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Colonial continuities and nation-building within social work practice

and a demand for critical whiteness studies

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Abstract

Raven Sinclair (2004) locates the social worker at the heart of the colonial project, carrying out violent and assimilative government policy in Canada (p.50). Social work's connections to colonialism have been consciously and some would say "innocently" mutually dependent (Rossiter, 2001; Heron, 2007). Social work responses over time have been criticized for being non-performative (Ahmed, 2004), upholding institutional power (Bunjun, 2014) and ignoring ongoing colonialism (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). This study explores how self-identified white social work managers and directors reflect on and understand their roles in relation to reconciliation policy. It looks at the way discourse interrupts or maintains ruling relations including white supremacy and other colonial continuities (Heron, 2007). "In order to avoid further complicity, in assimilative and colonial practices, non-indigenous helpers must develop a clear understanding of their privilege and of their professions' complicity in past and present colonial practices embedded in their practice"(Baskin, 2016). Through qualitative interviewing the study used critical whiteness studies and critical discourse analysis with the concept of relational validity in mind (Tuck & Yang, 2018). "What is valid in research is that which resonates with people's lives and informs their power to make change" (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p.xiii). The findings suggest that participants orientation to reconciliation in the workplace, is controlled and continually reinforced through state discourses (neoliberal, neocolonial, reconciliation). Interestingly, the findings also suggest that participants may be de-contextualizing AOP discourses to neutralize and depoliticize their professional roles in the colonial project, as well as to rationalize their reluctance to take action. This suggests current approaches are not adequate to address colonial continuities in an era of reconciliation.

Keywords: social work, reconciliation discourse, nation-building, settler subjectivity, complicity, neoliberalism, colonial project, Canada, critical whiteness studies, gatekeeping, retreatism, harm reduction.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Setting a context

The history of colonization in Canada has become more prevalently discussed through the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report* (2008) and *Call to Action Report* (2015), however the meaning of this for Canadians has been obscured by media, and government. Reconciliation discourse encompasses both settler colonial narratives and the unwavering positioning of Indigenous people and voices (Manuel, 2017). This discourse and its complex and fragmented messaging navigates and decides Indigenous relations and futures in Canada (Edmonds, 2016; Monture-Angus,1999). Regan (2010) argues that the myth of the colonial Canadian narrative and Canadian relations with Indigenous people is "rooted in a racist mindset" (p. 235). "Various forms of settler violence against Indigenous peoples can be traced from these origins through to the flawed reconciliation discourse that now dominates Indigenous-settler relations" (p. 235).

The "age of apology" attitude central to mainstream discourse around Indigenous relations prompts concerns around the "performative effects of these reconciliations and their refutations in public culture" (Alfred, 2010; Edmonds, 2016, p.2). It prompts a need for settlers (non-indigenous subjects) to rethink and challenge their understanding of Canadian history, and the violence carried out towards Indigenous peoples (Regan, 2010). This notion of the colonial project as completed has its limitations in its deliberate failure to include land dispossession (past and present) and resource extraction (Alfred, 2010; Simpson, 2013). It also historicizes the violence and obscures understandings of colonialism, capitalism and white supremacy (Baskin, 2016). It is important to identify that much of the mainstreaming of highly invisibilized colonial repression throughout Canadian history is due to the efforts and hard work of many generations

of Indigenous people (Alfred, 2010; Baskin, 2016; Regan, 2010). These individuals and communities continue to fight and shed light on the ongoing effects of Canadian colonialism.

Intimately entwined within reconciliation discourse, the normalization and invisibility of racism in Canada allows the mechanisms of white supremacy to persist and even escalate on a national scale (Dangerfield, 2017; Khan, 2017). In the introduction of *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a white settler society,* Razack (2002) states that the "spatial and legal practices required in the making and maintaining of a white settler society" highlight "how the constitution of spaces reproduces racial hierarchies" (p.1). White supremacy's alienating, divisive and violent qualities, discourses around whiteness, entitlement, belonging, and Canadian identity have sprung up all over the country (Bunjun, 2014; Wright, 2017).

For examples of this, we need not look far. This spring, an Indigenous youth, Colten Boushie's alleged murderer Gerald Stanley (who is white) was found not-guilty by an all-white jury and also managed to raise over $100 000 from supporters for his legal campaign (MacDonald, 2018). Monture-Angus (1999) identifies the implicit injustice of "categories of discourse (law, politics, or academia) [that] are inappropriately applied without consideration [of] the different structural bases of the worldviews of Aboriginal people" (p.42). The meaning of this process speaks clearly to what Indigenous people and their allies have stated: that cultural genocide and colonial violence is ongoing in Canada (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p.135). The fact that Stanley received $80000 over his fundraising target also shows that supporters of his defense may be financing more than his legal fees, a claim about something bigger than the trial itself. By funding and overfunding this defense they also demonstrate their allegiance to Stanley's defense in spite of claims made by Boushie's community around the trial and the verdict being unjust (Common & Gomez, 2018).

History continues to repeat itself through court ignorance around systemic racism in Hamilton, Ontario. Ameil Joseph (2018) shares his experience being summoned as a juror, one of two triers in the court proceedings for Peter Khill, who was recently found not guilty for the killing of Jonathan Styres in early 2016. As a critical race scholar, Joseph problematizes the courts proclamation of' "significant improvements" in addressing racial bias during jury selection and points to "systemic colonial continuities and systemic racism in Canada and within the Canadian criminal justice system" (2018, para 5.). According to Joseph (2018), during the selection, jurors had the potential to be excluded by having an awareness of racism or admitting to having experienced racism. Law's commitment to impartiality, by "abstracting people from their social contexts or locations" (Comack, 2014, p.13) is only accentuated in Joseph's noting of the judge's race-erasing ideas. Nationalist discourses tend to dismiss identity in Canada (Schick & St. Denis, 2005b, Razack, 1999). This prevailed in Joseph's court experience where he identified a strong message, "identities should not be spoken of, nor be considered" (2018, para. 14).

Joseph's (2018) witnessing of the legacy of legal injustice for Indigenous peoples in Canada is grounded in the fact that "Canadian legal history is characterized by an *ideology of racelessness*" (Backhouse, as cited in Schick & St. Denis, 2005b, p. 305). While Joseph (2018) calls it out in the present *Erasing Race but Not Racism,* two decades earlier Morrison, as quoted by Schick and St. Denis, describes that "claiming racelessness is itself a racist act" (2005b, p. 305). While the details of these examples are complicated and go beyond the limits of this thesis, they expose the reality that white supremacy in Canada is in need of urgent attention and exposure. "Racism is one of the essential tools of colonialism and without understanding the workings and effects of racism, you cannot fully understand Canadian colonialism" (Manuel,

2017, p. 76).

The connections between the Boushie case, and Joseph's experience with jury selection, demonstrate how deeply nationalist discourse drives the reactions of the Canadian public, for better or worse. They are also meant to demonstrate how systemic racism and colonialism are mutually institutionalized (Manuel, 2017; Sharma & Wright, 2008), making Canada's gesture of reconciliation an empty one (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.10). This fact about white supremacy has far reaching implications for social work. For Yee, one "cannot expect to address white supremacy if they are unable to realize how seemingly innocent practices of "helping" in fact produce and reproduce colonial relations of domination" (Yee, 2017, p.68).

Chapter 2 - Research Problem

This research project is interested in exploring the mechanisms, narratives, and barriers affecting individuals institutional, professional and personal roles in relation to reconciliation discourse. **The research explores how self-identified white social work managers and directors reflect on and understand their roles in relation to policy.** What are current discourses and best practice approaches to reconciliation? In what ways do these processes interrupt or maintain ruling relations including white supremacy and other colonial continuities (Heron, 2007)? "In order to avoid further complicity in assimilative and colonial practices; non-indigenous helpers must develop a clear understanding of their privilege and of their professions' complicity in past and present colonial practices embedded in their practice" (Baskin, 2016, p.177). The CASWE's (2017) *Statement on Complicity and Commitment to Change* provokes the profession to acknowledge and act on its complicity in colonialism. The practices and discourses might also give a sense of the current political knowledge around issues of colonialism, settler

Canada and decolonizing movements.

Dominant discourses, including neoliberal, colonial and national discourses perpetuate shallow colonial framings of reconciliation; the maintenance of power continues to be driven by discourse that denies ongoing colonization and enactments of white supremacy. "At a practical and institutional level, rarely are connections made about the relationships between whiteness, white supremacy, and racialization processes in social service agencies' institutional practices" (Yee, 2017, p. 61). Policy has been one of the main mechanisms in implementing the colonial agenda in Canada, beginning with the Indian Act (1876). It is one of the main ways organizations are answering for, adjusting and adapting to not only reconciliation discourse, but colonial legacy in general. Heron (2007) points to "colonial continuities" or the maintenance of colonial systems through social relations. While there are critiques from social work scholars around how this could be engaged with, we don't experience an explicit exploration of the mechanisms or processes of colonial continuities and in what ways the social work profession plays a role in this (Yee, 2017; Heron, 2007). Baskin references Yee (2015) "this is because the enactment of racism itself has been routinized and naturalized through the strategizes and processes of whiteness" (p.105).

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

Introduction

Raven Sinclair (2004) locates the social worker at the heart of the colonial project, literally carrying out violent and assimilative government policy in Canada (p.50). Social work's connections to colonialism throughout history and in the present, have been consciously and some would say "innocently" mutually dependent (Rossiter, 2001; Heron, 2007). Conversations

within the social work profession to address tensions to reflect these observations have provoked anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks in practice. The implementation of these frameworks over time have been criticized for being non-performative (Ahmed, 2004), upholding institutional power (Bunjun, 2014) and ignoring ongoing colonialism (Lawrence & Dua, 2005).

This review of the literature starts with social works colonial beginnings and its continual role in maintaining the colonial project. According to Johnstone (2018) and others (Bunjun, 2014; Lee & Ferrer, 2014) it does this through mechanisms, such as gatekeeping. For Lee and Ferrer (2014) gatekeeping "[determines] those deserving versus undeserving of entry into the colonial nation building project" (p. 13). Gatekeeping also produces present day processes of control and surveillance over the Canadian project itself, largely through neoliberal logic (Lee & Ferrer, 2014, p. 12). It then shifts to the context from which a call for critical race theory (CRT) emerges in the social work profession including social work education. The review demonstrates a history of responses or trends; social work's failure to address systemic inequities and root causes. These include diversity and multiculturalism training, cultural competency, and other approaches which are all presented under the guise of anti-oppression (AOP) and anti-racism frameworks. With a turn towards CRT we see the beginnings of concepts like white privilege and social location emerge in the profession (Jeffery, 2005; Yee,2005). This review then continues by discussing how social work education introduces these concepts through critical self-reflection, critical autobiography, intersectionality, and subjectivity as explicit components of anti-racist social work education (Heron, 2005, 2007; Schick & St. Denis, 2005a,2005b).

The literature review then zooms out to reconsider how AOP and anti-racist frameworks have fallen short of their claims. Not only have they previously failed to recognize their essentialist and reductive constitutions to date (Zhang, 2018; Joseph, 2017; Sharma & Wright,

2008), they have also fostered inattentively, a major gap between theory and practice (Jeffery, 2017). This gap, a kind of negligence, has led to a depoliticized and narrowed understanding of the implications of essentialism and its harm in these frameworks (Jeffery, 2017). Here we see the concept of an "anti" positionality problematized and left behind (Zhang, 2018; Joseph, 2015).

The literature review will also cover a critique of a missing macro lens; specifying how neoliberalism, colonialism and capitalism must also be part of these conversations and on the radar for social workers. These broader political concepts are lost in current social work practice, where social work fails to address its complicity in a meaningful way (Yee, 2017; Jeffery, 2017). The literature points to a need to identify, confront and engage with processes of assimilation and colonial gate-keeping in the profession (Yee, 2017).

3.1 Colonial Beginnings/ Colonial Endings

"Social work has its own traditions of critical scholarship that challenge some of the historical practices of the profession and the larger society that serve to perpetuate institutionalized oppression, including racism" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 252). While this "tradition" seems to be commonly understood within the academy, discrepancies remain in the field (Pon, 2009; Yee, 2017). This section of the review begins with discussions on social work's historical legacy with colonization in Canada. For Blackstock (2009), "social work must look in the professional mirror to see its history from multiple perspectives including that of those who experienced the harm" (p.35). Beginning with Rossiter's (2001) confessional skepticism for the profession itself, she points out the contradictions between "facilitating governmentality" and social work's "helpful" intentions. Johnstone (2018), Bunjun (2014) and Heron's (2007) works' illustrate the interweaving of good intentions and social works subjects in relation to colonial

continuities (Heron, 2007), a fact which can no longer be ignored by the social work industrial complex.

Social Service Agencies as Sites of Colonial Encounters

Rossiter's (2001) work *Innocence Lost Suspicion Found: Do we Educate for or Against Social Work?* demonstrates a profound hopelessness in regard to the social work profession. She questions whether social work and social work education will ever lead to emancipatory ends. Rossiter argues that social work is "an identity position that facilitates governmentality" (2001, p.4) and identifies as being "deeply suspicious of the innocence of "doing social work" (Rossiter, 2001, p.1). "We are always acting in and through a history in which the contradictions of history are lived out in our practices, and no person - even ones who do it perfectly can be extracted from history" (Rossiter, 2001, p.4). This theme concerning critical social work tensions is situated by Rossiter, in practicing within hegemonic contexts like capitalism and colonialism (Rossiter, 2001). Jeffery's (2005) article *What Good is Anti- Racist Social Work if You Can't Master it'?: Exploring a Paradox in Anti- Racist Social Work Education,* echos Rossiter's concerns.

> *There is paradox in social work where social workers aren't just asked to be critical of how whiteness and social work practice resemble each other, but also that when we teach people to be self-reflexive and critical of whiteness, we are, at the same time, inviting them to be critical of social work. (Jeffery, 2005, p. 409)*

Heron's (2007) book *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender and the Helping Narrative* mirrors much of the hesitancy in Rossiter's (2001) message. Heron (2007) identifies a crisis in Western helping in general, providing an important analysis of feminine bourgeois helping subjects and their complicity in state development objectives (2007). The helping industry in Canada today is similarly exploited by, but also part of the fabric of bourgeois

helping identity (Yee, 2017). Heron (2007) points to "colonial continuities" or the maintenance of colonial systems through social relations. Bunjun's (2014) articulation that feminist organizations exist as "sites of organizational colonial encounters and contact zones" also implicates social service organizations (p.3). Johnstone's (2018) article *Settler Feminism, Race Making, and Early Social Work in Canada* is important for a couple reasons. It points to the notion that social workers originated in Canada explicitly as settlers and that the practice of social work was one in the same with the Canadian settlement project. Bunjun uncovers a tendency within feminist organizations to "[reproduce] nation-building discourses and practices of dispossession and exclusion" (p.5) through how they engage with institutions by their attempts to lobby and challenge state initiatives. This understanding of the social service organization as a helping site validates it as space for colonial encounters and nation building (Johnstone, 2018). "Nation-building [is] the process of building, maintaining, and gate-keeping a colonial nation" (Bunjun, 2014, p. 4).

A manual used in Canadian immigration in early social work is referred to by Johnstone as "neutralizing white settler policy of assimilation and cultural genocide" (2018, p. 5). "Canada's robust immigration program required a workforce that could complete the nation-building tasks, but that at the same time fulfilled a gatekeeping function that maintained the white settler dream (Johnstone, 2017, p. 5). In the chapter *Demystifying Transnationalism: Canadian immigration policy and the promise of nation building,* Shakir (2007) demonstrates the explicit relationship white people have to nation building, pointing out that non-white people are not allowed to participate in the same way. "Ostensibly, the Canadian rulers have not viewed or allowed non-Europeans to be active participants in the nation-building experiment but have instead allocated to them a circumscribed role of either serving the nation builders or remaining

marginal to society" (Shakir, 2007, p. 70). For Bunjun "encounters demonstrate that the subjects involved are not equal and that they carry traces of difference which are markers of power and power relations" (2014, p.5).

Heron explains "one of the enduring legacies of the incomplete process of bourgeois identity formation from the nineteenth century" is a "legacy still enacted within and by means of ongoing imperial relations" (Heron, 2007, p.91). Heron uses the ambiguous position of white middle class women in relation to "full bourgeois status" stating white women as "bourgeois insiders/outsiders" (Heron, 2007, p.91).

Johnstone's conclusions around gatekeeping as a social work state function and Bunjun's (2014) work around feminist organizations as colonial contact zones demonstrate the tendencies of bourgeois development strategies that Heron writes about. Another important point Johnstone makes is how social work is aligned with feminist organizing despite hegemonic tendencies (2018). "Our desire for development is produced through continuing processes of white bourgeois Canadian identity formation" (Heron, 2007, p.151). Heron insists "bourgeois subjects are located in corresponding...positions of power vis a vis non-white and First Nations peoples" (Heron, 2007, p.152). While Johnstone creates the context for how the settler social worker subject emerged in Canada, Rossiter (2001), Heron (2007) and Bunjun's (2014) concerns are more relevant now than ever.

How is the concept of "colonial continuities" taken up in social work and social work education? While we are continually touching on and acknowledging social work's role in settler colonialism, our current critiques do not incorporate an interrogation of the processes or mechanisms intrinsic to Heron's (2007) "colonial continuities" in a substantial way. Should social work today look at current gatekeeping and nation-building tendencies within the

profession? Policy, for example, is one of the major ways we see the social work profession respond. Despite the knowledge of social work's affiliation with the colonial agenda, policy formation continues to be detrimental to indigenous communities it "seemingly" intends to serve (Baskin, 2016). "Policy practice refers to activities that are carried out by social workers as an integral part of their professional work and which is aimed at influencing the development, enactment, implementation, modification or preservation of social policies, at the organizational, local, national, or international levels (Almog-Bar et al., 2015, p. 391). Especially at a time when mainstream social work is being called out in relation to reconciliation and past violence? While Johnstone refers specifically to *the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's* (TRC) *Calls to Action* (2015), she fails to apply these questions to social work's present and instead focuses on white settler history and respecting aboriginal knowledges.

3.2 Problematizing Social Work Practice as Usual

Social work or development work has been criticized as pursuant of white liberal feminism and upholding the needs and desires of white feminine bourgeois subjects (Heron, 2007). The field has been thoroughly scrutinized for its western and overwhelmingly christian roots, the ideology which social work carried out globally, as well as in Canada (Heron, 2007; Johnstone, 2018). To answer for these grounded criticisms, social work has made anti-oppression and anti-racism standard requirements for practice. The strategies and manifestations of these frameworks have been highly problematized and questioned (Rossiter, 2001; Heron, 2007; Yee, 2005). Previous attempts at incorporating "diversity" into the fold have led to an important historical pattern that social work must understand before moving forward.

Practice frameworks and strategies in the social work profession include: diversity

training, multiculturalism, cultural competency, social inclusion, cultural sensitivity, cultural safety, cultural humility, anti-oppression, anti-racism. What they have in common, is that they have all been criticized as naively reductive approaches that are instrumental in countering their own presumed intentions (Pon, 2009). These models, have been used to educate and train social workers to "deal" with issues around racism and oppression in practice and have been overwhelmingly flagged within the literature (Fellin, 2000; Nylund, 2006; Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Joseph, 2015, Baskin, 2016). When used in these ways they become gatekeeping processes where instead of addressing oppression they inadvertently reinforce it. A short review of these frameworks and the reasoning of the criticisms follow.

3.3 Mainstream Social Work Practice Limitations

Multiculturalism and Diversity Frameworks

Fellin's (2000) take on multiculturalism is that its oversimplifying and naively optimistic (2000). It fails to "explicitly discuss the influence of White privilege and its relationship to racial oppression, power, and inequities in access to resources" (Abram & Gibson, 2007, p. 150). In Abram & Gibson's (2007) section on *Teaching Diversity in Social Work Education,* they identify a trend of how social work has implemented diversity content historically, and how the framing of this through time has amounted to much of the same oppression. They identify three *multiculturalism* inspired models for practicing with diverse ethnic and cultural groups that contextualize social work's responses embedded quite obviously within the colonial project (Abram & Gibson, 2007). They start by identifying the *assimilation model* as contested and an approach of the past, then shine light on a highly used and criticized approach, the *cultural sensitivity model,* and land in the last and most engaged framework, the *anti-racist model*

(Abram & Gibson, 2007)

Interestingly, while Abram & Gibson situate assimilationist models of multiculturalism in the past, many critiques situate assimilation strategies embedded in anti-oppressive frameworks of the present, including discourse around multiculturalism, cultural competency and inclusion (Nyland, 2006, p.29). Social workers good intentions result in "[employing] an essentialist and narrow understanding of race–one that sees races as fixed and given, discrete and homogeneous" (Nyland, 2006, p. 40).

