School Social Workers' Perceptions of Cultural Safety for First Nations Students

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, it aims to bring forth an understanding of the historical relationship between First Nations people in Canada and the formal Canadian education system. Second, to investigate how non-First Nations school social workers perceive their role in supporting First Nations youth to have a positive school experience.

The first goal is accomplished through a thorough literature review, and provides an understanding of historical events, which have shaped how many First Nations youth, and their families experience the education system today. The literature review also includes material on cultural safety, which is a theoretical framework used to guide service provider/service recipient relationships between non-indigenous and indigenous people where a history of colonialism and oppression exist. Within the review of the literature, the role of school social work, and challenges in defining this role as related to working with First Nations students is explained. In addition, the theme of Whiteness and how it plays into bi-cultural professional relationships is also explored. This literature provides the framework for analysis of the following section.

The second goal is accomplished through interviews with four non-First Nations school social workers, currently working in Winnipeg school divisions. The interviews were qualitative, and followed a narrative style of inquiry. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences working with First Nations youth. Transcripts from each interview were restoried into individual narratives. Themes from each narrative were then compared to the teachings of cultural safety and literature on whiteness.

The information gathered from participant stories demonstrate that there is more need for education on how to provide services within the education system that are culturally safe for First Nations youth and families.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background and context to this research

The idea for this thesis arose out of my own experiences as a non-First Nations, and more specifically white woman, working with First Nations youth. I have worked in several after-school programs supporting youth, and witnessed that often, First Nations youth had relationships with the formal education system that was very challenging. This was different from my own experiences with education, and something I expand on more thoroughly within this thesis. I wanted to understand why this difference existed, and what role I, and others like myself played in maintaining this challenging relationship, and how we could work to challenge it. For my pre-master's practicum, I chose a position in the field of school social work, where I had hoped to get a better idea of how social work contributes to supporting students, and in particular First Nations students, to have a more positive school experience. This practicum left me wanting to further explore the relationship between First Nations people and the formal education system in Canada, as well as what the role of non-First Nations social workers, others like myself, play in this relationship.

I found that research on historical and current-day colonialism within the education system, which has resulted in lower school attendance rates of First Nations youth in Winnipeg, as well as Manitoba and throughout Canada, is not hard to find (Silver, Mallett, Greene & Simard, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2010a, as cited in Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2010). However, as a non-First Nations, white woman, and future social worker, my desire was to understand what role I, and others like myself, can play in working towards better supporting First Nations youth and families in schools, without perpetuating negative colonial relationships.

Research on this topic has focused on the role education policy-makers, administrators, and educators play in increasing the attendance rate of First Nations youth (AFN, 2010; Battiste & McLean, 2005; Silver et al., 2002; RCAP, 1996), yet the role of school social work is often absent from the recommendations. Through this research, I sought to understand the role of school social workers, and more specifically non-First Nations school social workers, in supporting First Nations students within the schools.

As the role of school social worker is multi-layered, acting often as collaborator and liaison with schools, students and families (The School Social Work, 2002), this role may be in a unique position to support the retention of First Nations youth within the school system, and advocate for structural change. Research on the role of school social work could provide yet undocumented insight into the importance of this unique role in the bigger picture of supporting the needs of First Nations youth in Winnipeg schools.

In order to address this gap in information, this research aims to accomplish two goals; 1. Understand non-First Nations school social workers' perceptions of their role in supporting early, middle, and senior years First Nations students and their families to have a positive and culturally safe school experience in Winnipeg, and 2. Explore how school social workers navigate an understanding of the relationship between historical and current colonial practices within the school system, their impact on First Nations youths educational experience in Winnipeg, and how this impacts their work with First Nations families.

I think it is important to state from the beginning some challenges I experienced in accomplishing these goals. I expand on them in greater detail throughout this thesis, but an overview now will help guide the understanding of the information that is revealed. While it was difficult to find past research similar to my ideas to help guide this research, my greatest

challenges came from the interviews. Upon analysis, I realized that my interview questions were

not as effective as I had desired in drawing out personal stories of experience. Perhaps due to the

questioning alone, or due to other reasons hypothesized in the analysis section, participants were

not forthcoming in detailed and reflexive responses. The focus of response was more often

outward, directed at client, than inward, directed at self. There was also a challenge both for

myself and for the participants in naming, discussing, and personally reflecting on Whiteness,

and how it directs and impacts the work white social workers do. Ultimately, I believe this thesis

demonstrates the need for further research on the role of white social workers, working with First

Nations people.

Previous literature related to this thesis

It has been well documented that many First Nations youth in Winnipeg, as well as the

rest of Manitoba and across Canada, do not stay in school as long as their non-First Nations peers

(RCAP, 1996; Silver et al., 2002; Statistics Canada, 2010a). In order to put this statistic into

perspective, I begin the following chapter, the Literature Review, with an overview of the

historical relationship between First Nations communities, families, and youth, and the western

education system. Essentially this overview looks at a cross-cultural relationship between First

Nations students, and non-First Nations workers within the formal Canadian education system,

that has been rife with oppression, racism, and even abuse (Barnes, Josefowits, & Cole, 2006;

Battiste, 1998; Milloy, 1999; RCAP, 1996; Regan, 2010). Several authors have described

multiple reasons that First Nations, and other Aboriginal students leave school early (Battiste,

1998; Battiste & McLean, 2005; RCAP, 1996; Silver et al., 2002); such as content that denies

their history, and ignores their present, school staff who do not understand them, and values that

do not mesh with their own. All of these factors can contribute to a negative school experience.

These authors suggest that the onus for change is not on First Nations students, but on the

education system. As school social work has long been a part of the formal school system in

Canada (The School Social Work, 2002), the following two questions arose for me: 1) What is

the role of school social work in supporting First Nations youth and their families to have a

positive school experience? 2) How is the impact of historical and current day experiences of

oppression within the school system by First Nations students and families, acknowledged by

school social workers? In order to both ask these questions and answer them through this

research with meaning, I looked for a model that offered guidance to cross-cultural working

relationships where one population has been oppressed by another. It was in this search that I

discovered the teachings of cultural safety. Cultural safety is a unique model in that it looks

beyond simply acknowledging differences in cultural customs, and explores the meaning of

power differentials, while specifically challenging colonialism and oppression (Fact Sheet:

Cultural Safety, 2006; Kirkham, et al., 2002, Ramsden, 2002). This model also recognizes that

the culture that has been historically oppressed is the only one who decides if in fact a service is

culturally safe for them to approach and use (Ramsden, 2002). Cultural safety can be understood

through its four guiding principles:

1. To educate non-Indigenous service providers of the historical and colonial processes that have created the oppression that exists today for Indigenous people that they provide service to;

2. To teach service providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work;

3. To encourage open-mindedness and flexibility with attitudes towards people they provide service to who are culturally different; and

4.   To produce a workforce of service providers who are educated and self-aware,

and able to provide services that are culturally safe, as defined by those that

they serve. (Ramsden, 2002, p.94)

