’s colonial climate. The tensions that arise within the classroom identify where Eurocentric education continues to participate in colonial practices within a colonial climate. They provide a starting place for social work students and professors to critically examine unjust ways of practicing social work. As social workers our core values and principals include the “pursuit of social justice... integrity in professional practice and respect for the inherent dignity of worth of persons” (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005, p. 4). These principals are difficult to uphold and aspire to without informed guidance. Rights and freedoms of all people are directly related to their cultural ways of being and knowing. The question still stands; how are we as social workers able to support those we work with if our ways of knowing are not inclusive of ALL people?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A**Email Recruitment Script****Kara Samuels,****Masters Candidate in Social Work****A Study of The Education of Colonization; How We Learn About Aboriginal Child Welfare****McMaster Study: Exploring how social work students learn about colonization from an Aboriginal perspective**

E-mail Subject line: McMaster Study - The Education of Colonization; How We Learn About Aboriginal Child Welfare

I am inviting you to participate in my study by submitting to me your course outline pertaining to _____(course name). As part of graduate program in Social Work at McMaster University, I am carrying out a study to explore how colonization is addressed within Aboriginal courses offered to social work students. I'm interested in learning how child protection can be viewed as a tool of colonization and how this is explained to students.

I selected your course and name from a list of course offerings online in the field of Aboriginal studies. I further invite you to participate in a short 30 minute one on one interview either on the telephone or a place of your choosing at your convince. You are not required to take part in this interview if you are submitting your class outline. This interview will be to gather further information as an extension of your outline and further understand some of the aspects that might not be available thought strictly reading the outline.

The risks involved in participating in the interview are minimal. You may worry about how others will react to what you say. Although you will not necessarily be identified by name you may be identified based on your method of teaching. Therefore there is a minimal risk to your reputation. All efforts will be made to minimize risk through carefully separating the analysis of interviews from the course content. Also the names of the school and yourself will be disguised. In addition the course names will also be disguised to ensure continued confidentiality.

You can stop the interview at any time. I have attached a copy of a letter of information about the study that gives you full details. This study has been reviewed and cleared by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you any have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted you can contact:

The McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administration, Development and Support

(ROADS)

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration. After a week, I will send you a one-time follow-up reminder.

Kara Samuels BA,
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Appendix B

Semi- Structured Interview Script

I would like to start the interview telling you a little about where I am coming from, because it does not seem right that you tell me things and I not tell you.

Neither I nor my supervisor are Aboriginal. Last semester I took a course that was co-taught by my supervisor and a Haudenosaunee Clan Mother at Six Nations. This course examined the child welfare system and made it clear that child protection is a tool of colonization, and that other aspects of social work have also sometimes colonized.

I took the course interested in pedagogy - given the ways social work can colonize - I have been wondering how instructors navigate the tension between teaching child welfare and other social work approaches knowing that the occupation is linked to colonization. In other words, how do instructors (and schools of social work) navigate the tension between a hope that social students will take up the occupation in a way that helps, while knowing that so often it is used to oppress?

Any questions about my area or where I am coming from in relation to it?

Maybe we could start with how you take up the tension created by child welfare being a tool of colonization within your classroom?

What are the teaching methods you have used to help student learn about the tension or the concept of colonization?

If applicable how does history play a role in teaching?

Do you think any of the assignment relate to minimizing this tension if so why? what is it about the assignment that allows for dealing with the tension?

Is there one overarching ideology or learning from an aboriginal perspective taught that you think is vital to reducing or disrupting dominant western practices such as child welfare? If so what is it and how does it do this? If not is there one you can is there one you think is important to your teaching?

Other Questions we discussed if applicable during this interview:

How do you think the institution takes up this issue?

How do you think the social location of the teacher impacts how they take up this issue:

- Them as an individual
- Them as non-Aboriginal person

Appendix C

DATE: _____

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

A Study about The Education of Colonization; How We Learn About Aboriginal Child Welfare

Investigators:

Principal Investigator:

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Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to discover how social work education teaches students about colonization. Colonization within the Canadian context has often targeted Aboriginal Peoples and child welfare or child protection has been a significant tool in doing this. I have chosen to explore how those working from an aboriginal perspective take this up by evaluating courses offered to social work students that use an Aboriginal approach or come from an Aboriginal lens. This research is being completed as a requirement for my thesis for my master's degree in social work.

Research Process:

What will happen during the research is I will have received the outline, which you use to teach your course. After receiving that I would invite you participate in an interview and schedule a time to meet face to face at a location of your choosing, or a time to complete a telephone interview at a time of your choosing. At the time of the interview we will review the consent

form and I will answer any questions you may have regarding this or this study. This should take approximately 2-5 minutes. The consent form will either than be signed, or with your permission a recording of verbal consent will be completed. With your permission I will than ask you a series of questions which will take approximately 20 minutes. Examples of these questions will be

- How do you navigate the tension between teaching child welfare and other social work approaches knowing that the occupation is linked to colonization. In other words, how do instructors (and schools of social work) navigate the tension between a hope that social students will take up the occupation in a way that helps, while knowing that so often it is used to oppress
- What methods do you use to teach your students?
- Has available information about colonization and its linkage to child welfare changed over the years? [] Yes [] No. Please tell me more about why you think that?
- Who makes up the body of scholars you draw from to teach your course?

You may be asked to explain in further detail your answer to a question or asked to clarify your answer. I will also be asking some background information such as your years as a teacher and what brought you to teach in this field. If you choose not to answer the question we will move on to the next. You may also choose to stop the interview at any time. During the interview I will either be taking hand written notes, electronic notes, or voice recording the interview.

Risks:

The risks involved in participating in the interview are minimal. You may worry about how others will react to what you say. Although you will not necessarily be identified by name you may be identified based on your method of teaching. Therefore there is a minimal risk to your reputation. All efforts will be made to minimize risk through carefully separating the analysis of interviews from the course content. Also the names of the school and yourself will be disguised. In addition the course names will also be disguised to ensure continued confidentiality.

You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable and you can withdraw (stop taking part) at any time. I will describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Benefits:

The research will not benefit you directly given the nature of this study. I hope to learn more about how students are being taught about colonization. I hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help us, students and teachers, to better understand areas where colonization has impacted society and how that is reflected in social work practice. This could help students and teachers to identify were decolonizing knowledge is linked to practice, where is it influencing practice and possibly identify gaps in this knowledge.

Privacy:

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. However, since your group (community) is small, others may be able to identify you on the basis of references you make. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell me. There are also circumstances, however, in which I cannot keep information confidential. If I am told that a child under 16 is being or is at risk of being physically harmed or sexually abused, or if I become aware that a person plans to harm themselves or someone else, I am bound by law to report this to the appropriate authorities.

The information/data you provide will be kept in a locked desk/cabinet where only I will have access to it. Information kept on a computer will be protected by a password. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed.

Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw), from the interview for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study or up until approximately June 1st, 2013. This date has been chosen in accordance to the anticipated deadline for this master's thesis and to give the researcher time to make any necessary changes. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

I expect to have this study completed by approximately August 1st, 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you. The thesis will also be available via McMaster University Digital Commons website digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/.

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

Kara Samuels BA, Masters Candidate in Social Work

Phone: 416-427-5567

Email: hennebkg@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Kara Samuels, of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately June 1st, 2013
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

Yes.

No

2. Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to this email address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.