Dangers of Cultural Competency

Many others also warn about the potential harms of *cultural competence* in social work (Baskin, 2016; Furlong & Wight, 2012; Pon, 2009). These findings by Pon (2009), Furlong & Wight (2012) and many others point to a trend in how social work is drawn to strategies that allow a false neutralizing of power (Carr & Lund, 2011, p. 178), responsibility and a quick and tidy timeline for resolution. Cultural competency constructs knowledge about cultural "others" in a way that does not challenge social workers' sense of innocence and benevolence" (Pon, 2009, p. 66). Furlong & Wight (2011) mirror Pon's (2009) conclusions about cultural competency and problematize its attractiveness to social workers (p. 39).

Critical of framing cultural competence as a learned skill (Furlong & Wight, 2011, p.39), they also "do not believe the standard, modernist version of cultural competence offers an adequately proactive engagement with the socially conducted meanings and mechanisms of difference" (Furlong & Wight, 2011, p.50). Furlong & Wight warn about this idea that social worker can "tick the box" on issues of structural racism through an anti-oppressive lens (2011). They argue for *critical awareness*, a way of challenging ourselves to "be more connected and accountable than our culture has acculturated us to be" (Furlong & Wight, 2009 p. 52). Also, that

there is "no way to safely manage these attempts at interpreting cultural competence in the field despite explicitly defined outlines (Furlong & Wight, 2009 p. 52). For Joseph (2015) competency is not only inadequate to address systems of oppression, it is also impossible (p. 34). Joseph's (2015) messaging here points to a need for a critical exploration of the mechanisms of social work practice, to link behaviours in context with the maintenance of systems of oppression.

> *It is not an understanding or competence of intersecting understandings of race, ability, and citizenship through the interlocking systemic analyses of racism, ableism, and nationalism that reveal the "how" of a project... It is an attention to the techniques, instruments, technologies, and practices used that reveals how violence becomes permitted and how it can be intervened upon methodologically. (Joseph, 2015, p. 23)*

Cultural Sensitivity, Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility

Alternatives to cultural competency models have emerged and include cultural sensitivity, cultural safety and cultural humility. For Baskin, cultural sensitivity, "practices and guidelines are insufficient as they divert attention from the current impacts of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples while individualizing their struggles" (2016, p. 13). Sinclair (2004) problematizes mainstream social work's initiatives to incorporate culturally sensitive or cross-cultural education as a response to growing awareness of colonialism (p.52). "Cross-cultural discourse often dismisses and/or incorrectly authors Aboriginal thought, history, and colonization in terms that are ambiguous and misleading" (p. 52). For Sinclair, the effects of what she calls a "culture of silence" creates an escalation and further misunderstandings around the indigenous context, literally growing racism and discrimination (p. 52). Something interesting here; Sinclair notes how focusing on cross-cultural frames fails to include a critique of "othering" where white subjects are never invited to implicate themselves within the cross-cultural frame (p. 52). This acknowledgement around whiteness at this time, illustrates that cross- cultural or culturally sensitive frameworks that are put in place as responses to a growing

awareness of colonialism and its importance for social work education departs from conversations around anti-racism and a need for critical race theory.

This might mean that CRT, specifically whiteness studies are left out of this mode of responses to reconciliation. Cultural safety as a Maori concept, is still being explored in Canada (Yeung, 2016). According to Baskin (2016) cultural safety moves beyond cultural sensitivity, awareness, and competence. Education and job training in cultural safety have been recommended in the social services sector in Canada (Yeung, 2016). It involves "reflection on racism, power relations, and one's own privilege and status, as well as the oppression/marginalization and status of those we service" (Baskin, 2016, p. 88). "Cultural safety extends beyond cultural understanding and knowledge of the health care worker by emphasizing the power imbalance inherent in the patient- practitioner relationship" (Yeung, 2016, p. 3). Baskin (2016) speaks to the limitations of what is known about cultural safety in social work practice and advocates that more research is needed. McBurney's (2015) research "[illuminates] how whiteness is related to discussions of cultural safety in Canada, despite the ease with which it can remain invisible and unexplored within social work research and practice" (McBurney, 2015, p. 140).

Finally, cultural humility has also emerged as an alternative to cultural competency. It requires a "move from a focus on mastery in understanding 'others' to a framework that requires personal accountability in challenging institutional barriers that impact marginalized communities" (Fisher-Borne, Cain & Martin, 2015). Other current or emerging approaches like mentioned above; all have a place in anti-racist and anti-oppression practice but demonstrate a deficit in encompassing the colonizing context of Canada in this moment. All of these models were believed to be "best practice" during their times of implementation.

3.4 Mainstream AOP, Neoliberalism and Colonial Anti-racism

Questioning the "Anti"

Joseph's (2015) work *Beyond Intersectionalities of Identity or Interlocking Analyses of Difference: Confluence and the Problematic of "Anti"-oppression* actually concerns "anti" language within our understandings of power. Relying on difference or taking positions "against" systems of power assume detrimentally that those positions are fixed (Joseph, 2015, p.33). Zhang (2018), recognizing AOP's status-quo qualities, makes the point that it has yet to be fully scrutinized in social work education. Similarly to Joseph (2015), Zhang (2018) deeply

Interestingly, Zhang (2018) traces how the AOP identity is developed, troubling how it is constituted through exclusion and division. For Joseph, an "analysis of confluence refuses to engage in this competition and fragmentation" (2015, p. 26) resisting essentialization, and instead relying on interlocking systems of power manifested temporally (Joseph, 2015). It also allows someone identifying as "anti" to do just that, identify, but not actually engage with it through subjectivity. "When confluence and violence are appreciated for their fluidity and complexity, the position of "anti" is impossible, as we are all in a position of complicity" (Joseph, 2015, p. 34). While recognizing "complicity" we can also acknowledge "agency" within that complicity. "Difference is currently relied upon in responses that aim to know difference by developing competencies or to take positions as "anti" in response to racism or oppression. This has important implications for current social work practice. Sinclair (2004) also questions the self-proclaiming tendencies of an anti-oppressive practice as largely non performative for indigenous contexts (2004, p.52). Sinclair's (2004) critiques will be expanded on in the sections to follow.

Neoliberal Antiracism

While social work education might believe it has moved on from these criticisms and has addressed critical perspectives, these same issues are still embedded in social work programming through relying on anti-oppression and anti-racist framings as foundations. According to Abram & Gibson (2007), the *antiracist model* "stresses change at all levels of social work operation, including individual attitudes, agency policies, and the larger society. The model also suggests that social workers involve themselves in larger social movements to halt racism and oppression" (Abram & Gibson, 2007, p. 149). However, we don't see this portrayal of antiracism manifested by social work. Baines (2017) and Wagner & Yee (2011) frame the diversity of anti-oppression discourse within the context of neoliberalism and interestingly, neoliberalism's agenda, detrimentally trickling into social work practice unnoticed.

Wagner & Yee (2011) echo this concern for the capacity of anti-oppressive practice to make change, naming neo-liberalism as a barrier. Heron and Rossiter (2011) condemn neoliberalism's omnipresent manifestation and how it has shaped and eroded core social work foundations. Heron and Rossiter (2011) describe it as a "push towards free market economic policies, deregulation, reduction of social programs, indifference to the environment, and the insistence on individual entrepreneurialism" (p. 306). Heron and Rossiter (2011) use the way competency has been embraced by social work without critical understandings of the mechanisms of neoliberalism. "The foundations of social work-- thinking, reflecting and making complex judgements - cannot be represented in the form of competencies" (Heron & Rossiter, 2011, p. 307). Greensmith (2015) names state made funding crisis, state led project funding, and increasing pressures in a increasingly capitalistic context as what can constitute crisis mode in social service organizations and elsewhere. This puts even more pressure on workers to navigate

how and in what way compensate by looking for solutions that accommodate their work conditions. This demonstrates how crisis mode is not even a consequence of neoliberalism, but an assertion of it.

A critical understanding of the complexities of neoliberalism, capitalism and colonialism must be on the agenda for social workers. This complexity obscures understandings of anti oppression in education and practice, impacting outcomes due to a struggle over ideas (Baines, 2017, p.51). "The main consequence of this public shaping of social movements and the blurring of separation between mainstream and increasingly institutionalized contentious politics has been further entrenchment of Indigenous rights and contention within the state apparatus, drastically reducing the possibilities for decolonization" (Pillet, 2016, p.10).

"Best Practice" Discourse

In the profession of social work, the term "best practice" is often used to create a kind of assumed accountability (Smith, 2007). I am interested in policy initiatives that organizations have taken up as part of this increase in responses to reconciliation and decolonizing movements including "best practice" policy. According to Smith (2007) "best practice" can be a misleading and "has been defined as the actual demonstration of optimum performance in terms of certain modes of production, customer service, or public relations" (p.179). In social work, these neoliberal measurements of care are ethically misplaced (Baines, 2017). "Best practice" is "based on relational analysis with industry standards in response to or in anticipation of legislative or policy requirements and guidelines" (Smith, 2007, p.179). Mitchell and Macleod (2014) caution that "the use of social policies to "manage" populations, thereby [maintains] the status quo through instrumental versus authentic collaborative processes of policy development and implementation" (p.110).

Anti-racism and Colonialism in Social Work

Chatterjee (2018) suggests that "anti-racism as a principle requires a strong understanding of white supremacy" (p. 5). In *Decolonizing Anti-racism,* Lawrence & Dua (2005) deconstruct anti-racism and its failure to address colonialism. They demonstrate "the means through which colonization in Canada as a settler society has been implemented and is being maintained" (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p.123). Their understandable discomfort around how "aboriginal people cannot see themselves in antiracism contexts, and Aboriginal activism against settler domination takes place without people of color as allies" couldn't be timelier (p. 120). Sharma and Wright (2008) make an important point in response to Lawrence and Dua (2005) warning about the implications of lumping together migrant and colonizing positionalities. This reinforces the importance of a non-essentializing understanding of complex issues and the power mechanisms that allow these fragmenting discourses to persist (Zhang, 2018; Joseph, 2015). It could easily be applied to how antiracism frameworks are taken up in social work education and social service organizations today. The significant aspects of Lawrence and Dua's (2005) arguments for social work purposes, also align with Sharma and Wright's (2008) perspective that attending to the particularities of indigenous related issues, including decolonization, is a necessary component of anti-racist framings and approaches. Without decolonization at the forefront of anti-racist frameworks, the anti-racist intention becomes another colonial form of gatekeeping within Canada. This is especially significant in the social work profession where these frameworks are not only applied professionally, but go unflagged and misunderstood by practitioners (Zhang, 2018).

Anti-oppression and anti-racism and their failures to connect to their broader macro implications also creates a context where colonial and capitalist ideologies prevail. Almost all of

the strategies and concepts discussed above fall under these broader reductive frameworks,

where social workers have made a habit of reducing broad frameworks into skill sets. The

evasive history of the politicization of the social work profession has many detrimental

implications (Baines, 2017). The "call in" here needs to be part of social work education's

commitment to addressing complicity inherent in the avoidance of "politicization" in social work

practice (Baines, 2017, CASWE, 2017).

3.4 Social Work Responses: A need for Critical Race Theory and Whiteness

This trend of bringing in critical race theory shows up in social work in different ways (Ortiz &

Jani, 2010; Abrams & Moio, 2009; Yee, 2005; Jeffery, 2005). Through constructive criticism

and more explicit warnings around mainstream social work articulations of AOP and antiracism:

multiculturalism, cultural competency, inclusion, etc., there is an overwhelming demand for

implementing frameworks that include a CRT perspective. Many social work academics point to

including the concept of whiteness in their teaching (Nyland, 2006).

How has social work education engaged critical race theory?

Landing significantly in educational contexts – the concept of whiteness has been taken

up by educators as a way to engage students around privilege, social location and a deeper

analysis of the implications of whiteness and dominance (Schick & St. Denis, 2005a). Social

Work academics, Yee (2005), Jeffery (2005), Schick & St. Denis (2005 a,b), Heron (2005) and

Rossiter (2001) have made arguments for bringing an analysis of whiteness stemming from a

foundation of CRT in to anti-racist social work education, along with a particular critique of

white subjects "race to innocence" (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In navigating what this means in the

classroom Jeffery (2005) acknowledges that "people are of course situated differently in the

discourse" (p.48). Responding to many of the concerns brought up earlier, their focus on social location, white identity, privilege, critical self reflection and subjectivity, start a self reflexive process for social work students.

> *The perils of self-location pedagogy are not simply about white bodies. I believe that there are insights offered to all of us who are trying to understand what happens in our classrooms. Analyzing the dead-end that sometimes occurs can help us understand the resistance and begin to unpack the narrative of what sorts of ideologies and practices are operating in the classroom. (Jeffery, 2005, p.418)*

Tuck and Yang (2012) define *moves to innocence* as "strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all" (p. 10). Schick and St. Denis (2005b) acknowledge that engaging in whiteness is always troubling and risks not only re-centering whiteness, but creating a heroic white subjectivity.

Critical Self-reflection, Reflexivity and Self-awareness

In social work classrooms, responses embody a trend of self reflective processes (Jeffery, 2005, Rossiter, 2001, Heron, 2005). Self reflection as a practice is crucial to helping dynamics (Heron, 2005). In Heron's (2005) work interrogating the intricacies of social location and subjectivity, she suggests the latter will allow a more effective orientation in achieving social justice change. Critical self reflection, self awareness, critical consciousness stemming from a range of critical theories including CRT and Feminism have become bedrocks in social work education (Heron, 2005). Critical reflexivity is an ongoing process that interrogates embedded assumptions within social work practice (Van De Sande & Schwartz, 2011). It has become central in social work education and practice (Baines, 2017).These processes involve first

identifying and then acknowledging how external factors (discourse) might interfere with "worldviews and understandings of individuals in varying subject positions" (Heron, 2005, p. 342).

Critical Consciousness and Discourse

Joseph & Maiter (2017) share their experiences of the development of a shared critical consciousness and the role discourse played in obscuring and downplaying experiences of oppression. With the development of a critical consciousness, Hill (2016) argues that one must "consistently and courageously challenge the dominant ideology, the hegemony of the ruling class" (p.81). Through this process it was revealed that particular frameworks, or a lack of frameworks, prevented critical articulations and realizations of the experiences (Joseph & Maiter, 2017, p. 760). In other words, without critical consciousness one cannot challenge hegemonic relations, because they are invisibilized. For Heron (2005), "positions [are] made available to subjects through discourse" (p.342). "Discourses are used in everyday contexts for building power and knowledge, for regulation and normalization, for the development of new knowledge and power relations, and for hegemony (excess influence or authority of one nation over another)" (McGregor, 2003, p. 2). Understanding dominant discourse and how their role is unequivocally tied to colonial logic is imperative.

Other educational strategies, like having students use *critical autobiography* while exploring dominant discourses, provides an interrogation into the meaning of national discourse and how it relates to students sense of self (Schick & St. Denis, 2005a,2005b).

White Privilege and Retreatism

For Tanner (2017), findings show that "despite acknowledgement of white privilege, that

status quo was not disrupted." Jeffery (2005) explicitly links social work and whiteness. She points to a crucial and impossible ask, "if you have to 'give up' whiteness, how can you be a good social worker" (Jeffery, 2005, p.410). Jeffery and many others, rally behind a consideration of whiteness pointing to its "conceptual and practical significance for understanding the tensions that persist in social work education—tensions that resist the naming or marking of critical anti-racist discourse (Jeffery, 2005, p. 411).

Another example of Jeffery's dead end is what Alcoff (1992) calls "retreatism." One of the issues with the "retreat" response for Alcoff, is that "it may be motivated by a desire to find a method or practice immune from criticism" (1991, p. 299). For Alcoff "errors are unavoidable in theoretical inquiry as well as political struggle" (p. 299). Alcoff offers that this "desire for mastery and immunity must be resisted" (p.299). This "race to innocence" is part of a framework of critical whiteness studies, where white privilege, social location and other such concepts fail to provide outcomes that challenge power, as they hardly manifest in practice in meaningful ways (Howard, 2004). Alcoff's foundational "calling out" of what she terms the "crisis of representation" still affects political platforms and organizing efforts today. Her important contributions concerning how and why we must always question dominance, are less effective when those in dominant positions fail to deeply consider not only their complicity on many levels, but their agency as resistance. When this failure occurs, the conversations become about with- drawing, stepping back, dropping out, not speaking for, not speaking up, which in many ways strengthens complicity and contributes to the harms pointed to in the first place.

White Silence

Retreatism also partners with another response, white silence, a phenomenon articulated by Mia Mackenzie (2014) on her blog *Black Girl Dangerous.* Mackenzie shares her experience

of how her white friends show up or don't show up around race issues on her Facebook feed.

> *They are people I like, so I want to give them the benefit of the doubt. Maybe*
> *they are silent because they don't know what to say. Maybe they feel uncomfortable about*
> *chiming in on a subject that is so touchy... Or maybe they think they don't have the right*
> *to comment because they are white and it's not their place... This answer only makes*
> *sense if they don't see racism as their problem.* (Mackenzie, 2014, p. 41)

This is an important example of how retreatism, or reluctance to act, actually plays out, only

perpetuating white silence, instead of an awareness around power and privilege.

Alcoff (1991) and Rossiter (2001) argue that without the critical reflection and

interrogating of power, stopping altogether or dismantling efforts might be the best option in

order to reduce harms. However, their worries, that the main point or underlying concern around

dominant subjects use of and maintenance of power, was not intended to disempower or

depoliticize dominant subjects, but to use their power in ways that actually transform or interrupt

dominance and institutional power (Alcoff, 1991; Rossiter, 2001; Jeffery, 2017). For Mackenzie,

"pushing back against that privilege means sharing that power with, or sometimes relinquishing

it to, the folks around you have less privilege and less power" (2014, p. 113). Notice that

Mackenzie doesn't advocate for white identifying subjects to simply reject or deny power, but to

transfer their power in order to change conditions.

White Agency

In Howard's (2004) criticism of white privilege, he noticed that discourses around

whiteness overlook white agency. For Howard, "the concept whiteness should be made to

include oppositional White identities" (2004, p.74). If this agency isn't included in the discourse,

subjects "retreat to an ahistorical ideology of liberal individualism that firmly enables the

continuance of the racist status quo" (Howard, 2004, p. 74). Interestingly, white agency is often

confined to AOP or anti-racism frames, which as we have discussed invite their own issues and problems. "The suppression of white anti-racist activism, the erasure of stories of 'race traitors,' has been one of white supremacy's most powerful tools for maintaining and sustaining white supremacy" (Nichol as cited in Traore, 2017, p. 4).

Productions of Whiteness

Yee (2017) looks specifically at the processes within social service organizations as they are often sites seen as neutral and value free (p. 61). "The day-to-day practices on which the profession rests, and which sustain the profession, reproduce whiteness" (Jeffery, 2005, p. 409). These social work sites are important examples of where and how these processes uphold discourses that maintain and hide power structures. Again, Jeffery's (2005) acknowledgement of the "dead-end" that occurs when understandings of whiteness aren't taken far enough, leads to the reproduction and maintenance of the same power mechanisms that are being confronted and then co-opted.

3.6 Social Work Responses to "Reconciliation" Discourse

Inclusivity Strategies

Social work education has responded specifically to historical colonizing practices. Earlier, I discussed responses by social work, framed in a particular kind of way; within anti-oppressive or anti-racism frameworks, where colonialism is framed as historical, with little attention to the present, where the assimilative mechanisms are largely reframed as "inclusivity" (Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). Framing it in this particular way removes the issue of ongoing colonialism and the Canadian national project of continual land dispossession, masking the nonconsensual merging of indigenous people into Canadian subjects (Alfred, 2010). There has

been much discussion within this literature review pointing to how this type of framing is so hugely misguided and violent (Manuel, 2017; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Sinclair, 2004).

Lawrence and Dua's (2005) main and indispensable critique, that anti-racist politics subsume decolonization politics, outlines the need for anti-racism to not only look at decolonization, but identify it within anti-racism (Sharma & Wright, 2008). This points to the assumptions that inclusivity is the only possibility going forward, overriding and subsuming any challenging of this by indigenous communities (Manuel, 2017). Intimately entwined, it is problematic when both colonization struggles and anti-racist struggles exclude the other (Sharma & Wright, 2008). This division is exemplified when dropped into the social work context, and is reconstituted in the form of practice (Zhang, 2018).