Previously, research on creating environments that are culturally safe for Indigenous

populations has focused on the field of healthcare. The idea of cultural safety began as a model

for better care for Indigenous populations in New Zealand who were not satisfied with the

healthcare treatment they were receiving, or were choosing not to access care at all due to poor

treatment by non-indigenous healthcare workers. This model, developed by Irihapeti Merenia

Ramsden (2002), has gained interest in nursing and First Nations healthcare advocates in Canada

(Aboriginal Nurses Association, 2009; Brascoupe & Waters, 2009; Kirkham et al, 2002). While

the applicability of this model to the Canadian context is gaining popularity, its applicability

beyond healthcare has not been well explored or documented. Brascoupe and Waters (2009)

suggest that beyond healthcare, education is the social issue in most need of application of the

cultural safety model, despite the lack of research, as of yet, linking the two together. In applying

the concept of cultural safety to education, First Nations students and families become the

"client", and education becomes the "service" they are being offered. Professionals within the

education system have a responsibility to ensure that the education they are offering is culturally

safe for First Nations youth and families to approach and use, and youth and families have the

right to decide when in fact this service is culturally safe for them. School social work offers a

specific service within the education system. According to the International Network of School

Social Workers "Understanding the psycho-social factors that contribute to optimum learning,

the school social worker's job is to help children stay in school and be successful learners (2001,

as cited in The School Social Work, 2002). The five school divisions in Winnipeg commonly

describe this role as being accomplished through collaboration with students, families, school staff, and other community resources and professionals, in order to maximize students' success in school (Child Guidance Clinic, n.d.; Educational and Clinical Support Services, n.d.; Social Workers, n.d.; Student Services, n.d.; Student Support Services, n.d.). Through this research I explore the role school social workers play in creating an educational experience for First Nations youth and families that is culturally safe. I was unable to find literature on school social work and First Nations students. My search is described more thoroughly in the Literature Review chapter. Lack of previous research in this area provided a challenge for me, as I was unable to use other research as guidance for my own. Additionally, I was frustrated to find that this topic has yet to be researched. It seems logical to me that within a profession often focused on keeping youth in school, research on how this can be achieved specifically with First Nations youth, who have a well-documented history of leaving school early, should be plentiful. This was not the case. As such, much of the research I use within this thesis comes out of education, rather than social work.

As the second tenet of cultural safety asks of service providers to be self-reflexive of their own cultural realities and values that they bring to their work (Ramsden, 2002), this research includes literature on mainstream, or western understandings of culture, and explores the impact colonialism has had on both indigenous and western cultures (Kirkham et al., 2002), as well as our interpretation of culture. This exploration leads into discussion on whiteness. This section discusses the necessity of creating awareness of the often-unacknowledged power and privilege that can be associated with being white (Frankenberg, 1993), and the self-reflection that is involved in first naming whiteness, and then working towards abandonment of unearned white privilege (Helms, 1993) in order to level out power imbalances.

Focus of this research

Based on previous research, I am moving forward from the position that in various ways, First Nations youth and families have said they do not feel education is culturally safe for them. Ramsden (2002) explains that a service is culturally safe only when Indigenous people deem it safe to use. Previous research has demonstrated that First Nations youth continue to feel alienated within the school system (Battiste and McLean, 2005; RCAP, 1996; Silver et al, 2002), and too often these feelings lead to leaving school early (RCAP, 1996; Silver et al., 2002). When youth leave school early, they are choosing not to use the services provided by the education system, as it is not culturally safe. The teachings of cultural safety state clearly that the responsibility for creating services and spaces that are culturally safe for indigenous populations rests on the shoulders of non-indigenous service providers (Ramsden, 2002). The issue addressed in this research focuses on the role that school social work can play in creating educational experiences for First Nations youth that are culturally safe. Specifically, this research explores how school social workers believe they are already contributing to cultural safety, and how, if at all, they believe this role can be improved on. While literature on cultural safety focuses on indigenous and non-indigenous relationships, for the purpose of the Canadian, and more specifically Winnipeg-context, the cross-cultural relationship explored through this research is described as First Nations and non-First Nations. It is important to note that the term First Nations was chosen, as opposed to Aboriginal, as First Nations, Metis, and Inuit groups in Canada have different experiences, and to generalize is to take away from their uniqueness in experiences and needs. However, there is a smaller body of research pertaining specifically to First Nations people in Canada, than of Aboriginal people more generally, therefore throughout this thesis I make reference to other research that uses the term Aboriginal, despite attempts to explicitly focus on First Nations.

Goal of this thesis

As other research has been conducted which demonstrates the feelings of cultural unsafety, expressed by many First Nations youth by the act of leaving school early (Silver et al., 2002), my goal through this research is to respond to this problem by highlighting the responsibility that professionals within the school system bear in transforming this system into one that is responsive to the needs of First Nations youth, specifically by focusing on cultural safety. Through this research, I have examined the role of the school social worker to see how they are working towards creating educational experiences for First Nations youth that youth themselves can deem culturally safe. Two of the defining elements that separates cultural safety from other models of cross-cultural work are recognizing the impact that colonialism and oppression has on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, and requiring of service providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work. This research highlights these elements by asking how, if at all, school social workers acknowledge current and historical colonial processes that impact youth in the education system today, while being self-reflexive of their own cultural realities that guide the work they do. These questions are asked through qualitative interviews with four school social workers who have had experience working with First Nations students in Winnipeg. Narrative Inquiry was chosen as the qualitative method, as it is suited well for small participant samples (Creswell, 2007), producing more in-depth, personal stories.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter two provides a literature review which begins by detailing historical accounts of early educational relationships between First Nations people and Settlers in Canada, through to the Indian

Residential School System which many First Nations people experienced, on to current day education systems in place in Canada, and First Nations responses and recommendations regarding these systems and relationships.

Following this, the role school social work plays within the school system is explained, and related to supporting the needs of First Nations youth and families. This explanation leads into discussion of the responsibility non-First Nations professionals, and specifically school social workers, have in supporting First Nations youth and families. This discussion is guided by introduction to the principles of cultural safety. Cultural safety is described from its beginning inception in nursing and healthcare work in New Zealand, to its desired application by several Aboriginal healthcare advocates in Canada. Furthermore, I suggest the transferability of this model of cross-cultural work, in addressing the strain in relationships between First Nations students and families, and non-First Nations professionals within the education system.

Central to the teachings of cultural safety is the necessity for non-Indigenous service providers to understand the impact colonialism has had on both indigenous and non-indigenous cultures, and how resulting power relations affect and influence our work. Additionally, cultural safety teaches that non-Indigenous service providers must actively reflect on their own histories and culture, which shapes the values that they bring to their work. Through the literature review, the term "culture" is explored, reflecting on the impact of colonial histories, and putting non-indigenous, western, and white cultures under the lens. Acknowledging the need for self-reflexivity in culturally safe work, literature on "whiteness" is discussed to encourage awareness of ourselves as cultural beings, and the power, positions, and beliefs that we often bring into our work relationships.