Indigenous Social Work

Sinclair (2004) calls for Aboriginal Social work, and explains it incorporates both an Indigenous worldview and history of colonialism. Sinclair calls attention to the "risks that result from an assumption that current cross-cultural and anti-oppressive approaches are an effective lens through which to regard hundreds of years of oppression and cultural destruction" p.49. Aboriginal social work education attempts to achieve cultural relevance and has a very different agenda than Canadian social work. Sinclair (2004) describes Canadian social work as embodying "colonialistic actions and attitudes towards Aboriginal people have been deliberate and calculated; designed to displace and distance the people from their land and resources" (p. 50).

For Sinclair, a decolonizing pedagogy is the only appropriate framework for social work education, especially for indigenous students, where mainstream social work cannot meet the needs of indigenous communities (p. 51). Cyndy Baskin's (2016) contributions to the helping profession *Strong Helpers' Teachings* offer a departure from social work's typical responses to

incorporating indigeneity into the profession. She states that "cultural practices need to remain in the hands and control of Indigenous Peoples" (Baskin, 2016, p.4) but encourages that non-indigenous people will only benefit from learning from and embracing Indigenous worldviews (p. 4). This perspective addresses many of the concerns outlined throughout the literature review, including an inherent problematization of the AOP concept *inclusivity*.

Abrams & Moio (2009) argue that critical race theory might address some of these devastating oversights in social work practice. "CRT reformulates the problem by asking social workers to clarify what the results of antiracist education might look like" (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 255). So, we see a general trend in response to criticisms in the ways social work has mobilized these issues, all directing and encouraging a CRT framework for education and practice. A framework that includes addressing systemic barriers, that establishes a framework that can interrogate settler colonialism.

Chapter 4 - Establishing a Theoretical Framework

Establishing strong queer and critical theory roots, the research project focuses on critical whiteness, an established field of critical race theory (CRT) (Sueyoshi, 2013). Critical whiteness studies (CWS) is integral to the framing of this research project, not only does the project draw from its theories, but also carries them through its methodology and into the research findings and discussion. My current understanding and articulation of critical whiteness studies is in relation to my subjectivity as a white settler living in the colonial state of Canada. It is invoked by theoretical frameworks drawing particularly from CRT, anarchism, queer feminism and significantly impacted by decolonization theory. To start this process, it is important to first acknowledge decolonization theory, and how, theoretically it is an outlier here. It has

significantly challenged and shaped my understanding of settler subjectivity, agency and

possibilities beyond colonial logic. I will then focus on each of the theoretical frames, beginning

with CRT, followed by CWS, then how queer feminism and anarchism have also influenced my

understanding of critical whiteness studies for the purposes of this research project.

Critical Theory

This research project is situated within critical postmodern theory, "central to critical

theory argument is that systems like capitalism produce knowledge in such a way as to obscure

their oppressive consequences" (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010, p.8). My framing of the research

problem mirrors this argument beginning with the institution of social work, which according to

Baskin (2016) functions "as an arm of the state" (p.363). It then produces responses, policy

initiatives and "best practice" in such a way that its nation-building functions are concealed

(Smith, 2007). Interrogating ruling relations is also intrinsic to queer theory. This is especially

important in identifying "how the institutions take up or not take up/ incorporate or subjugate

queer ways of knowing, to do what the institution intends to accomplish?" (Watt, personal

communication, Dec, 13, 2017). Drawing from critical theory pulls these questions into focus

and allows an interrogation into the processes and mechanisms that allow these detrimental and

invisible co-optations.

Queer Theory

In queering settler subjectivity, we find settler's engaging in anti-colonial work,

disrupting and challenging colonial continuities (Heron, 2007). This queering is "radical

subversion" where the subject is in opposition to something that is in a sense hegemonic (Vick,

2012, p.47). Indigenous communities partaking in decolonizing movements engage in "radical

deconstruction" or the dismantling of subordinate categories (Vick, 2012). This function of *queerness* challenges the state itself. In an era where Indigenous self-determination and land repatriation are realized, new subjectivities are revealed, outside colonial spaces. These connections are important because within the unknowing - "a position of unintelligibility is potentially a position of power that exposes the limits of reason in relation to embodied diversity, and can become a platform for social and political action" (Vick, 2012, p. 48). With this emancipatory framework, the decolonial site actualizes queerness. In many of the same ways, doing a research project about whiteness to expose white supremacy, its mechanisms and its self rationalizing through colonial capitalist projects is also queer. It is through this queerness and critical inquiry that this whole research project was imagined and inspired.

Decolonization

Tuck and Yang (2018) warn about settler colonialism overriding Indigenous and decolonial theory through "the re-assimilation and re-incorporation of Indigenous theory under a patrilineal critical theory" (p.xiv). I include *decolonization theory* here, outside of my research project's theoretical frame to acknowledge and honour decolonization theory's arrival on its own terms, departing from western hegemonic ways of knowing as a distinct philosophical tradition (Tuck & Yang, 2018). A revolutionary critical pedagogy for Indigenous education refuses being subsumed within colonial theory (Tuck & Yang, 2018). *Red Pedagogy,* among other significant attributes, addresses the failures of non-indigenous critical pedagogy in differentiating "empowered critical citizenry for greater participation and integration in the nation-state" and "Indigenous approaches that seek self-determination from a colonizing state" (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. xvi). In their previous work *Decolonization is not a Metaphor*, Tuck and Yang (2012) reaffirm that "decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a

metaphor for other things" (p. 1).

It is important to note that Indigenous people define the objectives of decolonization, not settlers. For many indigenous scholars this includes indigenous resurgence, land repatriation and the return of Indigenous language and culture (Manuel, 2017; Alfred, 2010). In order to work alongside these movements, settlers must focus on how to strategize in order to dismantle barriers to indigenous self-determination and land repatriation. While decolonization theory has a great impact on my understanding of settler colonialism and social change, I will reserve it for its important agenda throughout this research project and acknowledge that it is through this lens that I have come to critique Canadian reconciliation. For this purpose I will not claim a decolonizing framework as a white settler, but instead attempt to address the gaps between settler subjectivity, the Canadian settlement project and Indigenous land dispossession in other ways.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT views race as a social construction. It is also important to note here that CRT emerged within a movement responding to positivist framings of race as neutral and objective in law and other structural contexts (Abrams & Moio, 2009). This was demonstrated earlier in the introduction to this paper where race was historically erased in legal processes. CRT emphasizes how these discourses become the bedrock of the Canadian settlement project. CRT re-grounds conversations about race by re-centering structural inequalities and their institutional stronghold (Abrams & Moio, 2009, p. 250) and this is one of the main ways CRT looks to processes of racialization for answers. If CWS does not embody an alternative to previous renderings of whiteness theory, it takes the perspectives and knowledge of BIPOC voices in vain, as if consumable products (Joseph, 2018, personal communication). As discussed earlier, tendencies by social workers in approaching tensions through the limitations of skill based realizations of

AOP and anti-racism have produced deficient and empty endings. Processes of racialization are intrinsic to the Canadian colonial project (Manuel, 2017). For Yee (2017) "centring the analysis on race allows for a nuanced and detailed understanding of the ways in which strategies and processes of whiteness hold power over the racialized "other" (p. 61). In Canada, processes of whiteness determine the national identity. These processes organize and prioritize the settlement project over all other initiatives through mechanisms of white supremacy (Razack, 1999).

Critical Whiteness Studies: Understanding White Supremacy

Critical whiteness studies expressed through critical race theory exposes white supremacy as an ever present set of mechanisms that maintain ruling relations within capitalism and colonialism (Bunjun, 2014; Razack, 1999). It offers a different orientation to a white supremacist colonial Canada by centering the mechanisms and processes of white supremacy through innocence making, neocolonial and neoliberal discourse, and deeply embedded Canadian narratives (Joseph, personal communication, Sept 12, 2018). It identifies a white settler subjectivity, and its inherent colonial complicity. Dominant narratives reproduce the ideas that Canadians do not see themselves as racist (Schick & St. Denis, 2005b), yet many Canadians have demonstrated an authority and entitlement that would suggest otherwise (Bunjun, 2014). "We must be asking how these legacies have lead us to the power, positions, and beliefs that we hold and that we bring to our professional relationships" (McBurney, 2015, p.36).

The literature review reveals that within the social work context, "whiteness" in a particular sense is avoided or absent, failing to address its colonial implications within hegemonic white supremacy (through complicity within a system). Building on and recognizing the limits and problems with whiteness theory (centering whiteness, retreatism), critical whiteness studies (CWS) looks at how "whiteness" is produced through power relations.

"Critical whiteness studies uses a trans-disciplinary approach to investigate the phenomenon of whiteness, how it is manifested, exerted, defined, recycled, transmitted, and maintained, and how it ultimately impacts the state of race relations" (Matias & Mackay, 2015, p.34). When reconsidering CWS through critical race theory, CWS can offer that whiteness is based on the perpetuation of hegemonic structures, invisible, and not so invisible. Nayak (2007) in their article *Critical Whiteness Studies* establishes three entwined paradigms on the subject of whiteness. Nayak first outlines a desire to dismantle whiteness through a Marxist lens, beginning with whiteness as unearned social privilege, uncovering historical context and challenging its social reproduction (2007, p. 739). Next, Nayak looks through a feminist lens at how whiteness is deployed contextually, through gender and race relations, "into the multiplicity of ways in which power and subjectivity intersect" (p.745). Finally, Nayak moves beyond materialist and deconstructionist frameworks and offers the third paradigm in whiteness studies, a "recognition that white identities are both externally and internally constituted, that whiteness needs to be understood in relations to its imaginary racialist Others, and that racism cannot be explained purely at the level of the rational" (Nayak, 2007, p. 746).

Nayak's article outlines the general tenants of whiteness studies and points out a popular criticism of whiteness theory, the inevitable co-optation by white hegemony itself. For Nayak, the most appealing or more persuasive quality of critical whiteness studies, an important foundation of CRT, that race is socially constructed (2007, p. 752) and the "making and unmaking of whiteness" (p. 752) serves as evidence of this. Nayak brings up many of the tensions and unforeseen consequences around the re-centering of whiteness, "a peculiar irony if whites again become the sole architects of race history" (2007, p.750). For Nayak, "if the field of critical whiteness studies is to achieve global impact it must avoid essentialism and become more

international in outlook" (Nayak, 2007, p. 750).

Tanner's (2017) article on a need for an emerging 2nd wave critical whiteness pedagogy is especially important for social work's consideration and attention. Commenting on the minimal research and documentation of how critical whiteness has been implemented, Tanner notes a serge in critical whiteness pedagogy (Tanner, 2017, p.164). Along with criticisms of whiteness pedagogy to find material endings, social work as an industry is a perfect example of what Jeffery (2005) refers to as a "dead-end". "Confessional pedagogies" "impede the efforts of anti-racism work with White people" (Tanner, 2017, p.164).

The challenges around whiteness theory are growing as mainstream discourse starts to ingest it. As covered in the literature review, concepts like "white privilege" lead to retreatism, resulting in little actual agency for anti-racist organizing (Alcoff, 1999). In some cases, the concept of "white privilege" provokes a retreat; individuals in dominant positions become vulnerable and lose agency (Alcoff, 1999). CWS has already been established as a powerful tool in deconstructing power relations, through an exploration of how "whiteness is perpetuated and internalized" (Yee, 2017, p.61). While whiteness has been looked at substantially, it requires the theoretical framework of CRT and should be taken up as "a mutually constitutive aspect of [ones] investigations into race" (Nayak, 2007, p. 738). Matias et al. (2014) "propose utilizing Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) to support CRT to aid in deconstructing the dimensions of white imaginations" (p. 290). According to them CWS maintains "the normative script of white supremacy is an exertion of whiteness that refuses to acknowledge how whiteness is historically, economically, and legally produced (p.291). For example, how whiteness is "[attached] to bodies, objects and practices" (Nayak, 2007, p.752). This is observed through the *new racisms* that have emerged based on the intersections of global migration and shifting national politics

(Pon, 2009; Nayak, 2007). Nayak borrows from Said (1978) in claiming psychoanalytic devices might offer a shifting of gazes from racialized subjects to "whiteness, the West and the tenuous construction of the self through these 'imaginative geographies' of race- and nation-making" (p. 749). Nayak (2007) uses the example of religious-based discrimination where one's status as white is undermined based on new articulations of what "white" is in a changing national political landscape. "As white social service providers, especially in the context of the school, where a strong legacy of white domination has occurred over Aboriginal people in Canada, it is time we include ourselves in the examination" (McBurney, 2015, p.36). And do more than just include ourselves in the examination, but specifically look for how complicity is enacted, based on processes and mechanisms social workers carry out.

Baskin exemplifies Hart's (2002) view that "social work is not meant to challenge the colonial system since it hides behind its colonial altruism" (2016, p. p.12). CWS might have the potential to engage this specific avoidance in social work, to interrupt or challenge "colonial continuities" (Heron, 2007). How can social workers stop or refuse the reproduction of entitlement and nation-building in policy that runs counter to decolonizing movements (Bunjun, 2014)? Taking whiteness theory further through an embodiment of CRT, and within the context of reconciliation discourse and decolonization, colonial subjectivities are tied to performances of whiteness and the discourses attached. Jeffery's claims, mentioned earlier, about the implicit questioning of social work by way of criticizing whiteness could also be applied to social work attitudes towards reconciliation (2005). If we ignore the invoking of whiteness, easily a metaphor for colonialism, we aren't really performing (enacting) anti-racism, but perpetuating social work's original racism in Canada– colonialism (Jeffery, 2005). There is a need for a methodology to address these issues (Yee, 2017; Carlson, 2016).

The adaptation of whiteness theory over time in relation to its ineffectiveness and many criticisms, points us to a necessary turn to settler subjectivity in the Canadian colonial context. Tuck & Yang (2012) in their article *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, bring up *equivocation*. They call it a "vague equating of colonialisms that erases the sweeping scope of land as the basis of wealth, power, law in settler nation-states" (p.19). They specifically bring up and criticize approaches to oppression that do not address settler colonialism through an ambiguous avoidance and positioning of ambivalence (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Because of its emphasis on social stratification, taking up critical whiteness theory lends an approach to deconstructing how whiteness is invoked through power in society and especially within Canadian nation-building (Oritz & Jani, 2010, p. 176; Bunjun, 2014). It is this manifestation of CWS, explicitly taking on a CRT framework, for purposes of understanding complicity, entitlement and processes of colonial subjectivity.

Intersectional Queer Feminism, Canadian Nation-building and Confluence

In Bunjun's (2014) work *Organizational Colonial Encounters: A Critical Intersectional Analysis of Entitlement and Nation Building,* she identifies the importance of identifying nationalist discourses which "come from particular ideologies and political/socio-geographical discourses of a liberal colonial settler society" (p. 14). This nudge by Bunjun to focus on the nation-building tendencies of feminist organizing redirects to a focus on the mechanisms of white supremacy in the settling of Canada and provokes a different way of aligning as settlers with decolonizing movements. In order to start this process, it is necessary to shift critical whiteness studies to an interrogation of the maintenance and production of Canada itself.

My knowledge around Canadian nation-building stems from Bunjun's (2014) queer

intersectional feminism which is explained by Bunjun in the following way, "intersectionality largely derives from racialized feminists (Indigenous women and women of colour) directly contesting hegemonic feminism's investments in essentialism and exclusion" (Bunjun, 2010, p.116). To build on the intersectional aspects of this argument, we can take the problematizing of Canadian nation-building even further, by considering the concept of confluence. Confluence "[demands] a historical consideration, an appreciation of the temporal" (Joseph, p. 17). For the purpose of this research, Bunjun's (2014) interrogation of processes and mechanisms of nation-building alongside Joseph's (2015) articulation of confluence requires that each settler subject arrives at an understanding of their own colonial legacy, grounded in the political present as an agent.

Anarchism's Contributions

Anarchism as a framework has shaped my understandings of CWS with its unique qualifications in challenging ruling relations and the Canadian state. One of the biggest pushes towards using an anarchist framework here, is that it has already been pointed at and taken up by decolonizing movements in different ways (Alfred, 2010; Barker, 2013; Lewis, 2017). This demonstrates its compatibility with decolonizing projects. For many, anarchism becomes irrelevant when it is not considered within an anti-colonial context (Lewis, 2017).

To begin, the fundamental project of anarchism is the dismantling of ruling regimes that indulge in "right over others" logic; the state cannot be "neutral" and "has its own logic of command and control, of monopolizing political power" (Milstein, 2010, p.23). This "rights over others" logic is built into the Canadian colonial system and its relations to Indigenous Peoples. Anarchism problematizes how authority is socially organized and questions how it is exercised over others and their territories (Suissa, 2010). Some may argue that anarchism is understood to

be in opposition to all forms of government, however, according to Suissa (2010) this opposition "is crucially contingent upon the character of prevailing state systems" (p.55). This is important to note here because Canadian nationhood and nation-building "[erases] and [conceals] the erasure of Indigenous peoples within the settler colonial nation-state and moves Indigenous nations as "populations" to the margins of public discourse" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.22). Settler advances towards transforming relationships with Indigenous Peoples must include decolonizing principles (Lewis, 2017). With a need to shift our understandings of our own relationship to the State in order to understand ourselves as nation building subjects, the inclusion of national discourses and narratives around belonging and entitlement are necessary (Bunjun, 2014).

It can be a revolutionary action-based practice, but can also manifest in other ways, through understanding and emancipating the self, between individuals and how they form relationships, and through projects and community building; materializing a collective agency (Milstein, 2010). Anarchism critiques the normalization of disenfranchising people as economic actors and political actors and requires that individuals understand their roles as actors within the social landscape (Milstein, 2010). Anarchism opposes neoliberal logic in this way, working against fragmentation and the diminishing of agency. For Canadians, this would extend to how we understand ourselves as national actors, and how as national actors, we have been disenfranchised, for example, our political agency might be confused with patriotism, or displays of "Canadian-ness." Anarchism is skeptical of neutrality, where complicity legitimizes state power, another neoliberal stronghold within our discourse and subject-hood.

Of relevance is anarchism's historic connections to other global struggles, including anti-capitalism. This overarching critical perspective on power internationally provides a macro understanding of Canadian colonialism within a world context; Canada's supreme authority over

all of Turtle Island must be questioned and interrogated (UNDRIP, 2007). "The hegemony of the state has thus far not been up for debate in the broader, public discourses of recognition and reconciliation" (Lewis, 2017, p. 481). This lack of discourse around state hegemony is one of the major suspect aspects of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's* (2008) claims; without this understanding, the claims fail decolonization efforts. In order for CWS to realistically contend with ruling relations it must locate white supremacy within a larger and broader constitution of colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal power relations. CWP acknowledges that Canada does not exist in a vacuum and that all struggles are interrelated.

This particular understanding of CWS will help articulate, identify and interrogate processes of white supremacy and social work subjectivities in relation to the colonial project. Using From here, I will explain how CWS embodying pieces of the theories that have just been discussed will also used in this research as a methodology.

Chapter 5 - Methodology

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as a Methodology

CWS is a commitment to continual reflexive behaviour for the purposes of liberation and the immediate and necessary transforming of Canada's colonial dominance over Indigenous Peoples (Heron, 2005). In order to imagine structural change is possible, we must engage a process that builds critical consciousness and aggressively nudges towards a practice of questioning. CWS makes use of processes of critical self-reflexivity and critical discourse analysis for the purposes of developing critical consciousness and relational validity. It is through these mechanisms the research process has been conducted. According to Carter & Little (2007) "a reflexive researcher actively adopts a theory of knowledge" (p. 5) as this lays the

foundation of the entire inquiry and its direction. We come to problems and questions with a set of understandings about the world which shapes where and how we look for answers. Even within the interviews, the researcher and the participant are subject to power dynamics, allowing a temporal subjectivity to persist (Joseph, 2015).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Referring back to the particular and very personal framing of CWS, the CDA will draw from CWS (embodying queer feminist, critical race and anarchist features as discussed earlier), social work scholars and the discourses that emerged within the literature review. I will specifically be looking for Canadian nation-building mechanisms within social work settings that reveal dominant discourses and their effects on participants actions. Looking at "discourse of the day" and how it is reflected in the understandings of reconciliation discourse by the participants, as well as how it affects their roles working with policy. "Discourse (the words and language we use) helps shape and constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs" (McGregor, 2003, p.3). It is also important to process how power dynamics between white social workers emerge through discourse within the interviewing process. This will be demonstrated through acknowledging the power of "discourse of the day" and professional rhetoric that as a researcher might be hearing and responding to for the first time.

The Importance of Relational Validity

Critical whiteness studies is only useful if it is continually engaged and adapted for emancipatory purposes, otherwise it is a means to an end, similar to Rossiter's (2001) warnings about the social work profession itself. Tuck and Yang (2018) emphasize *relational validity* and locate it within social justice initiatives. They note its importance to decolonizing approaches

(Tuck & Yang, 2018). "What is valid in research is that which resonates with people's lives and informs their power to make change" (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p.xiii). Critical whiteness studies is committed to continuously challenging and interrogating the meaning of white subjectivity and the invoking of whiteness as the mechanisms adapt and change (Nayak, 2007). "Race signs are constantly produced, circulated, resisted, mis/recognised, consumed, adapted and so forever incomplete in their rendering" (Nayak, 2007, p.750).

Therefore, while responding to reconciliation and decolonizing discourses with a critical and informed understanding of how one's' subjectivity might shift in relation to these changes is paramount. The critical whiteness process doesn't end but must always be transforming and adapting with an emphasis on learning and teaching for emancipatory purposes. Matias and Mackey (2015) argue that the inclusion of pedagogies specific to critical whiteness studies have yet to be articulated (p. 33). The meaning of *relational validity* within this research project recognizes the power of discourse, including a lack of relatability when discourses aren't there.

Chapter 6 - Research Methods

Here I will describe how CWS methodology, specifically how critical reflexivity and CDA shape research methods including rationale in terms of who, why and for what. Considered here, is how the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research, shaped and informed the research project itself. This was done through engaging a critical reflexivity approach and a critical consciousness oriented research design. First, I will explain how critical self-reflexivity has been used within the qualitative interviewing process. This covers how I engage my subjectivity as a researcher, social work student and white settler, as well as how I interrogate and acknowledge my "moves to innocence" in conducting this research. I then describe why I chose social work as a site for this research and go on to rationalize through a CWS lens why it

was important to interview self-identified white non-indigenous participants. I conclude the research methods section by laying out the details of the participant recruitment process and the methods I conducted for collecting and analyzing data.

Qualitative Interviewing as Critical Self-reflexivity as Move to Innocence

Qualitative interviewing itself is part of reflective/reflexive debriefing process as a white settler engaging in critical whiteness challenges (Deliovsky, 2017; Van De Sande & Schwartz, 2011). It's possible that by disrupting and further identifying *moves to innocence* (within the contexts of the participants in this research project, as well as my own that come up throughout the process) the research inevitably embodies an admitted *move to innocence*. However, I also have an awareness of the mechanisms of retreatism, where stepping back from these conversations would not contribute to engaging with other white people about land dispossession or decolonization (Alcoff, 1999). Tuck and Yang provide their own "framework of excuses, distractions, and diversions from decolonization" (p.10). In this research, I hope to uncover *moves to innocence* in the social services context. As a commitment to critical whiteness studies, which as has been discussed earlier as a commitment to engaging relational validity throughout the research. This is demonstrated through the implications of conversation via interviewing as a site of potential furthering of critical consciousness.

Critical Reflexivity as a white colonial subject

This particular framing of critical reflexivity stems from critical race theory and critical whiteness studies. Because it has also been criticized for "reinscribing colonial constructions of whiteness" (Badwall, 2016, p1) it is important to talk about here. Critical reflexivity is meant to reveal power dynamics between social workers and those they work with (Badwall, 2016). I

would trouble this specificity of the possibility for critical reflexivity in social work, as Badwall's interpretation is limited to power dynamics between co-workers, and clients. It does not consider the potential for critical reflexivity as an exploration of settler subjectivity. If critical reflexivity was challenged to include interrogations of complicity in Canadian nation building and social work's role in maintaining the Canadian settlement project (such as land dispossession), it would produce a different set of conversations. Because of its role in qualitative research, it can also be used to reveal power relations between researcher and participants (Palaganas et al. 2017). For the purposes of this research, it will be used to to examine the participants own demonstrations of critical reflexivity as white colonial subjects. As a white colonial subject myself, an ongoing awareness and questioning of my own assumptions and inevitable "moves towards innocence" is imperative. It will be impossible from my subject position to trace of all of these throughout the project.

Why social work?

According to Badwall (2016) "social work's historical constitution within colonial and imperial projects is inescapable in the contemporary period" (p.1). Social work's demonstrated role in colonial continuities (Heron, 2007) also makes it a site of accountability and liability in terms of government responses (Simpson, 2013). It is mentioned by the Calls to Action (2015) and because of this has a unique position in society; an intimate relationship with settler colonialism as a profession. The social work profession itself is where mechanisms of settler colonialism is enacted through policy and the implementation of policy. Policy sets the framework for how social workers practice and understand their roles. We also see social work education, implement curriculum changes around reconciliation discourse, setting the foundation for social work practice in the field. Because social work has been linked in these ways to settler

colonialism and is already "a contested and highly politicized practice" (Baines, 2017, p.6), I have chosen social work as a site to conduct my research.

Why self-identified white participants?

The recruitment process is a kind of filtering where the participant by self-identifying as white, already understands the implications of what whiteness means in society to some degree. Based on who responded to the research call out, I am assuming that the participants each show up with a preliminary working understanding of their white subjectivity, or at the very least are aware of white privilege and power and hold structural analysis pertaining to white supremacy. For research purposes this allows the conversations to start at a certain point in a self-reflective process around whiteness. It also shows a willingness to engage in the interview process. The interview process naively implies willingness, but as a white researcher, power and tension exist differently. Without the cooperation and willingness to endure concerted ongoing efforts, white people will only escalate racism by continuing to thrive from it (James, 2007). "It means recognizing (i.e., admitting to) "White privilege," dealing with the resulting personal or internal discomfort, tensions and conflicts, and challenging the very system or structures that contribute to the privilege" (James, 2007, p.129).

Alcoff (2015) argues there is a content to whiteness, in the specificity of responses to this history that exhibit a particular affective orientation. She also identifies "a complex constellation of white identities that results resist any unified description in regard to racism, racial consciousness, or political orientation" (Alcoff, 2015, p.70). That being stated, it is important to acknowledge any person can inhabit whiteness ideology, but that white people embody and manifest whiteness in a particular way that is important for this research (Matias & Mackey,

2016, p. 34). As a white researcher, there is a level of relatability to this particular orientation which will impact the interviews.

It is here, that I would like to again acknowledge Joseph's (2015) model of confluence, which is "concerned with how we are all imbricated, implicated, and complicit within the hegemonies, hierarchies, and struggles of our human condition" (p. 24). To be able to resist essentialization, I want to demonstrate white settler social work subjectivity not concerned with a social location, but an orientation existing in relation to "the processes of differentiation and systems of domination as productive forces of power" (Joseph, 2015, p 24). My interpretation of Joseph's (2015) mode of *confluence* challenges our subjectivity through creating a temporality, a possibility of future agency. This not only exposes a common project, but allows us to identify our agency within it through our former complicity (Joseph, 2015, p.30).

Why white non-indigenous participants instead of non-indigenous participants?

Navigating the intricacies of racialized Canadians, transnationalism, globalization and Canadian immigration, while very intrinsic to colonial processes, are beyond the scope of this thesis. As a white researcher, my scope and orientation to these experiences will always be distorted (Carlson, 2016). Shakir (2007) points out that non-white people have not played the same role in nation-building, or the colonizing agenda (p.70). "For people of colour the benefits of being a settler are accrued unevenly" (Jafri as cited in Battell- Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 29). For Shakir, "Canada's immigration strategy has always been predicated on three important factors: claiming the right to the land, nation building through European immigration, and importing non-white cheap labour to service the nation" (2007, p.69). Chatterjee (2018) also argues "for a re-articulation of racialized labour as a constitutive component...of settler nation

formation" (p.3). For Chatterjee (2018), "notions of sovereignty, spatial belonging, and national borders primarily enact the conditions for exploitation of immigrants" (p 3). Sharma and Wright (2008) trouble *dualistic hierarchy* for its fragmenting and simplifying implications. They are concerned with the binarizing distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous people, characterizing it as neo-racist thought (Sharma & Wright, 2008, p.125). This is linked to the concept *flexible Othering*, "aimed at creating categorical juridical distinctions *between* 'different' people *within* the same social space" (Sharma, as cited in Sharma & Wright, 2008, p. 125).

Another important aspect of this comes from Walia's (2012) emphasis on the important intersections of solidarity between migrants and Indigenous people. Whom together have called out Western governance and continue to build alliances to "challenge the authority of settler-colonial governments and the sovereignty of Western statehood" (p. 50). Sharma and Wright (2008) in their responses to Lawrence and Dua (2005) claims about the subsuming of decolonization within anti-racism parallel Walia's (2012) view. They ask that the division of migrants and indigenous people be reconsidered, in order to work "toward an antiracist politics fully cognizant of the necessity of anti-capitalist decolonization" (p.122).

Participants and Recruitment

I interviewed eight individuals who self-identify as white, non-indigenous and work at a managerial or equivalent level in the social services sector in and around policy. In order to recruit participants I relied on purposive and snowballing sampling, recruited through social media and recruitment letters and emails to specific agencies through word of mouth, focusing on agencies within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Throughout the research process, I engaged in rigorous confidentiality strategies. The participants have chosen to be represented by pseudonyms, I will use "participant 1, 2, 3, respectively. All clarifying or personally identifiable

information has been referred to in a more generic way. The interviews were voluntary, and participants were able to opt out if they chose, however all participants remained in the research. Among the eight interviewed there was a diverse spectrum of identities including varying genders and sexual orientations. For the purposes of anonymity, I have used gender neutral pronouns for all participants in this study. Two of the individuals were positioned differently than the other six within their work positions. I decided to dis-include the interview data from participant 8 as it was later revealed that they were a frontline worker at an agency and their current role did not involve policy. While they had previously worked in a different position in British Columbia where their role revolved around policy in a substantive way, the content of the interview was not appropriate for this research project. The requirements around the context of policy making in GTA were not met. That being said, their shared responses and experiences as a front-line worker in an era of "reconciliation" may be considered for further analysis in another writing project.

The second individual, participant 2, works as a private evaluation consultant and researcher and has a different role in relation to policy than all the other participants. Their experiences and interview responses provided an account of policy that felt appropriate to include in this interview. The nature of their relationship to policy through several social service agencies and institutions is relevant for the purposes of this research.

The remaining six participants consist of: senior social planner, director of housing and outreach, social planning associate, manager of homelessness policy and programs, executive director of a community health organization and a Coordinator for Sexual Violence Prevention and Peer Support in a university respectfully.

Methods for Collecting Data

I conducted one on one semi structured interviews with mid-level to higher level agency individuals in social work roles. The interview guide consisted of a mix of open-ended and clarifying and elaborating questions. They were meant to build on one another for the purposes of more in depth exploration of the participants experiences within certain contexts. The questions covered a range of topics including policy, reconciliation policy, obligation to make policy provoked by reconciliation, sources of policy, crisis mode, cultural safety, decolonization, challenging processes, agency responsibility, and workshops and educational efforts. The questions purposively facilitated dialogue around participants understandings of themselves as colonial subjects, as well as their relationships to whiteness.

The interviews were between 1 and 2 hours and took on a debriefing style, where myself and the participant would reflect on the process of the interview itself within the interview. I took handwritten field notes during the interviews and supplemented with audio-recording of the interview with permission. I transcribed the interviews verbatim in order to proceed with coding and data analysis. I included the option to conduct a follow up interview, but this was not necessary. The interviews took place throughout participants communities, where those involved found it most convenient.

Methods for Analyzing Data

The interviews were analyzed using CDA, through an initial coding system based on responses to particular questions and then through thematic analysis. It is important to remind here that the interview guide served as a foundation for the interviews, but that the interviews themselves did not follow a particular pattern as described earlier. For data analysis purposes, this meant that many times stories were fragmented, and continued to be brought into the

conversation based on the questions and the participants perspective with the question at the time. Due to this, I have attempted to think of these specific pieces as whole stories, including the participants debriefing in relation to the interview direction.

Many themes emerged throughout the interview conversations. These were identified and organized within the findings section. This was done through headings revealed by the themes that emerged from verbatim excerpts from the participants. Due to the CDA methodology I focused my attention to the way the participants spoke about, used language for, and appeared to understand their roles through the kinds of discourse that came up. I would consider these articulations in relation to the work setting, context and outcomes if shared by participants.

The discussion following the findings attempts to draw from the findings, themes and discourses that were revealed by contextualizing them within the literature review, as well as within current political realities.

Chapter 7 - Findings

Many of the participants reflected on their own processes and understandings of how they engage with policy related to reconciliation. The interviews provided a sense of the participants current political understandings of colonialism, whiteness and settler subjectivity. It also demonstrated how "discourse of the day" or reconciliation discourse shapes the participants understandings of their roles in their work contexts. I feel it is important to indicate here, that despite what the CDA reveals in terms of dominant discourses and processes of whiteness, complicity and colonial continuities, the participants willingness to engage reflects their own personal commitment to identifying the mechanisms troubled through this paper. The research project shows the participants efforts were not only admiral in how they engaged in vulnerable

processes, but also how they showed up in the moment to engage critically with their own

practices. This means that often times they shared their learning moments, their regressions,

their fears (in order for readers to also gain insight) in a generous and selfless way. They also

participated in a mutually beneficial learning experience where many things were unknown

going into the interviews. They also shared transformational moments, their hopes and their

intentions, in a way that I hope is honoured throughout this rest of this paper.

7.1 Conversations about reconciliation related policy

Discussion with participants about policy included questions about how policy at their

work sites relates to reconciliation or reconciliation discourse, the kind or type of policies they

worked with, and where their personal understandings of reconciliation policy comes from. In

general, based on the 7 conversations, participants gave the impression that reconciliation policy

usually comes from above, not often from individuals at the municipal or agency level.

Participants explained that it usually manifests through funding mechanisms and inclusion

strategies. There are exceptions which will be discussed further below. Another commonality

across all 7 interviews was the *discourse of the day* which seemed to frame the participants

understandings of their roles and intentions. This demonstrated some contradiction in

participants understandings of the policy intentions and what was possible.

Reconciliation policy comes from above through funding mechanisms and governmental inclusion strategies.

Responses indicated that policy is mainly produced by higher levels of government –

federal or provincial often coming from above. Participant 4 explains that "policy directives

often have funding attached and our floated down municipally into community organizations."

At the agency level, Participant 2 shares their role as a creator and co-creator of policy but that reconciliation related policy is usually provoked by community members asking for programming specific to needs. Participant 1 described the role of their agency as a manager of community strategy funds for the indigenous community in their municipality adding "we are accountable to the federal government and, as the aboriginal community has a direct relationship with the federal government we are part of all that dialogue." Participant 6 described their experiences with policy at the national, provincial and municipal levels, and mentioned on one occasion with a particular agency "I made sure that when we were giving funding we talked about doing diversity and representing the communities, like the francophone, or specifically the aboriginal community."

Inclusion and Inclusion Discourse

Common discourse that came up throughout the interviews were largely used as mechanisms to claim accountability, intentions, taking responsibility, as well as concern around their organizations and other people's use of protocols like land acknowledgements. Alongside the focus on funding as central to reconciliation policy, the policy seemed to be understood or accepted by the participants as a framework for inclusion. Inclusion based discourse was part of every interview and was emphasized when participants described their roles, how they work with the policy and what the policy does. The literature review interrogated the use of inclusivity as a strategy in how it often ignores it's assimilative qualities (Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013). This can be seen in the the participants responses which did not frame inclusivity with this in mind.

Certain terms and phrases were used to describe relationships to indigenous communities and the nature of the policy. Terms like "bringing indigenous voices in," bringing indigenous workers in," dialoguing with indigenous organizations and communities," "joining community

projects, or bringing indigenous people into the community table," "checking in and consulting with indigenous community," " strategic directioning for developing partnerships," "facilitating relationships," "indigenous led initiatives," "obtaining indigenous input," centralizing, prioritizing, focusing on indigenous voices, bolstering and amplifying voices, being equal partners, sharing space, came up often. The implications of framing inclusivity without addressing the issue of forced assimilation of indigenous persons into the colonial project of Canada embodies the perpetuation of the white settler dream that Johnstone's (2017) identifies. Here, the participants enact an attitude of reform, where inclusivity is framed as "doing" AOP without connecting political implications. This attitude also embraces and seemingly maintains colonial, reconciliative neoliberal discourse around a projected utopic multicultural Canada. This notion of multiculturalism has also been problematized in the literature review.

Contradictory discourse

Messaging was often ambiguous, non-performative, and outright contradictory to the policy. For example, repeating concepts like "autonomy and self-determination" when also speaking about funding contingencies. This language around indigenous self-determination and autonomy comes from the indigenous communities relationship with the state, where Canada, or the many levels of provincial government have jurisdiction over indigenous nations and communities, where autonomy is not possible. The idea that a community or anyone can be autonomous and self-determining while also forcibly dependent on something is contradictory. Especially in these contexts where the fulfillment of financial supports is based on certain conditions, where community organizations and different levels of government not only have discretion about their investments - but somehow also avoid the fiduciary commitment by law that Canada has and doesn't fulfill around supporting indigenous communities well being

(Monture-Angus, 1999). For example, participant 5 shared a specific policy document

framework for how they choose to invest in the community.

> *The TRC I think reaffirms the ways in which we choose to work together in partnership*
>
> *and helps educate and inform the city as a whole and this division in particular around*
>
> *how we continue to work towards reconciliation, through the acknowledgement of self-*
>
> *determination and autonomy. (Participant 5)*

Another example of contradictory discourse has participant 1 explaining that their

agency has centralized indigenous women in policy and planning objectives, that this community

is a priority, and then admits that indigenous women's voices are being taken "more seriously"

than before. Taking their input more seriously doesn't equate to centering, turning these claims

by the agency into reconciliative rhetoric.

Other common discourse included using appropriation language, "turning the lens on

ourselves", unpacking ceremony, awareness around tokenism, and unpacking jargon were also

part of the discourse.

7. 2 Institutional Limitations

Leadership Power and lack of buy-in at the top

Leadership is another barrier in institutions, where higher level individuals stop efforts

from taking off or going forward. This also seemed to impact leadership in organizations, where

people in high levels of management were not as informed about reconciliation.

> *In policy, one organization can help change a bit of the community, but you need buy in*
> *from all the...right up to the macro, from the micro. When we had a federal government*
> *that was anti, you couldn't go anywhere. You are literally just holding ground. When the*
> *liberal government is in, where they say they are interested...you at least have a little bit*
> *more to push with. But when they get voted out, we get the backlash from the other side.*
> *(Participant 6)*

So when we talk about power, the person who takes it up in the organization that has influence...So, myself and one of the main lawyers in the organization, both white males but composing these ideas. When you start to think about power to bring ideas forward...We were able to bring them forward and not be challenged on them until way later in the game. So, when we went to this indigenous organization, and said - hey what do you want? How do you want to work together? We always had the goal that we would do the visits together, but when we brought that back and put a plan to that, that's when the plan got squashed. So, we wrote up the plan, we had other people review it and sent it to management and that's when we got the hard no...maybe we should have had buy in from senior management from the start. (Participant 4)

Here, participant 4 reflected on their learning, where they discovered that the need to secure "buy in" from upper levels of the organization was imperative. They also debriefed on how skipping this process, destroyed trust with that specific community organization, where promises were broken and power reinforced. This showed that the participant at the time, had carried out their role in an individualistic way, embodying a kind of champion in this context. It also demonstrates that the structural aspects of what were possible weren't part of the work for this participant.

In another example, participant 3 questioned whether something as important as this issue should be the "job" of smaller community organizations and wondered about the responsibility of higher levels of government to take reconciliation more seriously. They felt that the issue was beyond the scope of their organization, which was already entrenched in other issues like mental health, housing and addiction. As a result of this, it wasn't a priority of the organization. Several people mentioned bureaucracy and the many levels of hierarchy within the organizations, which would slow down or completely stop progress. "I think a safer space would be if policy direction is determined by the top, and then more of the middle management/frontline worker are able to implement it, that would be a much better process" (Participant 4).

Another person shared that even with the buy in of many upper levels of an organization, people

can change their minds quickly depending on circumstances. - little to no follow up from organizations around actual impact. Lack of support by leadership also came up in conversations where participants expressed not knowing what to do, where direction from above was either not clear or didn't exist.