The second chapter concludes with review of literature on "becoming an ally". This review of a term popularized by Anne Bishop, adds to the above discussion on self-reflexivity. Becoming an ally encourages the acknowledgement of our own relationships with oppression, both how we have experienced oppression and how we have been oppressed, and through this acknowledgement to explore how, to the best of our abilities, we can effectively support those we work with who often have very different experiences with oppression (Bishop, 1994).

Following the literature review, chapter Three details the methodology used for this research. The rational for choosing narrative inquiry is explained, along with supporting literature describing the process of conducting narrative research. Next, the Methodology chapter outlines the theoretical framework, which guides this research. The cultural safety model is used as a guideline to direct the nature of the interview questions, as well as analysis of the resulting data.

Following explanation of the theoretical framework, the method of participant recruitment, as well as description of the desired participants is outlined. Four school social workers whom work in one of six school divisions within Winnipeg were recruited through posters emailed to the social work departments of their school division. The poster requested the help of non-First Nations school social workers who had experience working with First Nations youth and families. All four participants met these criteria.

Next, the sources of data are summarized. Data included the interviews with the participants, which were transcribed verbatim and then restoried, as well as two personal narratives I wrote. The first describes how I came to this research and why it is important to me, while the second is my reflections on the process of conducting this research.

Analysis of each interview is then described through detailing of the process of restorying. Restorying is essentially taking the information from each interview and reworking it into a chronological story (Creswell, 2007). This process was guided by the Three-Dimension Space Approach to organizing texts, described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, as cited in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). This approach guides the process of restorying by organizing interview information into the three categories Interaction, Continuity, and Space. Interaction refers to personal relationships, while Continuity helps in organizing the timeline, i.e. past, present, and future, and Space refers to where the story takes place. Using this approach, the information from each interview was restoried into four unique narratives.

Next, the criteria used to evaluate personal narratives are explained. Webster and Mertova (2007) outline seven criteria commonly used in narrative inquiry: Access, honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity, familiarity, transferability, and economy. Each criterion is defined.

The Methodology chapter concludes by outlining the benefits of this research. Benefits include the opportunity for participants to reflect on and share their stories, as well as bringing light to the unique role school social workers play in supporting First Nations students, while highlighting some strengths and barriers to carrying out this role. Also, this research aims to benefit First Nations youth and families who are finding their school environment culturally unsafe, and are choosing not to participate in the education system. This research has the potential to benefit them by introducing the applicability of cultural safety to education, and by outlining recommendations as to how non-First Nations professionals can work towards achieving cultural safety within schools.

Chapter four is the Data section, consisting of the four restoried narratives drawn from the participant interviews. Accompanying the participant narratives are my two personal

narratives. The first was written prior to conducting the interviews, and details how I came to this research, and realizations and changes that were made along the way. The second was written after the interviews and the restorying of participant narratives, and tells of my experiences during the process of conducting and analyzing this research.

Chapter five details the analysis of each story, as compared to the tenets of cultural safety. This chapter begins with a discussion on culture as it relates to the literature and how it was described by the participants. Following this, all four tenets of cultural safety are outlined, and information drawn from each participant story related to the tenets are interweaved into the broader story of how cultural safety is or is not part of the role of school social work.

The final chapter is the conclusion, which offers a synopsis of the research, and then outlines implications of this research for school social workers, and First Nations youth and families within the school system. Following this, recommendations are summarized as to what changes could be made within the school system to encourage the application of cultural safety, and thus better support First Nations students. Finally, suggestions regarding further research are outlined.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The aim of this research is to explore how school social workers approach working with First Nations youth and families within the education system. Through this exploration, I look at how their understanding of historical and current day factors such as colonialism and oppression, which impacts the educational experience of many First Nations youth, influences how school social workers approach their work with this population. In order to put this goal into context, my literature review begins with an overview of some research on the history and progression of the relationship between the formal education system in Canada, and First Nations peoples. Following this, I outline some ideas on the role of Non-First Nations practitioners in supporting First Nations youth in education, which is guided by the teachings of cultural safety, research on Whiteness, and on becoming an ally. This literature review provides the background of information of which the analysis of the interviews is compared.

History of First Nations Education in Canada

In order to understand the present, we must explore the past. In order to more fully comprehend the experiences of First Nations youth in the Canadian education system today, we need to look at the historical relationship between First Nations people and the education system in Canada, and how this relationship has progressed into it's current day form.

The education system for First Nations students in Canada was born out of colonialism, with intentions of assimilation (RCAP, 1996; Silver, Mallett, Greene & Simard, 2002). L.T Smith (1999) describes colonialism as an expression of imperialism, which began as a means of economic expansion, including, "'discovery', conquest, distribution, and appropriation" of indigenous lands and resources (p. 21). Colonialism ensured this expansion and control through the creation of European settler colonies in indigenous territories. However, imperialism is not solely concerned with the appropriation of land and resources, but also the dissemination of

knowledge. Imperialism thrives through the belief that western knowledge is the only form of legitimate knowledge, discrediting indigenous ways of knowing (Smith, 1999). In Canada, "colonialism involved the deliberate attempt to destroy Aboriginal peoples' economic and political systems and their cultures and religions, and to replace them with European institutions and values" (Silver et al., 2002, p. 32). Smith (1999) explains, "Imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world" (p. 28). Colonialism in Canada was at the root of early federal assimilationist policies designed by European settlers to "civilize" the "savage" original inhabitants of this land (RCAP, 1996). The following section demonstrates an overview of the intentions that drove the government desire for assimilation, and how policies were carried out.

Assimilation policies. Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada, set forth a national goal to "do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit to change" (Milloy, 1999, p. 6). The resulting policies of assimilation were "designed to move communities, and eventually all Aboriginal peoples, from their helpless 'savage' state to one of self-reliant 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community, a non-Aboriginal, Christian one" (RCAP, 1996). The authors of the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) explain, "Of all the steps taken to achieve that goal, none was more obviously a creature of Canada's paternalism toward Aboriginal people, its civilizing strategy and its stern assimilative determination than education".

The colonial history of assimilationist policy and the Indian Residential School system (IRS) in Canada have been described by John S. Milloy (1999) as a national crime that has been consistently denied despite being well documented (Milloy, 1999; Regan, 2010). While

colonization in Canada took many forms, Milloy (1999) argues that none were as damaging to this land's original peoples as the residential schools. In order to understand the impact residential schools have had on Aboriginal people, we need to understand how these schools were created, how they were run, and how students were treated. Below is a brief summery, detailing literature that has described this history.