Crisis Mode

When I asked them about what crisis mode meant for organizations in terms of reconciliation related responses, and specifically about processes of reflection and evaluation, answers varied. In general participants reflected that they needed more time, more consultation, and there was a pressure to take action. Many felt *crisis mode* was a common aspect of their work; where there isn't enough funding or people to do the work. Participant 2,4 and 7 also felt their organizations lacked consideration around the impact of policy and problematized there was no evaluation or follow up. Participant 4 answered similarly but emphasized overworking. "In housing, in childcare, or child welfare...it doesn't matter what the context of the work is. There always seems to be more work than there are bodies to complete it. Participant 2 commented "I think it's [crisis mode] a real danger for sure. To act in haste about something that has been historical...tightly packed ball of historical processes of oppression and disenfranchisement."

> *Yes, because we are always in crisis mode, I mean...my policies about sexual violence, even now...if I'm not in crisis mode I'm revising the policy. I'm remembering the last crisis, as a way to understand what is needed in the policy. (Participant 6)*

> *I'm of two minds about it, I guess. That it's being talked about and it's on the radar, and that there is some cultural pressure to be aware of a name, grand theft and genocide, even though those aren't the words they say at land acknowledgements...but I think there is something to the "look, jesus is coming..let's look bust" thing. We can't be seen doing nothing, so we have to be doing something. Without sufficient responsible reflection? Yeah, deep conditioning...the roots of anything we are doing and how are they entwined with racism and oppression? Yeah, I think I'm of two minds: enough already...let's get moving... and then also without being mindful about what it means or where it comes from. You might do more damage... (Participant 2)*

Participant 4 also commented on the system perpetuating crisis and the way crisis is built into our understandings of issues.

> *I think the way policy gets taken up organizationally is organized by the nature of the work in the organization and how they are often dealing with crisis. But then, at the municipal level, every organization is responding to crisis, an aggravate effectively creates a system that is prone to responding to crisis, and not really great at planning...The nature of crisis is that it forces you to respond to it, you can't prioritize things over it. (Participant 4)*

Participant 6 shared their learning around the un-productivity of crisis mode and how it might impact change.

> *I know that if you push too hard, again, it goes in waves. They will just push back so much. So, I don't like when it's done in crisis mode. Because what happens is people make a policy, but when the crisis is over, they go back to the same behaviour. It actually has to be done on stages, with slowly pushing and moving until people think it was their idea and it's the right thing to do. (Participant 6)*

Lack of training and education at the government and agency levels

The participants used discourse that demonstrated the power of mainstream narratives at their institutions and felt their colleagues at all levels lacked knowledge, education or training around reconciliation discourse and indigenous issues. All participants demonstrated concern around a lack of training and capacity at their worksites to do meaningful work with reconciliation policy. Some participants mentioned that there had been voluntary staff training at their worksites, but that training was almost exclusively cultural competency-based workshops. Two participants also said they had access to anti-oppression training. When we talked about cultural safety no one had taken that kind of training at their worksite, however one participant shared their skepticism. Participant 2 explained "I think cultural safety is like a buzz word for like… look at how diverse we are, and we different people than white folks in our organization...and it's something that agencies uphold, as a ...we are doing the work, quote,

unquote." Two participants also acknowledged that they knew about cultural humility training

but felt it was beyond their workplace capacity. Three participants also referred to an upcoming

strategy by their municipality that would be taking these issues up in the future, but participants

couldn't comment on any of the specifics.

> *I've experienced that. If someone can tie reconciliation and their practices to the history but I think they have to have a sense of the history and the devastation that happened to indigenous communities in order to do that, and where I currently work, it's not a very diverse community. So, there's that education component, even understanding the history even happened. I don't know...I think they need that context to feel that guilt. (Participant 4)*

Five participants referred to their previous social work education as the basis of their knowledge,

informing their current understandings. Two of these participants noted that while doing their

degrees, taking courses related to indigenous issues were also voluntary. When asked about

whether the participants had any training about whiteness, or white privilege, they all affirmed

they had at some point, but not in the workplace. Participant 2 described do-it-yourself learning

(reading) and taking workshops and training outside of work, as well as conversing with friends.

Participant 1, 4 and 7 either teach about power and privilege, or put on workshops themselves.

All participants felt that more training around whiteness, white privilege and power would

significantly impact cultural norms at their worksites.

> *I think for a lot of non-indigenous people, part of it is just even getting brought up to speed, like having the TRC coming out, brings to light there is an actual issue. Like often times people are just uneducated or uninformed about what those issues actually are. Are they reacting to it ? (Participant 5)*

7.3 Non-indigenous people making indigenous related policy

When asked specifically about general ideas around non-indigenous people making

policy for indigenous people, the participants responded in different ways with some

demonstrating skepticism for the process. Several participants shared concern about the integrity

of the policies, that the process itself was complex, and that the policies were still framed in a particular way, replicating a "power over" model. Participant 4 problematizes "a *lot of white people getting together thinking they have great ideas about what to do about other people's cultures, that's not a good idea.*" They continue "we shouldn't probably be making policy around something that isn't [ours] to make policy about." Participant 4 shared concern about the consultation process at their work explaining that even though the policy was developed with an intention to consult with indigenous communities, at year 5 of a 10 year plan, they had failed to do so.

> *The part where it says "engage with indigenous communities around housing" hasn't happened yet. We have redesigned the total housing system and I don't know where we had their voice. We have 5 years left on the 10 year plan to complete that action, but there's no indication that's going to happen. I think, as a general idea, I think we should be engaging with indigenous communities at a very substantive level, where those communities are in control of at least the direction, if not the provision of service. I don't think that is happening in any large way. (Participant 4)*

Participant 4 also spoke about challenges with, or having questions about, how certain policies are implemented.

> *I think one of them is tokenism. Having one indigenous person that is responsible for an entire organization's policies around indigenous policies is somewhat problematic. I think often times because there is a call to action report...and responding without giving thought or due consideration to what indigenous people in your community think, feel and how they would respond to such policy needs to be considered. (Participant 5)*

Participant 6 felt the whole process was embedded with hypocrisy,

> *First and foremost, I'm always concerned that we talk out of two sides of our mouths. Policy and practice are not closely together, and I believe they should be. So, for example, when we talk about indigenous people having a choice, well, we still have an indian act that controls people and controls how they operate in this contextualized world. And then we say, oh, we are going to treat them...oh we are all just all going to get along and forget our past. It's just that it's still here in the present. It just feels so full of hypocrisy and there's just no which way to frame it. I think that a lot of policy is patronizing, completely patronizing in so many different ways. (Participant 6)*

> *I think I have learned from indigenous communities is about holding complexity's intention, as opposed to thinking we can do this one way, or think about this one way, because monotheism..pluralism is an indigenous world view and before I learned that...I thought that structures mattered and things could be clean and neat. I think with pluralism, we are moving forward and we are moving backward, so just how complex everything is in reconciliation and acknowledge that we are not doing good enough, at the same time, but my summary is that policy will either have to be about dismantling institutions or systems that are oppressive otherwise they are just bandaids for the system. (Participant 7)*

7.4 Harm Reduction

I asked participants if they felt harm reduction had a role in the social services sector in relation to reconciliation. I was interested in whether they would see their roles as embodying a harm reduction-based response to issues impacting indigenous people. In the interviews I specifically asked about *culturally safety* which is defined by Baskin (2016) as embodying harm reduction qualities. Tuck and Yang (2012) define harm reduction models as "[attempts] to reduce the harm or risk of specific practices" (p. 21). The only participant that used harm reduction in a broader sense was participant 7 who responded with,

> *harm reduction is more personal and reduces harm that I could cause as a service provider in a more meaningful individual way, as opposed to having read in a policy that i am supposed to be culturally aware, or have learned it in a workshop. I'm just open to some things about reconciliation, like collaboration with indigenous people, and making sure that I am using those to reduce harm, removing barriers, that are totally unnecessary… (Participant 7)*

Participant 7 continued to finish their idea "I think that harm reduction is a more reasonable way, or model for us to create some form of justice, some semblance of justice within our institutions, if we are not going to dismantle our institutions." The other participants either had limited understandings or applications of harm reduction specific to addictions or housing first models, or had never had cultural safety workshops. We had conversations about Tuck and Yang's definition of harm reduction and how something like cultural safety could be used, as long as it

implied that the colonial settlement project was ongoing. We also talked about the intersections of these concepts, though, because I feel I was leading in those conversations, I won't include them here as data.

7.5 Obligation and Responsibility

Obligation to implement policies related to reconciliation

Participants were asked if there was a sense of obligation to implement policies related to reconciliation. Four participants out of the seven directly indicated that they felt an explicit obligation. Participant 1 answered " I don't see it any other way. It's an obligation to carry truth, to bear witness. It's an obligation to make space. It's an obligation to say ' this is not my space, even to give". When I asked if the process was political for the participant, they responded "Yes, it's very political. Participant 2 responded that they "feel a huge sense of obligation as a white person, as a person who is only here because of colonization and racism." They continued "I feel a responsibility to participate and I don't feel like I'm doing enough. I don't know if I ever will. But I don't see it showing up in my work." Participant 5 answered "Yes, I feel I have a sense, as a person living in Canada, I have a responsibility and an accountability to be committed to reconciliation" and "yes, I do think there is a responsibility around education for sure."
The remaining three participants took the scope of obligation beyond the personal. While participant 3 still acknowledged a personal obligation, they extended who has an obligation. "There is probably an obligation from a social justice standpoint, but there is no obligation...Our funders aren't making it obligatory." Similarly, participant 7 shared their questioning around how the term "obligation" is used by the institution. "Not from an institutional perspective in a meaningful way. I think the university would say yes to this. They would maybe think they are

doing it, and I'm skeptical of that."

Participant 4 questioned the authenticity of obligation as opposed to responsibility. They

shared "I still feel there is a sense of...within organizations, particularly those that we fund, that

service to Indigenous folks is still an obligation and not a responsibility in the way they take it

up." They continued "do people still feel obligated? Whether it's driven by guilt or because I'm

told to. I still think predominantly, they don't feel responsibility to doing the right thing."

> *Yes...I think we have an obligation as an agency, I think on a personal level we have an obligation to be engaged, on an organizational level, on a municipal level, a provincial and federal level. I absolutely think we have an obligation to do it right, and not only about our past, but about doing it differently moving forward. I know about change and I know about implementing. I have more of an inclusive background and what comes up for people is fear and resistance because they think they have to change or be different. Those who have power really don't like that, so I think there has to be...open conversation about resistance. (Participant 6)*

Agency's responsibility to engage other non-indigenous agencies about reconciliation discourse

I asked participants directly about whether they felt their agency had any responsibility to

engage with other non-indigenous organizations around reconciliation? How they felt about this

question and if they did feel the agencies had responsibilities, in what ways. These questions

provoked interesting responses ranging from more reflections on personal responsibility, to

organizational stakeholders, government responsibility and conversations about workshops and

training. Many participants had not thought about this framing of the issue before. Those that

continued to reflect on their individual responsibility commented on their own participation, how

to act responsibly or the right way, agency around responding to and challenging mainstream

narratives, authenticity, and personal commitment. Participant 3 hadn't thought about this before,

"I've never really thought about that, until this moment. But yeah...of course. I think."

> *I bring it in, in a way that allows to be safe, which is selfish, but that's what I feel like is possible at this time. I have the few things I focus on, that I think are decolonization*

> *efforts...I bring that into conversations with other departments all the time...So, I guess my responsibility personally matters most to me, because that is where I see I can make the most work and so hopefully, I'm leading by example...as a way to engage other non-indigenous workers in other departments. Because they will see.. Yep! We did remove that process and we survived. (Participant 7)*

For those that spoke about their agencies, responses ranged from "yes, there is a responsibility" to referencing the *Calls to Action Report* (2015), including different levels of government's responsibility, requirements for funding, projecting responsibility, incorporating Indigenous perspectives and partnerships and bureaucratic barriers, also funding and appeasing stakeholders. Participant 5 asked "I work in government, are you speaking about legislated, mandated, or moral?"

> *I think our agency, as a funder of programs, we do have a responsibility...if that's a value that we take up as a service management and lay that expectation on the services we fund. I just go back to "obligation vs. responsibility." I think that has to be done in a really particular way. I don't think if I went into one of our funded agencies and said "hey, you have a responsibility to reconciliation..." I don't think that is for me to say. I think we do have a responsibility to engage with the organizations around reconciliation in partnership with the indigenous community. (Participant 4)*

> *Why don't we have the agency to take up reconciliation discourse, or reflect on how our policies are practices are impacting indigenous identities. There isn't a sense of urgency in my area...Like an organization feeling wholly responsible to do that in an urgent way. There is no one scrambling to respond to this. (Participant 4)*

7.6 Participants Expressions of Personal Agency

I asked the participants about their concerns regarding reconciliation policy and how they might bring this up in their worksites, or challenge processes they were uncomfortable with. This provoked many responses throughout the interviews including the participants sense of ally ship and some of the job duties related to ally ship. Participant 1 discussed their personal agency and sense of duty as an ally and felt it was their job as an ally to intervene or engage in a "calling it out" response to oppressive attitudes in their worksite. For Participant 4, as a white person,

shared "I think it's our job to challenge for sure."

Participants 1,2,4, 6 and 7 shared about how they facilitate change outside their worksites through community volunteering, part time jobs working as teachers and workshop facilitators, and in their personal lives. Participant 2 shared their impression on the executive director to bring training into their worksite "*this came up basically because an ED and I saw each other at another meeting and I was like...we should really do something, and we kind of picked it up and talked my ED into it. As far as a I know there was no real organizational commitment, or you know… publicly...to…*"

Another common response from participants around how they might challenge processes is by disrupting dominant narratives, interrupting meetings, or speaking to people in private. Participant 1 shares their experience as a "white person" engaging in this process, "I have to be careful that I'm not replacing anyone else's voice or taking up too much space. That's I think...when we talk about feminism now, and intersectionality, that's where I think I need to be more intentional, to be able to call it out and be able to shut up." Participant 1 also described an act of refusal; quitting a volunteer position at a policy roundtable because the group wasn't willing to prioritize indigenous voices. Many of the participants saw their way of challenging policy or the organization was through how they exercised agency through funding discretion, sharing resources in the community and discretion in general when choosing community partners.

> *Supporting groups that are already doing stuff. Sometimes I think its not the.. Its not my organizations… we can't do everything, all the time. So how do we invite, or how to use our space. How do we use our power, our privilege, our conversations, our networks, to support really good work in the community? At a grass roots level or on a larger level. So I think creating space in a more intentional way, following up on it, not just the offer but like, bringing more people in and giving space and we do that but I just feel it's not enough. (Participant 3)*

Participant 4 reflected on having autonomy in facilitating how the Ontario funding policy

Journey Together worked on the ground, where they flowed funding to an indigenous child care

organization and backed off, meaning the organization had more direct decision making in how

the money is used. Participant 1 stated "if there is money on the table, to make sure to point it in

the right direction." Participant 2 talked about the power and choices of white settlers and how

they can show agency,

> *by not choosing to put [their] bodies in places, where [they] are showing solidarity, and supporting struggles and whatever, giving money to legal funds, as people get arrested. By avoiding that we are participating...by not choosing you are choosing. I have the ability to choose. (Participant 2)*

Participant 5 shared that they had challenged specific issues at their worksite and shares about

professional work settings, "*we want to be mindful about the ways in which we are engaging*

people around indigenous issues, both indigenous and non-indigenous ...and being really

mindful and thoughtful about how that happens."

7.7 Demonstrations of Retreatism

During this same question around challenging or questioning concerns in the worksite

many people found reasons for why they are not able to challenge processes.

Dominant Narratives:

Participant 6 explained that they identify as an agent of change and yet, expressed there were
limits to what they could do because of the dominant push back.

> *I know that the sensibilities of the dominant group are bigger than one sheet of paper. And what I try to do is...what is it called? It's not a word. Help the dominant group metabolize the change in a way that allows me to keep pushing forward with the power that I have. (Participant 6)*

Needing Permission or Invitation:

The invitation discourse was applied in scenarios where people were actively working with or alongside Indigenous communities or in isolation. It was also referred to in the responses by some participants when they were talking about agency to engage with non-indigenous people. Participants indicated that their roles were unclear and they weren't sure if it was up to them. Participant 1 mentioned having been "invited personally" to do the work (whether or not this work was through their organization or tied to funding). Participant 1 also implied they need permission to do this work, asking "Who has the perfect answer? I don't think it's our place as a white organization, I don't know if we should be...is it our place to take it on? Is it our place to initiate it? I'm not sure." The response from participant 3 echoed this need, "I feel like everyone at my work specifically… every one is super eager to do this kind of work but feel they need to be invited, and they don't." Participant 3 implies that their peers are ready to do the work, but are waiting for invitation or permission, and because there is no explicit invitation the work doesn't get taken up. Participant 7, displaying self awareness around dominance, offered "I want to be pulled into conversations, instead of inserting myself, because I can be a pretty dominant person."

Discomfort:

Discomfort was articulated in many different ways. Many of the participants depicted a comfortable and understanding context was needed in order to take on a lot of the issues discussed. For example, participant 2 felt the process needed to be "rooted in compassion and understanding [a] historical reality, without wasting a lot of time on guilt. White guilt can be a very useless process." Participant 2 also expressed hesitancy in participating, **"I should

participate, I should be doing more already. I guess I'm hopeful that I will feel… that I will take

things we've talked about and take action, but I don't want to take action too quickly." For

participant 4, feeling safe at work, or safe enough to criticize or challenge things to "safely

pushback" at their work site was a big part of the discussion. Participant 2 hesitated about the

idea of problematizing Canada itself in the reconciliation process, **"I would choose a different

strategy, i wouldn't want to undermine...a lot of people are very attached to the idea of Canada."

Participant 3 brought up some of the tensions of asking hard questions at their worksites,

> *I mean, everyone wants to talk about diversity, but as soon as we start talking about whiteness everyone gets weird, and I feel like decolonizing work is that. And no one really wants to do that. Everyone wants to be like..the white worker with the poster in their office of ...you know … the right names for Ontario. But no one really wants to get in there about how we personally uphold whiteness, our agency upholds whiteness, and our community does.(Participant 1)*

> *I think this has to do with what I started with about champions. So, if my agency or myself was a champion of reconciliation, then i could spend energy trying to collaborate and build alliances of agencies or organizations or departments that were going to focus on reconciliation, but as a non-indigenous person, I don't feel comfortable taking the charge of that. I would feel more comfortable amplifying the conversations that are already happening from the Indigenous groups on campus. (Participant 7)*

Lack of Leadership or Not knowing what to do:

This lacking of direction resulted in people doing nothing. Participant 3 commented on

the enthusiasm of those she works with to do something "this conversation is obviously really

helpful, and I think there is a tone of opportunity and willingness from a lot of folks, but literally,

people just don't know what to do." Participant 4 expressed an urgency to do something,

alongside their colleagues at the time the Calls to Action Report (2015) came out, "we need to do

this in the spirit of reconciliation, but couldn't quite articulate what that meant. We just knew we

needed to do something." Participant 6 offered that they think "people don't know where to draw

from."

Fear of doing something wrong:

This fear of not getting it perfect, and facing scrutinization or accountability is another reason some participants felt they couldn't engage in challenging issues at their work. Barriers to agency around facilitating change came up. There was specific fear or worry brought up by Participant 1,

> *You are just so worried about how you are saying Haudenosaunee. How will I pronounce it right without having to think about the fact I am standing on stolen land...People don't have the language, because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. And so, I find that people are skirting around it. They don't know quite how to feel it, how to say it. (Participant 1)*

Other participants referred to issues around "doing it right", "saying it right", "writing it right", "getting it perfect. Participant 2 expressed their preference of challenging things at work by doing it well. "I prefer doing it well, so we can talk about decolonization so that we have a clear goal and we can do it compassionately and recognize that these systems are historical. This participant in believing they couldn't do it well, hadn't addressed any of these issues within their work contexts.

Lack of interest/ It doesn't come up:

Participants also admitted that they hadn't felt there was a need for challenging or questioning because it didn't come up for them. They felt it was not on the radar of their organizations or on the minds of their colleagues and because of this conversations didn't happen.. For participant 4 responded with "no, not because I wouldn't, but because it hasn't happened yet. The opportunity to challenge somebody, their attitudes or opinions hasn't existed." This response by participant 4 is interesting because they later share that they are currently part

of a housing strategy that has neglected to follow through with the outlined consultation process as part of their work project. For participant 3, the conversations weren't on the radar by staff, "there wasn't any uptake necessarily by our staff. Although there was quite a lot of white liberal guilt around the room. You know...This is really sad… and you know… But it didn't turn into anything back then when it came out in 2008 (TRC Report)..."