Residential schools. Chapter 10 of the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) provides an account of the early development of the Indian residential school system. RCAP report explains that as early as 1879, what is now understood as the tragedy of the Indian residential school system was beginning to take root in Canada. In response to pressures from the Catholic and Methodist churches regarding education of Aboriginal people, Sir John A. Macdonald, commissioned Nicholas Flood Davin to explore the Industrial school system that was currently in place in the United States. Reporting back to the Prime Minister, Flood Davin clearly expressed support for a similar educational system in Canada, whereby children would be removed from their homes and placed in off-reserve schools so that they could be kept constantly within what at the time was considered civilization. His warning to accompany his proposal was that "the influence of the wigwam was stronger than that of the [day] school" (RCAP, 1996, Chapter 10, Residential Schools). Milloy (1999) also documented the history of residential schools. He explains that the development of this new education system resulted in many Aboriginal children being persuaded, or often forced, from their homes, families, and communities, and placed in boarding, industrial, and residential schools. Milloy (1999) explains that although instructed by Catholic and Protestant clerics in almost all of the boarding schools, students were neither provided with "the education or the care that was the promise of Christ's call, 'Come unto me'" (Milloy, 1999, p. xiii). Instead, children

were exposed to neglect, violence, and severe powerlessness (Battiste, 1998; Milloy, 1999). Worse yet, many residents endured both physical and sexual abuse (RCAP, 1996). According to Barnes, Josefowits, and Cole (2006), the abusive treatment experienced by many students at residential schools, along with "separation from parents, introduction into a new culture, second-language learning, and denigration of their first language and culture" has had the potential to cause seriously harmful psychological effects (p. 20).

In addition to chronic maltreatment, these schools lacked the funding to adequately meet the physical needs of its students. Underfunding for such schools was all too common, and Barnes et al. (2006) describe accounts of thrifty school-masters who made up for inadequate funding by using the young students as unpaid labour for school-wide chores. The schools themselves were built with poor planning and cheap materials with insufficient means for ventilation and sanitation. At the lowest point in the school systems history, fifty percent of children enrolled in these schools lost their lives to illness, due to a combination of introduction to European diseases, and living conditions which facilitated the spread of illness, before they could ever hope to benefit from the education they were to receive (Milloy, 1999). Spanning an existence of over 140 years, residential schools have directly impacted over 100,000 Aboriginal children (United Church of Canada, as cited in Menzies, 2008).

Through neglectful and often abusive practices, the Canadian formal education system was used as a way to silence Aboriginal people, while trying to transform them into fully assimilated Canadian citizens (Milloy, 2002, RCAP, 1996). This has had a terribly negative effect on not only students, but also whole communities who have lost children, languages, histories and traditions (Antone, 2000). One of the legacies of the residential school system that remains in existence today is the emotional trauma, which has permeated through generations

(Barnes et al., 2006; Deiter, 1999, as cited in Silver et al., 2002).

      Intergenerational trauma. Residential schools no longer exist today, but ongoing multi-generational ill feelings, fear, and mistrust of the formal Canadian education system remain for many (Barnes et al., 2006; Deiter, 1999, as cited in Silver et al., 2002). Former students are likely to "transmit negative attitudes and expectations to parents, siblings, spouses, children, or grandchildren; in this manner problematic residential school experiences have influences extending well beyond the immediate lives of former students" (Barnes, et al. 2006, p. 29). As Deiter (1999) conveys, the residential school experience "...is an intergenerational experience, one that didn't stop with one student, but affected every generation and each of us in the Indian community at a profound and personal level" (as cited in Silver et al., 2002, p. 34). Barnes et al., (2006) have outlined four components of school ecology within residential schools that have left a negative impact on students: (1) Curriculum, which was based on standard provincial curricula of the day, intended for English or French-speaking Euro-Canadian students, and provided low expectations for Aboriginal students, often terminating at grade 8; (2) Staffing, which often consisted of unqualified, or poorly qualified teachers, unable to support the specific needs of students; (3) Instruction Time, impacted by inadequate funding, caused many schools to use students as cheap labour. Students have reported spending more time working than in the classroom; (4) and possibly most impactful, Parental Involvement, which is now known to correlate with higher school achievement, was limited or completely prevented. Furthermore, Barnes et al. (2006) explain that racism, language prohibition, and maltreatment have lead to educational difficulties that are now multigenerational, due to underdeveloped cognitive abilities and mistrust of the school system. Barnes et al. (2006) also write that former students are likely to "transmit negative attitudes and expectations to parents, siblings, spouses, children, or

grandchildren; in this manner problematic residential school experiences have influences

extending well beyond the immediate lives of former students" (p. 29). Battiste and McLean

(2005), have also written about the legacy of education with First Nations people, which has lead

to many challenges today, such as poverty, cognitive, cultural and social dissonance, trauma,

youth suicide, substance abuse, disproportionate incarceration rates, and low graduation rates

from high school. Battiste and McLean (2005) believe that the detrimental effects of the

residential school system, born out of colonial assimilationist policies, are not widely recognized.

While most Canadians believe that "colonization and racism are issues of the past",

assimilationist practices continue in public schooling today, through the inadequate telling of

Canadian history, and the absence of Aboriginal worldviews, ways of knowing, and knowledge

from standard curricula (Battiste & McLean, 2005, p. 2). For several decades, First Nations and

other Aboriginal groups have been advocating for changes to be made in how education is

delivered for their youth, in order to combat the detrimental legacies of the past, and provide a

more promising future for students. Below, several papers are outlined to give an overview of

formal recommendations that have been expressed.

First Nations Recommendations

In 1969, the federal government released their Statement of the Government of Canada on

Indian Policy. This policy paper, commonly referred to as The White Paper, outlined a plan for

full integration of Indian people into Canadian society, by way of abolition of the Indian Act

(Government of Canada, 1969). Several Aboriginal and First Nations organizations wrote in

response to this paper, outlining their fears of what the abolition of the Indian Act would entail

for their people, and urged recommendations for improved relationships with the Federal

government, as well as changes that could benefit all Canadians (AFN, 2010; Wahbung, 2011).

In 1971, the Indian Tribes of Manitoba published a paper entitled Wahbung: Our Tomorrows

(Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 2011). According to the recently released 40th anniversary edition of

this paper (Indian Tribes of Manitoba, 2011), Wahbung was written out of the joint

dissatisfaction of First Nations people in Manitoba of the progression and results of their

relationship with the Crown and Federal government, between the time of the signing of the

treaties, to the time the paper was written. Wahbung outlined five areas in need of improvement

for on-going relationships, and seven major development areas. Third on the latter list was

education. Historically, education for First Nations people was the responsibility of the Federal

government, as agreed upon through the signing of the treaties (Wahbung, 2011). However, the

Indian Tribes of Manitoba wrote that this federal responsibility was executed in a way that

"excluded Indian people from any meaningful involvement in deciding their own education

destiny" (Wahbung, 2011, p. 198). Integration of First Nations youth into provincial schools

began to surface with a policy recommendation of a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and

House of Commons in 1948 (Wahbung, 2011). This lead to First Nations youth being immersed

in curriculum and programs designed for urban, middle-class students, facilitated by educators

who were also middle-class, bringing with them their own values which were imposed on First

Nations students (Wahbung, 2011). Without proper planning, or acknowledgement of First

Nations reality, the authors of Wahbung wrote that integration into the provincial school system

resulted in what they describe as another "invitation to participate in the annihilation of our

culture and our way of life" (p. 174). This resulted in a clear failure of education for First

Nations students, which the authors of Wahbung exemplify in statistics from 1957-58 grade 12

attendance rates (5.4% of First Nations youth, compared to 60.5% of other Manitobans, p.168).