Participant 2 explained from their position as an evaluation consultant that with different agencies, "none of my clients are agitating for it," implying it is also not on the radar in a way where challenging would be appropriate. They continued to share that the only time they had encountered reconciliation discourse, that they could recall was during a community meeting where they stated "I feel it does come up in conversations...about reconciliation. That's a pretty small blip on the radar of all the work that I do, I am aware of it personally." Relating to the question on a more personal level, participant 2 also shared "people don't come to me with questions about how we are doing it. I feel that there is so much business...day to day work...I feel it consumes the time...It doesn't feel like there are opportunities to have political philosophical things that could get practical if we talked about them."

It's a champion's job and Individualism:

Interestingly, many of the participants talked about a champion or that there was a need for certain individuals to take up this kind of work at their agencies. For participant 7, "you have to have a champion who, really understands reconciliation, or TRC reports and committees and processes in order to actually do this in a meaningful way." Participant 2 also shared a similar understanding, "I think it's super haphazard. I mean I think it's deeply dependent on individual people and how strongly they feel about something." Others thought similarly:

Yeah, so it would be from individuals really, so if someone in the organization was really

70

> *passionate about it and bringing it up every 5 minutes, we would do it. If I was super passionate about it, as a manager, or another manager on the management team, they would implement it.There is nothing really stopping it, it's just...needs someone taking it up and running with it. (Participant 3)*

> *So, the way this policy...or creating policy with reconciliation in mind happens, it happens through individuals bringing it up and it's typically not at the leadership level. I think that is difficult. Cause it shouldn't be up to the front lines, in my opinion...I think they have a role to play in reconciliation, but I don't think they can be solely relied on to shift the policy direction of an organization...I need to hear the executive director say that same thing and take concerted effort to do that. (Participant 4)*

Participant 7's response is interesting because they demonstrate awareness around how their response becomes a kind of retreatism. They state "I don't want to lead that on the campus. They are leading that on the campus....because I don't feel like it's my voice, and I don't have to do it, and nobody does it…" Here, it makes sense that the participant does not want to assume a leadership role in speaking for indigenous people. However, this brings up two issues. The first, whose responsibility is it to engage with non-indigenous people in reconciliation contexts. A common misunderstanding comes up here, that reconciliation is the job of indigenous people and therefore in this context, not the participants job. Something else here worth mentioning is that the participant refers to their own voice, and that they don't have a voice for this on campus.

Job Security and Risk taking:

Some participants reflected on their sense of security at work and how bringing up challenges at their organizations might change their relationship to their agency and colleagues and put their positions in jeopardy. Participant 4 brought up the precarity of contract work and how their willingness to challenge things is tied into that. **"**In my experience I haven't felt totally comfortable questioning particular practices, ones that I know that the organization doesn't

support, without being insecure in my job." Participant 7 describes their personal agency as a

balancing act, a constant internal battle, where being radical causes vulnerability.

> *If I come in all "Guns a'blazing" ...they would say- that sounds great in theory, but we are going to look at your through this microscope about everything you do. ..When I'm working for an institution, I understand what they want, what they need, I figure out what I can do to make them get what they need and what they want, and then I do my ground work. What it really means to me...and I do meaningful work with the individual in front of me because that is my decolonization social work, that's my reconciliation. (Participant 7)*

Participant 6 shared an experience of trying to make change and some of the things that come up

when you do try to challenge resistance from others. According to participant 6 when bringing

up white privilege, for example, "*they use their whole ability to get the group to then bond that*

you're wrong and then they stop listening."

Defeatism, Hopelessness and a Lack of Follow through:

Maddison, Clark and De Costa, (2016) name a dynamic, "hope turning to despair in the

face of colonial intractability" (p.2) as a key part of the reconciliation process for settlers.

Participant 4 demonstrated skepticism around what possibilities there were for making change,

naming how the system is set up itself as a barrier to change. They state, "*if a person or an*

organization isn't willing to authentically engage in other perspectives or attitudes, then

reconciliation just wont' work." They continue,

> *It's something we all feel whether we recognize it or not, but like, it's so true, if I really wanted to change the system, I would be working probably in a different way. I need that space to work in that different way. Whether I recognize it as wholesomely as you have, or I just feel it and I know I can't change it, this system the way it's set up, white power is set up, I don't have the ability to change it, to change the structure. (Participant 4)*

Participant 3 and 4 both shared about experiences where they had personally put in work and

then the organization dropped the ball, and the projects ended or were blocked in the final

stages. Participant 3 shared,

> *I remember when the report came out (TRC, 2008), one of my teams felt it was very important. It was the case management team. We just sort of...before out meetings, we would send it out a few days before and then had a conversation about it. It was ...when I think about the complement of who was in the room...there was a lot of white social workers, there was a lot of white social work… I want to say grief, like rhetoric… you know...this is terrible, we need to do more, and then not a lot happens after that. (Participant 3)*

7.8 Whiteness: Reflecting on processes of whiteness

When discussing processes of whiteness several themes emerged, including personal storytelling (critical autobiography), self reflexivity, awareness of national discourse and awareness of complicity in settler colonialism.

Critical Autobiography and Storytelling

Participants reflected on their past experiences and education around their own whiteness and understandings of indigenous relations. Self process and reflection were an important part of understanding the issues for all participants. Many participants shared stories about their past and referred to being ashamed or embarrassed about how they used to act and think. They also all felt that education was an important component in the process, where through education institution, at their worksites, or between individuals. Here is as sample of just one of the participants accounts.

> *I think part of...as a non-indigenous person growing up in the city, one of the things I note and communicate often when talking about this issue, is that I was never educated. I did not know. I wasn't educated until I went to university, and the reason I started learning about indigenous issues and what colonization actually meant, I took it upon myself. It was in a women's studies course. It came up and I felt ashamed and embarrassed that I had no idea what people were talking about. I thought I should probably learn some things about this. That's really where I started my understandings about the issue, and it has been a commitment to continuing to learn and understand and*

> *I will never fully be able to comprehend or understand, because I am not indigenous and i don't understand what it means to live in a colonized environment as an indigenous person but I can understand my role in terms of how I'm contributing to that oppression every day as I live in Canada. How I can be made aware of that and work towards creating...you know working towards resolution, not achieving resolution. (Participant 5)*

During these reflections, participants referred to white privilege, earned and unearned privilege, invoking whiteness, processes of learning including inherent racism, managing power, awareness of essentializing, and awareness around inserting dominance. Participant 5 noted that they have some indigenous ancestry but don't identify as an indigenous person stating "I do look white, if someone saw me they would say I'm a white person, so yes, I identify as white." To clarify about their understanding of white privilege they continued,

> *I acknowledge my white privilege in everything I do. My cultural, to some degree, the sociological components of my whiteness. I am very mindful of...but sometimes I feel challenged by the cultural components of my whiteness because I do have a different ancestry that contributes to...you know...I feel challenged by it because I don't want to dishonour my ancestry, but I do acknowledge that I am a white person that lives with that privilege in society, so that's what I'll say. (Participant 5)*

> *It's definitely not a quick fix, when i think of my own process, and i'm still in the process too, and I still say things, that people call me out on, not all the time, but I'm constantly learning and challenging deep ceded biases from my childhood. And we have to continue to engage in that. It gets at .... these questions are interesting because it gets at, part of the issue of mainstream agencies is that they take up reconciliation in a superficial way rather than deeply owning it, rather than challenging their biases. Right? Cause that takes time. (Participant 4)*

Critical Self-reflection

Participants demonstrated they engage in self reflexivity. Participants used these words to describe their feelings and understandings: discomfort, defensiveness, fear of re-centering whiteness, cognitive dissonance, regression, privileged pacifism, discretion, systems of dehumanization, white guilt, white fragility, white feminism, compassion fatigue, white grief, fear of centering white healing, job security, wanting to "safely pushback," encountering

resistance, invisible bias, knowledge around complicity and feeling hopeless.

> *I experience cognitive dissonance, you know? I feel like I tell myself a story that I'm using some of the power that I have not earned and some of the power that I have earned to try to charmingly move people along in to having more compassion and understanding of oppressed groups experiences so they can put that into all of their work. I tend to take a more positive approach that's like as uncomfortable as people get, regressive or whatever, mostly because I feel it doesn't work for the kinds of changes that I think are needed. I also think if anybody's having a conversation or a meeting, or things get escalated, you are less likely to be able to have those conversations to have those spaces in the future. I also think that in some ways, the only way that significant change happens is through struggle and hitting the streets… privilege, pacifism...I don't know. (Participant 2)*

> *I think part of it is acknowledging a bias, I've only grown up in a colonized environment, so I hold bias through the lens that I have around how I understand information and the world within which I live, and the country in which I live in particular. It's about constantly educating myself and being aware of that bias and how that plays a role or has an impact in what in what I do, both personally or professionally. (Participant 5)*

Awareness of National discourse

> *I think that we are just so behind in Canada in terms of people even understanding the issues. We've created and perpetuated that oppression because we hear all sorts of negative stigma around understanding the indigenous issues and attributing them to the individuals, why can't they just get over it…. Or feeling frustrated when there are protests or rallies around stolen land. People get really frustrated by that in Canada. Non-indigenous people just don't get it. How do you start breaking that down? (Participant 5)*

Awareness of Complicity

Three of the participants directly linked their knowledge about the history of colonization

in Canada to how settler colonialism is ongoing. Participant 5 r

> *I feel constantly challenged but I also recognize that I'm also invoking the whiteness that ...everything that I do is contributing to oppression, everything that I do is contributing to making reconciliation more difficult because of who I am and how I live in society. (Participant 5)*

> *I would say that I'm constantly challenged by my white privilege because i invoke it constantly in the environment i live, sometimes you don't even know... i mean it takes a lot of reflection, awareness and education to even pick up on those things, because often times, people living with that privilege don't even acknowledge it themselves unless you aren't white, or unless you don't have the same. Unless you are not.. when you are in it,*

it's really hard to see it. And that in itself is part of the privilege, right? (Participant 5)

Participant 4 commented on their own complicity, "so we buy into the colonial narrative , do we?

Do I make that decision though? Or is it structured in a particular way that forces my

compliance?"

> *I think it's really common that people don't want to talk about whiteness, because they are too defensive, I think that understanding power and privilege, understands that you have to share power if you have privilege, and that comes at a sacrifice to you, and if you aren't willing to make sacrifices, you will not engage in the conversation, you will not build in policy in a meaningful way, you will not give space to other voices, how are you going to reconcile the history of colonization in Canada. You just won't do it, and people have so much to lose, because of what they feel like they've earned, it's their actual privilege that was given to them by the lottery of being born, wherever they were born... so we don't center it about whiteness." (Participant 7)*

Chapter 8 - Discussion

8.1 Interview debriefing/ Engaging critical self-reflexivity

As a white researcher interviewing white workers, we mutually participated in the

interviewing process. Strangely, it also felt to me, that it mirrored what an accountability process

might look like. At some points the interviews provoked a feeling that both myself and the

participants were performing. Looking back, I was not prepared for how professional rhetoric

around reconciliation discourse would hook me in, and get me off track. In some moments when

I thought we were talking about something specifically, I realized it was part of a participants

professional language and didn't correspond necessarily with what I was trying to ask about. By

identifying my own location within the broad location of the participants, the boundaries of

researcher/participant are blurred, as I am also a participant, and the participants are also

researchers. For Deliovsky (2017) "a/symmetries of power between researcher and the

researched are inscribed with race and gender dynamics that are not always discernible, yet have

a tremendous influence on data gathering" (p.1).

As part of reflexive work as a dominant researcher, I rigorously interrogated my role as a knowledge producer during the interviews (Deliovsky, 2017). While this was partly intentional, in terms of inserting nation-building and settler subjectivity into whiteness discourse, I felt I was also subject to other's knowledge production. "These dynamics require recognizing the agency of the research participants to shape what are considered and interpreted as data" (Deliovsky, 2017, p. 1). Interestingly, Deliovsky (2017), as a white woman researching other white women, borrows this concept *frontstage/backstage* from Goffman (1959) to explicate some of these dynamics*. Frontstage* refers to one's attempt to create a positive self-image and *backstage* where one's self might behave differently in private (Deliovsky, 2017). This concept works as a "framework for considering the ways in which the research interview setting operates as a social performance between researcher and the research participant" (Deliovsky, 2017, p. 6). My insider status as a white social service worker with an education in social work and assumed knowledge about whiteness theory may have facilitated an interviewing relationship that embodies both *frontstage/backstage* orientations. In other words, the participants may have felt comfortable enough to share their thoughts and perspectives in a less guarded way with another white person. Participants know that by engaging in the research interview, their responses, whether provoked by my insider or outsider status (researcher) would still be critiqued to illustrate the findings.

Another interesting aspect was the participants agency, in some ways overpowering my own throughout the interview process. Deliovsky (2017) argues for an inquiry that specifically examines "the power research participants may possess and wield to shape the direction of the analysis of research data" (p.3). I had reflected on my own entitlement and agency in

interrogating whiteness in the research project, but experienced the agency and entitlement brought forward with the participants as well, resulting in an unexpected power dynamic of dominance.

8.2 Summary of the Findings

This study explored how self-identified white non-indigenous managers and directors understand their roles in an era of "reconciliation." Here, I provide a brief outline of the discussion framework which will be followed by a discussion of the findings based on the themes that emerged through the CDA. The findings revealed that for the participants in this study, discourse is controlled and continually reinforced through the state and institutions which continues to stem from a neoliberal and neo-colonial ideology. they did this through using "discourse of the day" and applying "best practice" rhetoric. This showed to have a direct impact on the participants orientation to reconciliation in the workplace and their professional roles. It does this through policy primarily focusing on funding, and inclusion, through the participants articulations of institutional barriers or structural limitations, as well as through the participant's understandings of personal agency in an era of "reconciliation." The second discussion theme stemming from the discourse analysis revealed how personal agency for participants is also heavily shaped by state discourse. Interestingly, the participants demonstrated how they incorporate AOP into their practice in contradictory ways. These are specific mechanisms participants enacted that reinforce and maintain power relations. This was demonstrated in two ways. The first example of this is that the participants revealed through discourse that they were using AOP language to neutralize and depoliticize relationships with indigenous peoples through their agencies. The second trend shows that participant's retreats were often rationalized using AOP discourse to free themselves from responsibility. Finally, the

last section of critical discourse analysis shows that the participants knowledge and understandings around whiteness lack interrogation of themselves as settler subjects. Participants also indicated a reluctance, or lacked responsibility in engaging with other white people around these issues.

8.3 Neoliberalism and State/colonial Discourse shape social service settings

Canadian national discourse and policy are embodiments of neoliberal colonial ideologies. These ideologies dominate reconciliation settings and how white settlers see themselves within their positions in social service settings. "Social work has been significantly emasculated within the rubric of the neoliberal political era: an era which privileges modernization at the expense of tradition, individual over collective interests, and places economic value before social development" (Hyslop, 2012, p. 405). Below is an outline of how neoliberal and neocolonial discourses were demonstrated to have impacted, followed by a more in depth exploration of each.

The stronghold of neoliberal colonialism was demonstrated through the participants articulation of the institutional limitations. Limitations around institutional power and barriers was a large part of the conversations. Leadership, or individuals that hold power in the institution came up here as barriers to change in conversations. The participants were also asked specifically about working in crisis mode, and this was also discussed throughout different parts of the interviews when participants would use examples from their practice to depict unsatisfactory work conditions and barriers to doing meaningful work. This was also part of the institutional limitations revealed in the findings.

Another important issue that came up for participants was around a lack of training in

their profession, where all participants commented on the inadequacy of their institutions efforts in educating staff. Included in these conversations was acknowledgement of a lack of education and training, where in most cases cultural competency workshops were the extent of organizational efforts to bring organization personnel up to speed. While the exact content of the cultural competency workshops were not discussed, this shows the level of commitment in this areas for organizational learning in general but also to reflect reconciliation. As indicated in the literature review *cultural competency* is highly contested and extremely out of date in social work practice contexts (Pon,2009; Baskin, 2016). These findings show that the state is not committed to actual change, or reconciliation, in any capacity that would be meaningful in a decolonization context.

Neoliberalism has also become the foundation from which the participants viewed their own agency and even the agency of others. This was revealed in the interviewing around how participants unanimously advocated for a "champion" or some individual other than themselves that was needed to do the work of reconciliation at their organizations, there were minor exceptions to this, which are identified in the findings.

Reconciliation Discourse and Policy

The findings revealed that "discourse of the day" impacts how the participants understand their roles in relation to both their worksites, and reconciliation. This reveals that reconciliation policy in these specific cases is still very much part of the national reconciliation agenda which remains to be assimilative and inclusion/exclusion oriented (Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013, Alfred & Corntassel, 2005), framed through neoliberalism and symptomatic of persistent denial (Manuel, 2017). In Canada, all discourse must be contextualized from within a neoliberal colonial frame, where the discourse is so deeply entwined with escalating the colonial project, it

itself dictates it (MacDonald, 2011). In other words, for white settlers, one must not only address white supremacy when processing racism, but specifically make the connections to the project of that supremacy, which is connected to capitalism, resource extraction and land theft – all colonial logics embedded in colonial discourse (Lawrence & Dua, 2012; Alfred, 2010).

Critical discourse analysis "tries to illuminate the ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favour their interests" (McGregor, 2003, p.3). It can be acknowledged that whoever controls the discourse, also controls the frame. Introducing different discourse impacts the dominating ideology. Monture-Angus (1999) specified that as an Aboriginal person it is particularly difficult to accept Canada's liberal individualist ideology (1999, p.135). Discourse is power. It is also important to note here, that despite efforts by prominent indigenous scholars, the state has historically refused to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems (Monture-Angus, 1999, Manuel, 2017).

> *Indigenous people, widely portrayed in policy documents and social analysis as representing some of the most disadvantaged groups within Canada, have also long promoted visions of self-determination that are not confined to western or European-based notions of representation, integration and success. (Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013, p. 27)*

According to Manuel (2017) the Canadian government's use of the term reconciliation, from a legal standpoint, means the extinguishment of Indigenous title and rights. Here we see reconciliation as a kind of recolonization (Alfred as cited in Manuel, 2017). Alfred argues "discourses of inclusion and multiculturalism in Canada are directed at Indigenous peoples with the express intent of separating them from their traditional lands as sources of both physical and spiritual strength" (as cited to in Battell-Lowman and Barker, 2015, p.6). These discourses are part of a strategy, which has developed over time to respond to increasing resistance from indigenous people in an effort to diffuse their claims (Battell-Lowman & Barker, 2015).

Throughout the discussions on reconciliation policy, participants demonstrated their unwavering use of *inclusion discourse* through their use of professional reconciliation rhetoric. Inclusion focused discourse seems to drive or lead the understandings of the participants in their articulations of reconciliation policy. They exclusively spoke about their relationships to reconciliation, professionally and again, through their professional capacities making policy, implementing best-practice strategies and language, distributing funding and including and bringing Indigenous communities to the table. The use of *best practice* discourse, a neoliberal concept as revealed through the literature, was also used here to legitimize processes that appeared problematic. People didn't make connections to assimilation during these conversations. "Through the selection of recognizable rhetorical schemes and grand discourses, the speaker's discourse contributes to their further naturalization into hegemonic 'common sense'(Zanoni & Janssens, 2003, p.59). Mackey explains the Canadian nation-building project being "hidden behind the veil of racial tolerance and inclusion" (as cited in Battell -Lowman and Barker, 2015, p. 75). This is implemented through "flexible strategies of managing, appropriating, controlling, subsuming, and often highlighting it" (Mackey as cited in Battell -Lowman and Barker, 2015, p. 75).

Institutional Limitations

Institutional limitations were also depicted through a neoliberal/neocolonial lens. Participants spoke about the barriers of being able to work and implement the policies in meaningful ways. Through an analysis of their critical feedback, three themes emerged. They felt there was a crisis in leadership where those in higher up positions either weren't up to speed around the issues, or simply didn't align politically, often ending progress before it could begin. This was seen by participants as a "lack of buy in from the top." For Gaudry and Lorenz (2018)

having "the support from the highest levels of administration" (p. 159) is imperative. "If programs are rushed before there's adequate capacity to deliver them, ICRs are not going to work. Or worse, their failure will set us back, perpetuate mistruths, or destroy interest in actually engaging with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous histories" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p.159). This top down managerial style is indicative of the discourse which still aligns with neoliberal discourse.

This also suggests that there is a lack of "trickling up" happening in these institutions, where higher levels of managers, directors and government workers are not accessing conversations from the community, front line or at agency level. This demonstrates that power still comes from above in these contexts. As we know, in increasing contexts of "new management" and governmentality, managerial power and worker powerlessness, processes of fragmentation; alienation, solitude and even more governmentality persist. The findings around institutional barriers suggest that certain levels of government have not seriously changed their attitudes or agendas around reconciliation. This puts all of the work on agencies themselves to do the work and the training. It also indicates participants lack of agency around taking this on as a responsibility of their professional positions.

While participants were asked specifically about working in "crisis mode," the participants indicated that it was the reality of their professional lives, with one exception which was identified in the findings. Greensmith (2015) qualifies crisis mode as a neoliberal expression in that it requires social service organizations to always do more with less.

The last theme that arose from thinking about institutional barriers was lack of training and education, which all participants felt was extremely important and neglected within their profession. Something to note here: that the extent, according to participants, of training is still

cultural competency based. As identified in the literature review, using cultural competency

now, which as a practice itself has been historicized and deemed unhelpful (Pon, 2009), indicates

a crisis in institutional responses, or a lack of sincerity. To an overwhelming degree, this thesis

has already included the impacts and recolonizing repercussions of concepts like cultural

competency and situated within an assimilationist agenda. Interestingly, Zhang 2018 critiques

anti oppressive practice as also embodying attributes that may neutralize and confuse. This is

once again due to the consumption of "AOP as a refining of one's craft and technique, but failing

to see how it constitutes a subjectivity that takes up the embodiment of a liberal helping subject"

(Zhang, 2018, p. 126). This will be discussed further, later on.

Participants Expressions of Personal Agency

Participants expressions of personal agency is very shaped by current discourses around

reconciliation which seemed to embody a neoliberalist framing based on individualism.

I asked participants about if and how they might challenge or question decision making or

dominant ideology at their worksites. Looking at the findings the participants expressed personal

agency through three main avenues: individual responsibility, professional roles and by engaging

in a processes of whiteness theory throughout the interviewing. Discourse around white

privilege and power came up in conversations, where participants demonstrated that whiteness

was part of their responsibility and also that whiteness was related to their sense of agency. It

was through these beginnings of critical whiteness studies where participants started to bring up

tensions, questions and concerns. The scope around their whiteness was not only tied to a sense

of personal knowledge about their own legacies as settlers, but their processes of identifying this

along side privilege and power. I derived that Joseph's (2015) concept of *confluence* would be

useful here to tie these reflections together in order to arrive at an understanding of oneself acting

within the technologies of colonialism, as a colonial subject, but also with new possibilities for the future. This is where I felt CWS as outlined in this thesis might be a powerful framework for settlers in positions so intricately embedded in colonial processes.

Most participants largely saw non-indigenous people's role in reconciliation as their individual responsibility. It was here that participants reflected on the ways they were personally doing reconciliation work. Many of the participants felt they were either not doing enough, or that their responsibility was limited to their work life, or they were doing the best they could within the institutional barriers discussed earlier. Interestingly, responsibility around reconciliation was conveyed as being directed only at indigenous individuals and communities. Before I asked about their agencies responsibilities to engage with other non-indigenous organizations the framing of their roles did not include responsibility around engaging with other settlers about settler colonialism. This was especially true in their professional capacities. There was also a private component to this, where people shared their private or independent commitments to reconciliation, through engaging in their own research outside of work, as well as any teaching work the participants took up. This was a powerful finding in the research that most of the participants were doing work, sometimes rigorously, during their personal time to educate themselves around whiteness. There were exceptions to this, where participants admitted they hadn't kept up to date with current discourse and politics relating to indigenous peoples or reconciliation.

Many people referred to their actions with no references to collective agency or responsibility, and very much impacted by the limitations of their roles and the discourses that surround their roles. Participant 6 was an exception to this, they felt that encouraging others in their community to learn more about colonial history and their identities as settlers was a

concrete aspect of their personal agency. Agency seemed to be largely conceptualized as an individual issue. Discourse here included disrupting, calling it out, "making noise" and naming it, quitting and refusal, all highly individualistic and direct (one on one) ways of addressing issues.

The other way personal agency was asserted was through their professional roles via facilitating funding, sharing their agency's resources and their personal discretion around certain matters. These particular framings of personal agency reaffirm the point from earlier about how neoliberal discourse has impacted the participants understandings of their roles. When the participants see their job requirements as enactments of their personal agency in relation to resisting or challenging in their worksites, there are some questions that need to be asked.

What are the mechanisms that intrude or obscure the participants agency into aligning with the institutional agenda? And in what ways do the participants' AOP identities also become obscured through their unchecked understanding of their agency within the institution? When AOP adopts a naturalizing of oppression, "discourse and discursive practices are seen as something that could be sidestepped in one used the right theoretical lens of AOP informed sensibility" (Zhang, 2018, p. 129). Zhang (2018) argues that "AOP as a dominant knowledge base is a display of governmentality which creates moral subjectivities that mimic the technologies of domination" (p. 134). This revealing of the participants expression of personal agency through a continuation of state mechanisms is troubling. "What is worrisome about this process of naturalisation is that the type of attention, knowledge and techniques which subjects apply to themselves remains closed off for critique and rarely called into question" (Zhang, 2018, p.136). This co-optation of settler agency on personal and professional levels demonstrates a need for new articulations of what settler agency can look like. In order to do this, we have to

focus attention to the specific mechanisms we wish to interrupt.

There isn't discourse about settler agency in challenging colonial gatekeeping, therefore they are limited by discourse that exists now, that do not interrupt or visibilize certain kinds of violence being carried out. This demonstrates a need to name and infuse mechanisms that can interrupt or challenge dominant narratives and discourses. In Howard's (2004) criticism of white privilege, he noticed that discourses around whiteness overlook white agency. For Howard, "the concept whiteness should be made to include oppositional White identities" (2004, p.74). If this agency isn't included in the discourse, subjects "retreat to an ahistorical ideology of liberal individualism that firmly enables the continuance of the racist status quo" (Howard, 2004, p. 74). This shows that agency is diminished or limited when the discourse is determined and framed by government through funding and inclusion.

Demonstrating Retreatism

When I asked about the participants experiences challenging tensions at their worksites, they also brought up reasons for not taking action. The responses here focused less on structural barriers, like earlier where participants spoke about reconciliation policy, and instead was interpreted on the individual level.

Participants shared a variety of responses including the challenges of working with the power of dominant narratives, and mainstream attitudes about their work. A few participants revealed feeling a need for permission to take action or an invitation, especially in cases where people identified feeling vulnerable. Participants also indicated that discomfort was also a barrier in their worksites around change. They also spoke a lot about a lack of leadership or direction, and not knowing what to do. Another theme revealed through the participants responses around why they lack agency is fear of doing something wrong, or not doing it well.

For some participants, there was a lack of interest at the agency level, by staff and the organization itself. From their perspectives, challenging attitudes at their worksite hadn't come up as an issue. Therefore according to a few participants, there was no prompting for challenging or bringing up issues. Participants strongly felt that this job around challenging, or bringing reconciliation discourse on to the radar of the agency was up to impassioned individuals or what they called *champions*. Another barrier mentioned is Job Security and Risk taking, where participants felt there were substantial risks to challenging and speaking out about things. Finally, participants articulated a kind of defeatism, or hopelessness around what is possible, and also felt a lack of follow through by the organizations contributed to this. These feelings were portrayed in the context of complicity and making real change.

These retreats become the rationale which frees us from taking action or responsibility (Alcoff, 1991; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Tuck and Yang (2012) call them *moves to innocence*, Battell - Lowman and Barker (2015) call them *moves to comfort.* They describe *moves to comfort* as "moves to re-establish a barrier or remove ourselves from proximity to our own colonial identities, to disavow ourselves as settler colonizers" (p. 105). Here, I will use Alcoff's (1991) similar concept *retreatism,* as outlined previously in the literature review. The following list are the ways I chose to describe the scenarios or terms the participants used to talk about what discourages their agency (retreats). The categories here emerged from the findings.

1. Dominant narratives and discourse are too strong
2. Needing permission or invitation
3. Discomfort
4. People don't know what to do (lack of leadership)
5. Fear of doing something wrong
6. Lack of interest/it doesn't come up
7. Resistance from others
8. Champions and Individualism
9. Job Security and Risk Taking
10. Defeatism, Hopelessness and a Lack of Follow through by organizations

This list reveals the consequences of a neoliberal/neocolonial framing of the issues. The logic inherent in the discourse within the retreats reinforces and relies on institutional hierarchy, to direct, make decisions about, manage and control the agenda. The participants responses reveal a normalized individualism; fragmentation, isolation, ambivalence and fear all impact their ability to respond or show agency. Many of these subcategories described different ways the participants rationalized and articulated their retreats, resulting in known and unknown settler moves to innocence. This was articulated in the way that some of them lean on AOP and decolonization discourse. I will deconstruct and explore some of these retreats further later, I will focus on one particular retreat here to demonstrate how neoliberalism has manifested in the understandings of participant's agency.

Champions and Individualism

This particular response by participants was surprising for me. The term *champion* is part of professional social work discourse, Not only is it hugely individualistic, it also allows people to skirt responsibility. The discourse around this particular retreat is worth mentioning. It was almost indisputable, based on the conversations that participants felt that this kind of work at their jobs was up to a worksite "champion." There are three exceptions to this. Participant 7 eventually referred to them-self as a "gentle champion" after re-evaluating their role in their organizations. Participant 6, while never self-identifying as a "champion" embodied one, in my opinion. Participant 5 was the only participant that didn't mention a champion or one individual taking on the work for the organization, in fact they problematized this tendency in social service organizations, especially when it was up to one indigenous individual. When participants claimed that if only they had a champion it would be more of a priority, I wondered if that was actually the case. Especially because recognizing a need for someone else to do the job, or that a

position of this nature is needed in the organization, the participants distinguished championship

within their roles and didn't demonstrate any plans to hire for this. Participant 3 indicated that

"there is nothing really stopping it, it's just...needs someone taking it up and running with it."

This implied that it was up to a staff member to bring their own passion about this to

management. This puts the job, according to the participants, in the hands of another individual,

not even the system or the organization itself.

For Swaffield and Bell, an organizational champion is a neoliberal approach to social

change (p. 250). Swaffield and Bell (2012) in their research with climate champions found that

"champions and their managers consistently constructed the process of social change in

neoliberal terms" (p. 249). "They conceived of their colleagues (and their employers) as

neoliberal agents and accepted a neoliberal ethic in their relations with others" (p. 250). Based on

the literature review, we know that social services are frequently becoming more susceptible to

incorporating neoliberal logics in their operations (Heron and Rossiter (2011). "There are

fundamental components that appear in almost all accounts of neoliberalism" (Swaffield & Bell,

2012, p. 253). In their investigation they point to the individualist logic that neoliberalism thrives

on, including the extension of an individual's choice and how it relates to their ethical decision

making (Swaffield & Bell, 2012). The champion discourse that came up in these conversations

embodied Swaffield & Bell's (2012) findings. "On a neoliberal account, ethical commitments are

subjective preferences" (Swaffield & Bell, 2012, p. 254). Leaving reconciliation work and other

settler work to subjective preference is problematic and needs to be re-looked at as a strategy in

organizations.

The research is suggesting that there is an interesting trend in how the participants

articulations of their agency (which the research reveals is very much also based on the

participants backgrounds in AOP) aligns with neoliberalism/neocolonialism, in a particular way.

It not only reinforces dominant discourse but fulfills the job requirements the state facilitates.

Here, the discussion around AOP will continue as it came up through discourse when

participants shared stories about their practice strategies. This aspect of the study speaks to the

limitations of colonial discourse in creating change and how fragmented it is from decolonizing

agendas.

8.4 Harm Reduction

Later in the interviewing I attempted to facilitate an understanding of the participants

roles with policy in relation to indigenous issues through the notion of harm reduction. The

purpose of this was to shift thinking about the nature of the work so that participants could see

their work as subjective and temporal and the most important thing - see themselves within a

complex system with in which the outcomes they were seeking weren't possible. This framing

acknowledges the limits or barriers to the work and the relationships with indigenous people and

allows an admission that they system itself is wrong. In the conversations, I used the example of

cultural safety, to demonstrate how the objectives of cultural safety take on a harm reductive

foundation, in acknowledging power and structures of oppression, but allowing space for people

to work with this in mind.

This conversation in its entirety could be seen as a settler move to innocence, because it

assumes this "do your best with what you have " mentality, but it is also useful in unlocking

people's perceptions that this system or this government are the "good and only fit" for working

through these issues. While the participants before this conversation hadn't thought a lot about

harm reduction in this broader sense, they indicated that thinking about it this way was new to

them and provoked further thinking. This question was appropriate in the context of the interviews because the participants were unable to articulate other ways of seeing their work. The conversations provided a way of talking about the work that implies its imperfection, while also emphasizing power and complicity with room for change.

8.5 The Harms of De-contextualizing AOP

There seemed to be a struggle or incompatibility in the discourse between professional or institutional discourse, grassroots community based discourse and AOP concepts, and decolonizing logics. Monture-Angus (1999) frequently wrote about the incompatibility between colonial language in law and indigenous knowledge systems. Her perspective was that indigenous peoples would never experience self-determination through colonial systems and that being forced to use a language other than one's own language, reinforces the "[epitome] of the colonial experience" (Monture-Angus, 1999, p.22). There are more famous feminist slogans around this, for example Lorde's (2003) *the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* It is no wonder that participants synthesizing of both institutional discourse (neoliberal, neocolonial) and community based grassroots discourse (AOP, and anti-racist) produces contradictions and non-performative outcomes (Ahmed, 2004) and the continual maintenance of colonial rule. Following what Monture-Angus (1999) warned about earlier, the possibilities of any meaningful reconciliation are deflated without appropriate discourse and frameworks that stem from outside dominant discourses.

The conversations revealed that participants were de-contextualizing AOP where there were gaps in not only the discourse, but in their practice. It seems participants relied on their knowledge and understandings of AOP practice skills in contexts where there was tension or

gaps in the discourse. Applying these logics to contexts where they don't fit, for example, as discussed earlier in the literature review, AOP may not be equipped to handle the specificity of land dispossession without first changing its scope to include Lawrence and Dua's criticism's (re: decolonizing antiracism). This was demonstrated by the many contradictions that came up for participants when trying to use decolonizing language (which has been appropriated by the institutions) in colonial relations.

There were two ways this happened, based on my analysis of the participants experiences and descriptions. The first mechanism I noticed was the way the teachings and protocols that have become mainstream were obscured and resulted in a disempowerment of participant agency. This happened through appropriating messages from indigenous social work scholars around settlers protocols with indigenous people and misapplying these same instructions to reconciliation contexts in general. In other words, using these same protocols to dis-initiate organizing other settlers.

Reconciliation and Ambiguity

Maddison, Clark and De Costa, (2016) "despair at the new ways in which colonial assumptions are able to reproduce themselves in policy and in practice" (p.2). "There remains a broad inability to either understand reconciliation" (Maddison, Clark & De Costa, 2016, p.2) or make sense of the complex contradictions inherent within reconciliation processes (Maddison, Clark & De Costa, 2016). Reconciliation as an ambiguous concept produces multiple discourses "effectively limiting how it might be communicated and understood and therefore where and how it might be practiced" (Maddison, Clark & De Costa, 2016, p.3). Zhang (2018) locates ambiguity, or being in a position to perpetuate ambiguity, as stemming from multiple discourses.

This produced two identifiable repercussions. The first result is that it depoliticized and

neutralized the worker in their relationship with indigenous people as a colonial subject, as a representative of the state. This appropriation results in a decontextualized application of AOP which fails to address any of the technologies of power (Joseph, 2015). The second repercussion is that it inevitably used for retreating, misusing it in contexts that allow them to free themselves of responsibility through retreats (Battell-Lowman & Barker, 2015).

Depoliticization and Neutralization of Participants nation-building subjectivity

Appropriating AOP at the institutional level obscures violence

I asked participant 5 about the structure of one of the indigenous communities they work with, and whether it was part of a local indigenous nation. They responded by stating "I don't have that insight or knowledge, I just know that they are non profit indigenous organization led by indigenous peoples for indigenous peoples." This example, like many of the other conversations demonstrates the way the power of the discourse shuts down inquiry and assumes that any Indigenous Peoples will work in this context. This projection of the mantra *nothing for us without us,* AOP and inclusion based discourse, is projected through the participants ambivalence around who the "us" is. Here it is unclear who the individuals are, that comprise the organizations liaising with the municipal government, as well as what their personal commitments and political affiliations are. Despite how they have come to the table, or what organizations they represent, depoliticizing and obscuring the relationship. "Indigenous individuals can be managed within Settler Canadian society if (and only if) their connections to nations (sovereignty) and the land are severed"(Battell -Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 79).

This example demonstrates one possible way the discourses at play allow colonial relations to endure. This provokes a question - what does it mean when the state allocates

funding and supports to groups that do not resemble an indigenous nation. In this example

important decolonizing discourse around *nation to nation* relations is non-existent (Manuel,

2017). This discourse and framing subsumes indigenous relations within a subsection of the

population based on prevalence and the fact that indigenous people are disproportionately

marginalized. This is also another fragmenting neoliberal mechanism used by the state to ignore

land disputes and ongoing challenges to the state itself.

I was surprised that during the conversations about policy and reconciliation related

policy, the participants didn't already problematize the positions they were in. Especially

because of their previous established knowledge about white privilege, power and subjectivity.

Why hadn't they immediately linked their helping profession context with patronizing and

assimilative agendas. Instead, I was given the impression that for the most part, with 2-3

exceptions, participants felt policy around these issues was necessary, and their jobs - providing

funding, management, resources etc were part of their reconciliation work. The participants

whose professional roles directly stemming from the government did not seem to problematize

the nature of their work, and demonstrated to generally see the funding mechanisms and

inclusion strategies as also embodying their anti-oppressive practice.

The participants whose roles were affiliated with the state, whose organizations received

state funding also did not demonstrate acknowledgement of the totalizing financial relationships

with the indigenous groups they worked with. Exceptions to this were participant 7, who

problematized the institution, their employer, and strategically managed their role within that

system. Participant 2 was also an exception, as their work was contractual and not affiliated in

the same ways to governmental funding. To break this down, financial transactions from the state

to municipalities or organizations, which funnel the funds to indigenous communities engage in

neoliberal paternalist logic. Schram and Silverman (2012) in *The end of social work: neoliberalizing social policy implementation* describe "distinctive parallels across different areas of human service provision" (p. 128). "Neoliberal organizational reforms and paternalist policy tools appear in both and are associated with changes in who are the frontline workers, how organizational expectations affect their work, and how policy tools shape their treatment of clients" (Schram & Silverman, 2012, p.142).

The states processes of assimilation are carried out through inclusivity strategies. When these facts are removed from their contexts and individuals are using AOP to depoliticize these facts, the mechanisms that secure white supremacist and colonial ruling relations are maintained. Wotherspoon & Hansen (2013) state that "discourse of inclusion carries mixed significance for Indigenous People due to colonization and policies which undermine their positions in Canadian society" (p.24). This is also evident in the way the federal government has framed the modern day treaty process – where first nations primarily recognized as self-governing based on their acceptance of certain neoliberal and resource extraction based exchanges. For MacDonald (2011), these policy strategies are "not simply about meeting the demands of Indigenous Peoples but also about meeting the requirements of the contemporary governmental shift towards "privatization" within liberal democratic states" (p.1).

In the context of AOP at the community level, I tried to think of where ideas like this come from, and remembered that in grass roots organizing, white people are often encouraged to fund and support certain campaigns (Mackenzie, 2014). This trend of white people being asked to step up and support different issues materially, might have somehow been appropriated by AOP institutional practice. While the fiduciary relationship between the Canadian government and Indigenous Peoples has long been established (Monture-Angus, 1999), this particular

funding being misconstrued as the participants personal demonstrations of agency (and maybe

solidarity) is highly problematic. Especially when this is framed by the participants themselves

as one of their main enactments of their personal agency through discretion. This funding from

government to Indigenous community organizations through municipal level agencies is not and

should not be framed as anti-oppressive work. Many of the participants mentioned splitting and

sharing their budgets, directing, pointing, advocating for getting money to indigenous

communities as quickly as possible. This is interesting because it demonstrates how the

institution and its agenda, mask its original purpose by creating circumstances that produce these

particular understandings. I don't want to undermine the important changes in how this has been

done through the years, and would argue that a *harm reductive* framing of these relationships

would be more appropriate. The colonial - power over - relationship of the government to

indigenous communities has not changed, in spite of the demonstrations of personal agency of

the participants who are already doing their intended jobs.