Wahbung then outlined six areas of weakness in the planning of education for First Nations

youth in Manitoba:

1. Absence of a clearly defined educational objective.

2. Failure to provide a meaningful educational program.

3. Lack of qualified teaching personnel. Simple academic qualification is not sufficient.

4. Absence of parental involvement in determining the school program

5. Failure to genuinely consider the relevance of Indian reality to new programs such as the one on integration.

6. Facilities, as late as 1956, on many reserves can be described as being medieval in atmosphere. (p. 169)

Wahbung's chapter on Education outlines in detail recommendations and steps to move forward in creating positive learning opportunities for First Nations youth in Manitoba. Largely, the recommendations focus on education of First Nations people remaining the financial responsibility of the Federal government, providing "monies, facilities, and resource personnel" (p. 186), while transferring the responsibility of control and content to the First Nations People of Manitoba. The authors of Wahbung stress the importance of parental and community involvement, as well as the necessity to hire First Nations teachers and teacher assistants, and describes the transfer of control as entailing the creation of local school boards that would participate in curriculum development, and overall functioning of the schools. Where students and families do not live on reserve, Wahbung recommends Indian participation on Provincial school boards. Wahbung was not the only paper published that outlined recommendations to the federal government regarding their concern for First Nations education.

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), now known as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), produced a policy paper titled First Nations Control of First Nations Education (AFN, 2010). They wrote that in Canada, the goal of educational integration has taken the form

of a one-way street, asking only of the First Nations student to "give up his identity, to adopt new values and a new way of life" (AFN, 2010, p. 30). They warned, "This restricted interpretation of integration must be radically altered if future education programs are to benefit Indian Children" (p. 39, AFN, 2010). This paper also called for re-affirmation of the Federal government's responsibility to provide First Nations youth with access to free education, as defined by the treaties and the Indian Act, but requested the transfer of authority and funds to local Bands (AFN, 2010). At the time, 60% of First Nations youth were attending provincial or territorial schools. To ensure that these youth were receiving representation that was reflective of their culture as well, the NIB, like the writers of Wahbung, stated the necessity of First Nations members on all school boards where First Nations youth attended.

After publication of Indian Control of Indian Education, the federal government began working with First Nations to transform the system of education for First Nations people, "restoring control of education in all its dimensions to First Nations parents and communities" (RCAP, 1996, Chapter 5, Education). In the 1996 publication of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, chapter 5 is devoted to evaluating the progress made on this process of achieving the educational goals outlined by First Nations, as well as Inuit, and Metis communities. The Commission looked at the recommendations put forth by 22 reports on Aboriginal education between 1966-1992, and compiled a list of uncanny similarities:

- Aboriginal control of education.
- School courses in Aboriginal studies, including history, language and culture.
- Training and hiring of more Aboriginal teachers.
- Inclusion of Aboriginal parents, elders and educators in the education of Aboriginal children

- Special support programs for Aboriginal students, for example, counseling, substance abuse education, remedial education and retention programs.

- Funding of support services for students in post-secondary studies.

- Aboriginal language instruction from pre-school to post-secondary education.

- The resolution of federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictional conflicts over responsibilities, or recognition by the federal government of its funding responsibility for education.

- Training Aboriginal adults for teaching, paraprofessional and administrative positions in education.

- More emphasis on pre-school and kindergarten education. (RCAP, 1996, Chapter 5, Education)

In their evaluation on the progress of these recommendations that had been made many times, by many different groups, The Commission found that there has been some progress in many areas, but all too often the progress is much too slow, or inadequate, and overall disappointing (RCAP, 1996).

Most recently, the Government of Canada released a proposal for a bill on First Nations education in October 2013 (Chronology of First Nations Education). The Assembly of First Nations, in an open letter, responded to this proposal on November 25, 2013. The open letter explained that it was dissatisfied with the proposed bill, and outlined five conditions that would not be compromised in moving forward on a mutual agreement between the Government of Canada and First Nations regarding educations of First Nations youth. The five conditions were:

1. First Nation control and respecting inherent and Treaty rights: First Nations must gain full control of education, which must be supported by the federal government.

2. Funding: Full statutory guarantee of funding for First Nations students.

3. Languages and Culture: inclusion of language and culture must be respected through provision of funding for program design.

4. Oversight: oversight of First Nations education must be a joint responsibility between First Nations and federal government, not unilateral federal oversight.

5. Ongoing process of meaningful engagement: progress through shared responsibility of development and evaluation (AFN Open Letter, 2013)

Following this open letter, the Government of Canada introduced the First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act (Bill C-33) in April of 2014. After much deliberation, First Nations Chiefs have voted to reject the bill, stating "Canada must withdraw Bill C-33 and engage in an honourable process with First Nations that recognizes and supports regional and local diversity leading to true First Nation control of education based on our responsibilities and inherent aboriginal and treaty rights." (www.cbc.ca). While consensus has not been reached regarding the First Nations education, the focus is primarily on education on First Nations. However, 40% of First Nations youth attend provincially run schools ("Elementary/Secondary Education Programs", 2013). The following section outlines First Nations desires for education of children who participate in provincial education systems.

First Nations youth in Provincial schools

In addition to advocating for control of education in First Nations communities, the issue of education for First Nations students living in urban areas, and attending provincially or territorially run schools has been addressed throughout the literature (AFN, 2010; RCAP, 1996; Wahbung, 2011). Although 60 per cent of First Nations students today attend band-operated schools ("Elementary/Secondary Education Programs", 2013), many First Nations students

attend Provincial and Territorial schools for a variety of reasons. The Assembly of First Nations

writes, "It is essential that the inherent and Treaty Rights of First Nations learners to quality and

relevant learning be supported and maintained while attending non-First Nations schools, as

these Rights are portable" (AFN, 2010, p.8). According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

Development Canada (2013), education for First Nations students living off-reserve is the

responsibility of provincial or territorial school systems. However, The Assembly of First

Nations maintains that, "Provincial and Territorial education systems must be accountable to

First Nations governments, education authorities, parents, and caregivers for the learning

outcomes of all First Nations learners attending their institutions. They also have a responsibility

to provide quality, culturally-relevant learning opportunities for all First Nations learners

enrolled in their learning institutions" (AFN, 2010, p. 8). In 1996, the RCAP described the

response of Provincial schools to Aboriginal students as being "varied". They outlined several

successes that impact First Nations, Metis, and Inuit students, including, hiring of Aboriginal

educators and support staff, changes in curriculum that eliminate racism, and programs focused

on at-risk students. In addition, RCAP celebrates school boards in Toronto, Saskatoon, and

Winnipeg, where specific Aboriginal schools have opened. However, they write that progress

remains slow and insufficient, as "The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in

terms of high school completion had narrowed only slightly" (RCAP, 1996). Most recent census

information on Statistics Canada shows that 40% of Aboriginal Peoples aged 20 to 24 did not

have a high-school diploma, compared to 13% among non-Aboriginal Peoples (Statistics

Canada, 2010a), indicating a significant gap does still exist.