Non-indigenous people making indigenous related policy

It wasn't until I posed a later question that participants demonstrated any issues or

problems with reconciliation policy and discourse. I asked specifically about what participants

thought about non-indigenous people making policy concerning Indigenous peoples. I asked this

question to gain some insight into how participants might articulate their roles being involved in

policy processes related to reconciliation and Indigenous issues. The findings showed that

participants were generally uncomfortable with this idea and framing of the question. Discourse

around *best practice* was used to rationalize how policy was being made and presented as an

incontestable category or method. In other words, participants didn't bring up issues with the

policies themselves being fundamentally neoliberal in nature.

It is also important to acknowledge that it was here that participants shared their skepticism and anxieties about the relationship between the policy, the agencies and the intentions of the government. Interestingly, participants problematized the way the policy wasn't being followed, that it was power over, or insincere, but not that the policy was being made in the first place. This indicated to me that participants still weren't thinking about the nature of a relationship that requires a policy between non-indigenous people and indigenous people. The comments they made were also about other people and how they were doing the policy or weren't.

An example shared by participant 4, that their team had failed to consult with the indigenous community in their area despite this commitment being outlined within the project design demonstrates two understandings. The first, the participant found the fact that their team hadn't consulted yet, and felt they wouldn't consult throughout the process to be highly problematic. My second understanding is that the participant has taken on a passive position, expressing that although they saw this as an issue, they didn't express any plans to do anything about it. This revealed to me that the participant doesn't understand their complicity as part of the team project or them-self as someone that might challenge or question this. The removal of self in the telling of this particular tension shows there is a gap or lack of connection for this participant of their role in the context. For Zhang (2018) subjects that take on an AOP identity are "ultimately detached from their own subjectivity due to the luxury of positioning oneself as having an uniquely AOP perspective" (p. 129). Well, I had intended to provoke acknowledgement around the nature of their roles directly, the participants expressed that the concept itself was problematic, but only expressed that through a buffer, or degree of separation. They didn't identify as "the" non indigenous person making policy for Indigenous people. They

also didn't identify as being "the" non-indigenous person failing to consult and follow the protocol agreed to in their project proposal.

De-contextualizing AOP in order to Retreat

Retreatism is a mode of fragmentation and it works to individualize and obscure responses to social justice (Alcoff, 1991). For Alcoff (1991), it is not only self imposed, where error or humility are deeply individual and lead to withdrawal based on fear , but is a deeply isolating, disallowing any type of transformative resistance. Retreatism is another expression of neoliberal logic, which co-opts and breaks down initiatives that resist it."Sustained social dialogue focused on a broad Settler Canadian identity and the foregrounding of the enduring power of settler colonialism in Canada is a necessary part of any social just effort" (Battell -Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 73). Otherwise, any social justice efforts including AOP will "repeatingly [fall] into patterns of behaviour that buttress settler colonial structures of invasion, or replace existing structures with new ones, just as powerful and more pernicious in form" (Battell -Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 73).

The following are retreats that rely on the de-contextualization of AOP principles. There is a danger in blindly applying AOP principles to incompatible contexts. "The myth that there can be original action outside of a history of injustice and pain depends on constructing the complex present as ahistorical and detached, with a reinvested interest in the liberal subject" (Zhang, 2018,p. 131).

Needing Permission or Invitation

Participants used discourse that referred to "needing permission" or "invitation" when talking about both their work with indigenous communities and their responsibility to engage

with other non-indigenous people. Two questions emerged here around how these concepts are used in a superficial way. This discourse around "needing to be invited" has specific significance which is distorted in some of the participants accounts. Interestingly, this anti-oppressive discourse is part the mainstream social work's teachings around dominance and located within community based research processes (Carlson, 2016). In whiteness education, dominance and how non-indigenous people impose themselves, assume power, and fail to demonstrate self awareness around their privilege and positioning in relations with Indigenous Peoples are all scrutinized. However, discourses around white dominance are not meant to deter or impede settler organizing around reconciliation and settler dominance, as explained in the literature review. This use of the concept of invitation is problematic and absolutely aligns with Tuck & Yang's articulation of a *move towards innocence* through how the participant's rationalized their reluctance to do anything.

Participant 1 shared that they had been invited by the indigenous community to liaise around housing funding. The particular context of this relationship - the actual job of the participant to facilitate the funding, impacts the integrity of this invitation due to the paternalistic nature of the policy (Schram & Silverman, 2012). There is a contradiction here, this example ignores, once again the way the relationship is framed and shows yet again, how AOP is appropriated here in order to neutralize the mechanism of power. The participant uses discourse around "invitation" to depoliticize their work as an agent of the state in how it funds housing related issues, where the necessity for housing creates an unbalanced power dynamic. This particular dynamic is never named, even though it is a mechanism through which colonial relations persist.

The other question that arises is about the assumption that reconciliation work is always

with indigenous people, instead of it being about settlers and settlers responsibility to educate

other settlers. When the question about non-indigenous agencies working with non-indigenous

agencies around reconciliation came up, discourse intended for a specific context was used as a

way to rationalize the participants decisions not to take action. Revisiting participant 7's

> *So, if my agency or myself was a champion of reconciliation, then i could spend energy trying to collaborate and build alliances of agencies or organizations or departments that were going to focus on reconciliation, but as a non-indigenous person, I don't feel comfortable taking the charge of that. I would feel more comfortable amplifying the conversations that are already happening from the Indigenous groups on campus. (Participant 7)*

Baskin (2016) problematizes non-indigenous people who "fall into the trap of thinking that

because their department has hired Indigenous educators, they can sit back and expect that the

Indigenous educators will do all the work regarding decolonization" (p. 383). It came up several

times that participants were uncomfortable taking action without invitation.

Direct invitation for settlers to organize

Let's deconstruct the retreat response by settlers who claim they haven't been invited or

given permission to do work about reconciliation with other settlers. We have already discussed

earlier, how the appropriation of this language around invitation has been mis-used in

institutional contexts to neutralize political and colonial relationships. Here we are going to

address a myth, and debunk this claim that non-indigenous people in Canada have not received

explicit invitations to organize themselves. Non-indigenous people in Canada have been given

explicit consent to join the path towards decolonization by Manuel (2017) and many others

(Baskin, 2016,; Alfred, 2010, Monture-Angus, 1999). Settler Canadians have been given

directions on what they can and should do (Alfred, 2010). "The commitment to examine

Canadian responsibility is the task of Canadians and their governments" (Monture-Angus, 1999,

p. 22). Manuel offers a *Reconciliation Manifesto*, outlining the first six steps settlers can work

on. Baskin (2016) also makes the messaging explicit for non-indigenous social workers, and

settlers who want to take action. "In order to avoid further complicity in assimilative and colonial

practices; non-indigenous helpers must develop a clear understanding of their privilege and of

their professions' complicity in past and present colonial practices embedded in their practice"

(Baskin, 2016, p.177). Alfred (2010) also outlines the actions settlers can take immediately, and

should be doing immediately.

> *Working to dislodge state power over Indigenous communities and lands, delegitimizing racist and colonial discourses, making amends for colonial dispossession by arranging for the return of lands to Indigenous people... these are all things that white allies are eminently qualified to do and should be doing (Alfred, 2010, para. 8).*

"People don't know what to do" (lack or denial of leadership)

Lack of clarity around what to do also came up in the conversations. The research

revealed that the participants felt themselves like they weren't sure what could be done, and also

expressed that their colleagues and employees were willing to do something, but didn't know

where to start. This discourse I found to be revealing of two issues. The first that particular

participants role as leader could be seen as a denial of power. Mackenzie's attention to

"relinquishing power to," leans towards a dismantling of hierarchies and addresses Howard's

(2004) concerns around white agency. This ongoing displacement or denial of power by those

that hold power, only allows more of the same - managerial and administrative driven governing

by other dominant subjects within social work organizations.

> *By not taking up one's experiences as a form of dominance, subjects understand that their voices tell multiple narratives, held up by multiple competing discourses that may enter into the same room even when the speaker believes herself or himself to be a*

singular, definitive discourse that is explicitly anti-oppressive.(Zhang, 2018, p.133).

The "people don't know what to do" retreat is interesting because discourse around reconciliation is ambiguous and like discussed throughout this thesis, dominated by mixed agendas. The research again, indicates that there is a need to determine more ways settlers can engage. For Boler (1999) ambiguity is a kind of discomfort that opens up a window to explore one's emotional investments. Again this is a departure from retreatism.

If we borrow discourse from AOP frames, uncertainty is another component of AOP practice that has been embraced by Jeffery (2007) and Baskin (2016) and again has been used in participant's retreats in the wrong context. Embracing uncertainty and claiming one doesn't know what to do, are two separate actions. Uncertainty does not mean do nothing. Regan (2010) encourages settlers to approach indigenous relations from *a space of not knowing*. For Regan, "this space of not knowing has power that may hold a key to decolonization for settlers" (2010, p. 18). The context from which Regan (2010) speaks is from an openness in learning where one finds them-self in unfamiliar territory. For Regan (2010) this unfamiliar territory considers cultural, intellectual and emotional components. This is again, very different than retreating, but quite opposite.

Fear of doing something wrong

In social work, we could make the argument that dominant subjects withdraw based on an ethical standpoint, around essentializing power and harm. They might see themselves as less harmful, by not engaging their dominance, which might draw from an ethics standpoint, where they believe they are embodying AOP practice. "As a result, social work practitioners often see ethics as being primarily a personal rather than a communal responsibility, supported by codes

that place the blame for inadequacies squarely on the shoulders of individuals as independent

actors" (Weinberg, 2010, p. 36). Weinberg(2010) speaks here about the intricacies of ethics and

how it manifests for social workers individually, instead of being "able to see ethics as extending

to their positioning in social processes and their placement in institutional systems" (2010, p.40).

This stops a macro rendering of a dominance subject's engagement of ethics, and refuses the

possibility of agency around their own dominance. Weinberg (2010) speaks about the

mechanisms of ethics at the individual level, which could be applied to isolation as

fragmentation.

> *If an ethical framework stressed the ineluctable nature of trespass, isolation could be reduced because the problems would not be perceived as personal inadequacy. The field and the social construction of ethics would be strengthened by the solidarity of a community that recognized the inescapability of trespass, allowing for humility, doubt, and clemency (Weinburg, 2010, p.41).*

For Battell-Lowman and Barker (2015) guilt and fear "can be useful if it is part of the

journey toward critical acceptance of responsibility, but not as an end goal in itself " (Battell-

Lowman & Barker, 2015 p.101). They warn about settler responses to colonialism and

communicating that whatever the feelings they mustn't exclude next steps (Battell-Lowman &

Barker, 2015).

8.6 Critical Whiteness Studies

Throughout the interviews there was consistency in the participants acknowledgements

around white privilege and seeing themselves as settlers. This was interesting to me, because

outside of the context of whiteness, participants didn't speak about themselves as settlers in their

work contexts in the same way. That participants told stories about their personal processes

coming to understand power, privilege and issues about colonialism. They exhibited, along with myself as an agent in the interviewing, a self-reflexivity in relation to the conversations. Some participants also demonstrated an awareness around national discourse and colonial narratives, this was an exception. Finally, the participants indicated complicity in a broad sense, but didn't indicate their professional roles in this.

Building Critical Consciousness through Personal stories

Nayak (2007) locates "auto/biographical material, storytelling and anecdotal evidence" as an important method within critical whiteness theory. Schick & St. Denis's (2005a) use of *Critical Autobiography* works as an exercise or exploration for "[understanding] that identities are not fixed" (p. 391). Their work, engaging students in rigorous self-locating and analyzing of privilege through autobiography is an attempt to disrupt the flows of colonialism and white supremacy (Schick & St. Denis, 2005a). The participants used their personal experiences to build a context around their knowledge, trace learning time lines and connect with me as the researcher around relatable experiences as white subjects. They also used it to demonstrate how their attitudes and understandings have changed over time. During the conversations, as a researcher, but also as a white person, I also engaged in sharing about my own processing and identity formation. This embodiment of CWS seemed to indicate that critical autobiography is a powerful way to connect and relate to others about settler subjectivity. This provided space to expand on concepts around nationhood, Canada's agenda or intentions, complicity and the social work profession's role in reconciliation, building on critical consciousness around contradictions between reconciliations and decolonization principles.

Critical Reflexivity

Critical Reflectivity in the context of colonialism imposes an important conversation for

practicing social work. According to Heron (2005), self is "a co-constructor of a social reality and cannot escape playing a part in (re)producing the structures of society" (p.345). Participant 2's confession of experiencing "cognitive dissonance," demonstrates an admission of their unearned power and how they choose to use it and in what ways. Interestingly, later in the text, they include another option "the only way that significant change happens in through struggle and hitting the streets...privilege...pacifism… I don't know…". These moments of critical reflexivity allow a space for other possibilities. They become moments of questioning. Participant 7 came to a realization within a conversation, "I don't feel like it's my voice and I don't have to do it, and nobody does it…" The way critical reflexivity was relied on throughout the interviews for many modes of expression establishes its importance within critical whiteness processes.

Examining National Discourses & Complicity

Schick & St. Denis (2005b) claim there is a need to "counter commonplace tropes or mythologies that are part of a Canadian narrative" (p.296). "Theories of nationalism render Indigenous nationhood unviable, which has serious ramifications in a colonial context. Bunjun's (2010) exposure of *hegemonic nationalizing narratives* within social service type organizations demonstrates the importance of having an awareness about dominant discourses. While participants referred to Canada or dominant discourse, national discourse itself did not come up in a mentionable way. Participants brought up their complicity throughout the interviews but never demonstrated they were thinking about it in relation to their worksites. I'm including both national discourse and complicity here because I think this is an important part of whiteness discourse that is left out of conversations about privilege and power, and should be considered part of whiteness discourse.

Chapter 9 - Recommendations, Research Limitations and Future Considerations

People Need More Options - A Call for Emancipatory Discourse!

Settlers need discourse that focuses on settler agency to make meaningful change and allow for movement beyond fragmentation toward collectivity. Caffentzis & Federici (2014) argue for a "commitment to the creation of collective subjects" (p. 103) based on the "rejection of all principles of exclusion or hierarchizing" (p.103). This means that we need discourse to shape and inform collective subjectivities (Heron, 2005). They offer a counter solution to fragmentation, that moves us from individual responses shaped by neoliberal discourse (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Something like Boler's (1999) mutuality. Boler (1999) describes a "pedagogy of discomfort emphasizing "collective witnessing" as opposed to individualized self-reflection" (p. 176). Boler (1999) sees reflective work as a collective process and warns about individualization at the expense of mutual responsibility (p. 177).

New commons are being created all the time (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014, p. 95) and they describe projects outside the logic of capitalism, based on anarchist logics; principles of communal sharing and mutual aid. Establishing discourse that is reflective of where we want to move is intrinsic in controlling the ideology we live within. The findings show that there is a crisis around settler agency which is connected to a need for alternative discourses. Simply borrowing from AOP principles won't cut it. An anti oppressive framing may not be equipped to deal with land dispossession as AOP has failed to fully encompass the colonial project (Zhang, 2018; Tuck& Yang, 2012). Interestingly, Sharma and Wright (2008) offer a "practice of commoning" as a way to "challenge capitalist social relations and those organized through the national state" (p. 131). "Common rights have historically included principles of neighbourhood,

subsistence, travel, anti-enclosure, and reparations" (p. 131). Unless emancipatory discourse emerges and is taken up substantially, social workers are in danger of maintaining their complicity as colonial subjects. "Settler colonization is collective, so undoing settler colonialism will also necessarily be a collective effort" (Battell-Lowman & Barker, 2014, p. 109).

Settlers need to do the work to organize other settlers and "Get out of the way!"

Critical whiteness studies needs to include and focus on nation-building mechanisms that are enacted by colonial subjects, settler agency, and settler subjectivity that focuses on the future. The literature demonstrates not only a pattern of social work responding in a particular way, but also that an embodiment of settler subjectivity is avoided. Pon (2009) argues that inevitably "cultural competency discourses free social workers from having to confront whiteness and Canada's history of white supremacy and colonial violence against Indigenous peoples (p.66). And yet this research showed that we haven't moved beyond cultural competency in meaningful ways. These means paying particular "attention to the techniques, instruments, technologies, and practices used that reveals how violence becomes permitted and how it can be intervened upon methodologically" (Joseph,2015, p.24).

Settlers organizing settlers, as an option seems to be largely undermined and non existent within the "discourse of the day". This is important for many reasons. I noticed this rhetoric come up in the conversations around ally roles and responsibilities, where for example participant 1 shared the context of speaking for an indigenous colleague at a meeting "...that role, was to - call it out, so that my indigenous partner sitting across the table isn't required to do that constantly." While this is a micro manifestation of the participants identifying and placing responsibility on them-self as a white settler, this attitude could have macro potential. This is the task or responsibility of settlers that has been asked for by these indigenous scholars. To look at

the role of Canada and how it must change, including white settlers and their attitudes towards change. Non-indigenous people in Canada have a lot of work that needs to be done in order to join pathways to decolonization (Manuel, 2017). "It requires the commitment of Canadians to allow Aboriginal Peoples to lead the way to the future" (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 22). At the very least, settlers must organize to get out of the way. "Change will not come from institutions but from people" (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 159).

Settlers need to see themselves within the struggle

Malott (2012) states,

> *Not only is ideology more important than positionality when it comes to the work of resisting the doctrinal system and oppressive structures and arrangements, but their abolition (such as patriarchy) not only benefits those who are most hurt (i.e., women) by them, but those who benefit the most (i.e., men) by them, who are also better off under more positive conditions. (p. 261)*

What leaves a striking impression here is that colonialism as a system doesn't just hurt those it sets out to destroy, but that all colonial subjects – settlers included, would be emancipated in many ways, through this ideological change. All nation subjects are affected by the ruling regimes of the colonial project. "Whiteness is a hegemonic construction of the ruling capitalist class" (p.3) where everyone, including white people would "be better off without the institutionalization of white supremacy" (Malott, Waukau & Waukau-Villagomez, 2009, p.3). Malott, Waukau and Waukau-Villagomez (2009) address white people and state "self-identifying as white does not lock us into producing whiteness." The participants in this project did not demonstrate they themselves were also impacted by the nature of their role as settlers or colonial subjects. For Malott, Waukau and Waukau-Villagomez (2009) the moment we self-identify as white, we can start to trouble those particular relationships and processes of power. This is where

we can begin to see connections that maintain these identities (Malott, Waukau &Waukau-Villagomez, 2009). I would argue this would be similar when self-identifying as colonial or nation-building subjects.

Limitations and Future Considerations

For the purposes of this study the sample of 7 participants was sufficient but is too few to draw any real conclusions about the findings and trends that have emerged. In some ways, the sample size of 7 was also too large, as the thesis was limited in maximum allowable pages. The interviews provided more information than was possible to analyze in this thesis. This means that the data analysis was limited by prioritizing of the most prevalent themes, and also my own perspectives. There many also have been discourses present that I was unable to identify or pick up on, as a white person studying other white people as well as a white person relating to their experiences, perspectives and anxieties. Some of the themes could be explored as claims at a later date, when there is more time and space to focus on the particulars of the findings. Further analysis is needed in the area of whiteness and processes of whiteness that co-opt agency and stop transformation from being possible.

In terms of what the findings and my analysis might produce in terms of outcomes is a re-considering of settler subjectivity for the participants as well as introducing an orientation towards the Canadian settlement process, which they might see themselves within. The research project doesn't pretend to be an avenue for answering for the colonial system or white supremacy as a whole, or capitalism. Through the participants understandings and the discourses they maintain, it tries to demonstrate processes and mechanisms, interactions and understandings of how colonial continuities persist, in hopes that they can be interrupted. In order to begin to disrupt the colonial project one must first identify oneself within the colonial process as a nation-

building subject and recognize the processes and mechanisms within the discourses and their

practice that embody nation-building like gatekeeping for the state.

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