Educational reform for First Nations students becomes increasingly important as Statistics

Canada demonstrates; the population of First Nations Peoples continues to grow in Canada

("Aboriginal People in Canada: First Nations people, Metis, and Inuit", 2011). Outside of the

territories and the Yukon, Manitoba remains one of the provinces with the largest population of

First Nations people, about 10% of the entire population. In Manitoba, 42.9% of First Nations

people with registered Indian Status lived off-reserve, with Winnipeg being the Canadian city

with the largest population of First Nations people, representing 3.6% of the city's total

population ("Aboriginal People in Canada: First Nations people, Metis, and Inuit", 2011). The

Statistics Canada report, Aboriginal People in Canada: First Nations people, Metis and Inuit

(2011), indicates that First Nations in Canada represent a very young population, with the

youngest being reported in Manitoba, where First Nations children represent 18.4% of the total

population of children in this province. As a young population, these statistics serve as a

reminder for the importance of supporting the needs of First Nations youth within our provincial

education system. In Winnipeg, the Winnipeg School Division collects demographic information

of families in their catchment area through a voluntary declaration form. According to

information gathered in 2012/2013, they estimate Aboriginal families comprise 22.1% of the

total school population, while 41% of those who reported being Aboriginal specified that they

were First Nations ("Aboriginal Education", 2013). With such a high Aboriginal and more

specifically First Nations population, this school division has a unique opportunity to support and

enhance the educational experience of these students. Although some statistics specific to First

Nations are available, most of the information from the Winnipeg School division addresses

Aboriginal students more generally. This school division has been taking steps towards better

addressing the needs of Aboriginal students since 1979, starting with the formation of the

position of a Native Education Consultant. In 1996 a formal policy on Aboriginal Education was

established, then amended in 2006. Included within their program of integrating Aboriginal

initiatives throughout the school division is the following: "Aboriginal literature and author studies, elders in the classroom, arts programs that include Aboriginal music, visual arts and dance, Aboriginal games, athlete and role-model studies in physical education, star blanket math and traditional Aboriginal structures and perspectives of sustainable development in science" ("Aboriginal Education", 2013). The stated goal is not only to support Aboriginal students, but also to "encourage understanding of Aboriginal culture by all students" ("Aboriginal Education", 2013). In addition to integrated curricula, two schools, Niji Mahkwa and Children of the Earth, are specifically Aboriginal schools, devoted to the integration of Cree and Ojibwe language, cultural programming and academic work ("Aboriginal Education", 2013).

Despite this deliberate focus on Aboriginal programming, many Aboriginal youth are still leaving school at a rate much higher than non-Aboriginal students (Silver et al, 2002). In 2002, Silver et al. performed interviews with early school leavers from Winnipeg's inner city as part of their research study titled *Aboriginal Education in Winnipeg Inner City High Schools*. What they found was that a "cultural/class/experiential divide between students and their families on the one hand, and the school system on the other" (p. 3) contributed to feelings of alienation for many students, that eventually led them to choose to no longer participate in such a system. When many youth are still feeling disengaged, even within a school division with specific Aboriginal education policies, this seems to support the belief that "add-on" Aboriginal education is not enough. As Battiste and McLean (2005) state, "changes within current systems of education can only occur when First Nations knowledge and practices are acknowledged as valid and respectfully included in *all* aspects of educational reform" (emphasis added, p. 4). Included within the education system in Canada is the position of school social worker.

Respecting the above recommendation of Battiste and McLean, school social work has a place within education system reform in order to support First Nations students.

School social work

According to the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the role of school social worker began in the late 1800's as truant officer, ensuring that youth were attending school (The School Social Work, 2002). This role has grown considerably in scope. While school social work remains focused on supporting students to "stay in school and be successful learners" (International Network of School Social Workers, 2001, as cited in The School Social Work, 2002), this is achieved through student and family counseling, support, school to family liaison, community development (The School Social Work, 2002), advocacy for students and the school social work profession, and research (Our Duties, 2012). While websites for the Canadian Association of Social Workers, and Canadian Association of School Social Workers & Attendance Counsellors offer general descriptions of the role of a school social worker, I wanted to include within this literature review research pertaining specifically to school social workers working with First Nations youth. As we know from other research that many First Nations youth are choosing to leave school early, I believe that how non-First Nations, or more specifically white school social workers support First Nations youth at risk of leaving school early requires consideration. However, literature pertaining to the role school social workers play specifically in supporting the educational experiences of First Nations youth is non-existent. A thorough search was done through EBSCOHOST, including the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Canadian Reference Centre, Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Humanities Full Text (H. W. Wilson), Social Sciences Full Text (H. W. Wilson), Social Work Abstracts. The search terms used were: "School Social Work", "School Social Work" & "Canada", "School Social Work" & "First Nations", and "School Social Work" & "Aboriginal".

Search results determined no articles specifically addressed school social workers working with First Nations youth. Several articles addressed the role of school social work, but none were from a Canadian context. Articles that came from Canadian research focused on specific programs or populations, none of which were First Nations, or Aboriginal. Due to the lack of research in this area, I draw on the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics to guide my exploration of this role, as well as reflection on my own experience as a student in the field of school social work.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2005) outlines six values and supporting principles that are meant to guide the profession of social work in Canada. In looking at this document, several values and principles within seemed particularly relevant to the role of school social work supporting First Nations youth. The first value is Respect for the Inherent Dignity and Worth of Persons (CASW, 2005), and one of the principles which describes this value is "Social workers respect the diversity among individuals in Canadian society and the right of individuals to their unique beliefs consistent with the rights of others" (p.4, CASW, 2005). Working with families that are different culturally from themselves, I wondered how school social workers respect the difference in experience and beliefs about education that their clients might have. The second value, Pursuit of Social Justice (CASW, 2005) describes the need for social workers to "act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs" (p.5, CASW, 2005). As barriers to education for Frist Nations students have been outlined throughout the literature, I wondered how school social workers work to reduce these barriers and expand choice for youth. Under the third value, Service to Humanity (CASW, 2005), one of the principles is "Social workers strive to use the power and authority vested in

them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice" (p.6, CASW, 2005). This principle touches on being aware of the power that is inherent within the role of social work. I wondered how school social workers understood the power that they possess within their client relationships. These values and principles will be reflected on further in the analysis section. Again, due to the lack of existing literature on this subject, I use my own experience during my school social work practicum to offer additional information on the role school social workers play in supporting First Nations students.

During my practicum, I learned of various programs, initiated by individual schools, and division-wide, that focused on incorporating Aboriginal culture into the schools. School social workers often participated in these programs, either as facilitators, or as support. When it came to working individually with students, I did not find there was much direction on how specifically to support First Nations students. While I understand there is no one way to support all First Nations students, the literature from education that has been outlined above outlines many barriers within the education system that affect First Nations students uniquely. I was interested in how colonialism and oppression continued to affect students and families, and how as a non-First Nations, white social worker, I could create a helpful and trusting relationship, without perpetuating colonialism and oppression through ignorance in my approach to our relationship. I looked for ways to accomplish this by watching other social workers, and by becoming involved in programming, but I was too shy to directly ask the questions. I was afraid the answer might be so obvious that my questions might expose my ignorance. I was also afraid that there just would be no answer to my questions. As the answer as to how to navigate this imbalanced relationship between First Nations youth and families and non-First Nations school social workers was not obviously laid out within my practicum, I was left needing to explore

these questions in my thesis. Next I will outline the role of Non-First Nations workers through

the lens of cultural safety, which offers guidance in navigating these relationships.

Non-First Nations Roles

With the goal of supporting First Nations youth to have a positive school experience, it is

not enough, as mentioned above, to focus solely on adding Aboriginal, or more specifically First

Nations cultural content. While Battiste and McLean (2005) speak of a respectful educational

reform, non-Indigenous, or non-First Nations workers must reflect on their role in supporting

First Nations youth and families.

Cultural Safety

Cultural Safety has developed as a way for non-Indigenous service providers to work

with Indigenous populations in a way that challenges institutionalized colonialism, and provides

services that are deemed safe by Indigenous service recipients (Ramsden, 2002). The teachings

of Cultural Safety were developed in response to the longstanding unequal and discriminatory

treatment of Maori people within the health care system in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ramsden

(2002) wanted to establish a new way for health practitioners to work with indigenous service

recipients. The goal was to break down long held prejudiced attitudes of non-indigenous

practitioners, challenge serious power imbalances between practitioners and clients, and give

Indigenous clients the ability to have voice in their care, and be the only ones to decide whether a

service is culturally safe or not (Ramsden, 2002).

Cultural Safety can be understood as working to eliminate services that are culturally

unsafe, which Cooney (1994) describes as, "any actions that diminish, demean or disempower

the cultural identity and well-being of an individual" (as cited in Brascoupe and Waters, 2009, p.

7), or that cause cultural risk, which Wood and Schwass (1993) describe as when, "people from

one culture believe that they are demeaned diminished and disempowered by the actions and the

delivery systems of people from another culture" (as cited by Kirkham, et al. p.226, 2002). In striving to eliminate cultural risk from services that are meant to benefit indigenous persons, Ramsden (2002) advocated that models such as Cultural sensitivity and cultural competence, which focus on recognizing and respecting cultural difference, fell short of creating services that were deemed safe by service recipient. The Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada (2009), explains that, "Cultural safety takes us beyond the cultural awareness, the acknowledgement of difference; cultural sensitivity, the recognition of the importance of respecting difference; and cultural competence, which focuses on skills, knowledge, and attitudes of practitioners" (p. 24). Instead, Cultural Safety requires an understanding of colonial history and historical power differences (Kirkham, et al., 2002, NAHO, 2009) rather than simply increasing knowledge about Indigenous customs (NAHO, 2009). Cultural Safety goes beyond skills that a practitioner can acquire, and emphasizes the experience of both service provider and service recipients ("First Nations Cultural Safety in post-Secondary Education", n.d.). The Assembly of First Nations (n.d.) explain that Cultural Safety can be achieved when, "experiences of both patient and practitioner are respected, and First Nations cultures are visible and have similar power as mainstream culture" ("FN Cultural Safety in Post-Secondary Education", para. 2). Through this model, the responsibility of delivering services that are culturally safe is in the hands of service providers, while service recipients decide whether that service is culturally safe for them to approach and use (Ramsden, 2002). When emphasizing the experience of both the service provider and the service recipient, cultural safety specifically requires self-reflexivity of the service provider. Cultural safety necessitates the acknowledgement of cultural origins, beliefs, and practices (Kirkham, et al., 2002), as well as power, prejudice, and attitudes of service providers (Ramsden, 2002, The Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2009). Kirkham et al.

(2002) believe that lack of critical self-analysis renders other models of cross-cultural work insufficient in rectifying oppression within these professional systems.

   Cultural Safety and Education. Although cultural safety was created to specifically address the dynamics between Non-Indigenous healthcare providers and Indigenous healthcare recipients in New Zealand, the model is quite transferable to the Canadian context. Several Canadian researchers have written of the applicability of cultural safety in Canadian healthcare (Aboriginal Nurses Association, 2009; Brascoupe & Waters, 2009;Kirkham et al, 2002). According to the World Health Organization, education is a determinant of health, with low levels of education being correlated with poor health (World Health Organization, n.d.). As a determinant of health, I believe education can easily be included within the scope of Cultural Safety. Brascoupe and Waters (2009) write:

   Possibly the single most important social issue for inclusion within the cultural safety

   model is education, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary levels. There is a

   vast body of literature on education policy and Aboriginal people, but very little that

   explicitly links it with the concept of cultural safety. (p. 22)

It was my desire to open discussion on the applicability of cultural safety to education, specifically with regard to school social work, a profession concerned with supporting students to "stay in school and be successful learners" (International Network of School Social Workers, 2001, as cited in The School Social Work, 2002). To begin this discussion I looked at the defining elements of this model. Ramsden (2002) outlines four tenets to cultural safety:

1. To educate non-Indigenous service providers of the historical and colonial processes that have created the oppression that exists today for Indigenous people that they provide service to;

2. To teach service providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work;

3. To encourage open-mindedness and flexibility with attitudes towards people they provide service to who are culturally different; and

4. To produce a workforce of service providers who are educated and self-aware, and able to provide services that are culturally safe, as defined by those that they serve (p. 94).

I believe these tenets are relevant to the examination of non-First Nations school social workers and their perceptions of their relationships and ability to support First Nations youth and families within the public school system. Without exposing colonial constructions of culture and the current power imbalances between cultures (Kirkham, 2002), especially those that have strongly yet nearly invisibly prevailed within the school system, western researchers and practitioners will never be able to create a learning space where non-white, and more specifically First Nations youth and families can begin to feel culturally safe. In order to give deeper meaning to discussion on constructions of culture and it's relevance within social work, below I outline some literature specific to defining culture.

Culture

Since cultural safety requires service providers to both have an understanding of the impact of colonial histories, and reflection on ourselves as bearers of culture, I explore the concept of culture in relation to colonialism and self-reflexivity.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary offers several definitions for the word culture, two of which pertain to the manner in which it is being used for this thesis. They are:

a : the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

b : the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social

group; *also* **:** the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of

life) shared by people in a place or time (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.)

For the purposes of cross-cultural work, Brascoupe and Waters (2009) suggest a broader

definition of culture that should include recognition of "gender, income, education, personal and

community history, and life chances" (p. 15). Culture, and our understanding of it, has been

molded by colonial influences, and is often explained as a comparison to mainstream or western

culture (Kirkham et al., 2002). Kirkham et al. (2002) warn that, "commonly drawn-on notions of

culture tend to emphasize difference while ignoring sameness, to make essential supposed

cultural groups as coherent and distinct from mainstream culture, to overlook the social

positioning and histories of individuals and groups, and, in so doing, often to overlook power

operations and in- equities" (p.225). This warning is relevant to the teachings of cultural safety,

in that by ignoring social and historical influences on culture, our understanding is too narrow,

and we are not able to address power imbalances that exist, and may affect our interactions with

our clients. Furthering their discussion on culture and the relevance to history, Kirkham et al.

(2002) share the teachings of Lock (1993) who "helped us to see that culture is not simply a

system of beliefs held by those who have a shared way of life, but is inscribed by colonial

constructions of the non-western "other" and the western self" (p.224). Therefore, the

understanding of culture, held by many white, western social workers, has been constructed

through our own experiences as white westerners, and is understood in a way that compares

others to our own status quo, while leaving our own cultural beliefs and experiences

unchallenged. In order to challenge our beliefs, we need to explore what it means to be white,

and how our whiteness impacts the work we do with non-white clients. In the next section,

literature on the concept of whiteness is explored.

Whiteness

Throughout research, academia, and mainstream understandings of culture, whiteness has long been invisible, instead being referred to as "the norm", or "the universal" (Gunew, 2007). Whiteness is often the standard to which all other colours or cultures are compared to, and as such reinforces it's own position of privilege. In her book *White Women, Race Matters: The social construction of Whiteness*, Frankenberg (1993) discusses the unknowingly racist position of early feminism that was brought to the attention of white feminists throughout the 80's by emerging non-white feminists. She argues that, "Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination." (p. 6). Frankenberg (1993) goes on to argue that naming "whiteness" is essential in bringing forth visibility to the power and privilege of white racism that can be so easily hidden under the guise of normativity. As Genuw (2007) states, however, to separate the concept of "whiteness" from it's historical synonymy with universality "takes a conscious effort" (p. 143). One piece of this conscious effort involves understanding that both white people and non-white people live racialized lives, and that racism does not just affect people of colour, it both affects and implicates white people as well (Frankenberg, 1993). As we strive towards understanding the implications of racism on the work white people engage in with non-white people, we must look at both the practice and the research that guides it. However, in *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Regan (2010) discusses how Indigenous/Non-Indigenous research today remains predominantly fixated on the Indigenous experience, leaving out the critical exploration of "our own experiences as the decedents of colonizers and the primary beneficiaries of colonialism" (Regan, 2010, p.33). Furthermore, she states: "If we only examine the "Aboriginal", we continue the one-way street of examining "them". We need to critically

examine ourselves as part of the "decolonization project" (Regan, 2010, p.34). Framing this effort in a Canadian context, Sherene Razack (1998, cited in Gunew, 2007) puts forth the question "We may know how colonization changed Aboriginal people, but do we know how it changed, and continues to change white people?" (p.143). It is questions like this that we must ask globally of the white, western power structures, and individually of ourselves as we carry out work with First Nations families. 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. It is no longer enough to ask only how colonialism, the residential school experience, and ongoing racism in the schools today affects the families we work with. 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.

In the following section, power, positions, and our own relationships with oppression are explored through literature on "becoming an ally".

Becoming an Ally
Through acknowledging whiteness, and examining it's impact on our work as white professionals, often working with non-white populations, the question arises as to how we navigate our own identity and what it brings to our working relationships, and how, to the best of our abilities, we can effectively support those we work with. In 1994, Anne Bishop, popular educator and community worker, gave us a text to help guide us from reflection to action. Her book, entitled Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycles of Oppression in People, outlines for us the necessity of understanding oppression, and more specifically, how we have been oppressed, and how we oppress others. How we oppress others is often more difficult for us all to acknowledge, due to shame, guilt, and denial, and the way oppression is often masked by the invisibility of privilege (Taylor, 2002). However, it is through this process of self-exploration

that we make it possible for ourselves to become allies, those who are able to align themselves in support of others who are differently oppressed then ourselves, and sometimes oppressed by ourselves (Bishop, 2002). In the 2nd edition of her book, Bishop, (2002) outlines the path towards becoming an ally, and demonstrates that it is not as easy as simply wanting to help people. Critical to this path is our own consciousness and healing. This means becoming aware of our own relationship with oppression, when in our lives we have been oppressed, and when we have been the oppressor, both individually and as part of a collective, community, or culture. Becoming conscious of these experiences help us to understand our own pains, how we project them on to others, and how we can learn from them to create new ways of healing and supporting others. Bishop (2002) writes, "I believe consciousness and healing make the difference between a person or group that gets some power and uses it against others who are less powerful and a person or group that gets power and works towards building a new society" (p. 99). Similar to the tenants of cultural safety, Anne Bishop's model for breaking the cycle of oppression requires at the core an understanding of different forms of oppression, how they have come to exist, and how they are maintained (Taylor, 2002), and only through this exploration can we begin to heal, and then truly be supportive of others (Bishop, 20002). Within the education system, social workers have the opportunity to work towards becoming allies to the youth they support, but this role cannot be achieved without understanding the oppressions that have influenced both themselves and the youth they work with. This is particularly important in the Canadian education system where oppression and racism have formed much of the historical exchange between First Nations students and communities, and non-First Nations powers that be. With the power differentials that are inherent in a worker/student relationship, how can a social worker use this power to "build a new society" for the youth within the schools?

From early on, the relationship between First Nations people in Canada and the formal Canadian education system has been rife with racism and maltreatment, and been guided by colonial thought (Milloy, 1999; RCAP, 1996; Silver et al., 2002). Many recommendations have been made over the years as to how to improve this relationship, and better support the educational experiences of First Nations youth (AFN, 2010; Wahbung, 2011). However, the specific role of school social workers, especially non-First Nations, or white social workers, in supporting First Nations students has garnered little attention. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in this research to explore the perceived role of non-First Nations school social workers in supporting First Nations youth and families to have culturally safe school experiences. The method of inquiry is described, as well as how cultural safety is used as the theoretical framework that guided the creation and analysis of the research questions and subsequent interviews.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Qualitative Research

This research implemented a qualitative research methodology to explore the perceived roles of non-First Nations school social workers in becoming allies within the public school system, working with First Nations youth and families. In addition, this research investigated how each school social worker understands the relationship between historical and current colonial practices within the school system, their impact on First Nations youths' educational experience in Winnipeg, and how this impacts their work with First Nations families. A review of the literature was used to guide understanding of the impact of historical and current colonial practices on First Nations students' educational experiences today. A narrative research methodology was used to guide the construction of the interview questions in order to draw out personal and meaningful stories from each research participant. Narrative also guided the format of the interviews, and the final analysis.

A qualitative methodology was chosen to explore this particular set of research questions because of my desire to understand personal reflections on a complex issue, that of First-Nations and non-First Nations relationships within the school system. Webster and Mertova (2007) write that qualitative methodologies are key in investigating complex human issues that are "considered significant by the participants in the research" (p.3). My assumption going in to this research was that the work non-First Nations school social workers do with First Nations students and their families is considered both important and significant to social workers working within Winnipeg's various school divisions.

Narrative Inquiry. As the one of the goals of this research is to draw out stories from each participant, relating to their own perceptions and experiences, I have chosen narrative inquiry. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) state that, "People are storytellers by

nature" (p. 7). Stories are used throughout cultures as a means of communication, interpretation, and education (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Through the telling and interpretation of personal stories, we can gain a greater understanding of human experiences. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) write:

> Stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world; at the same time however, they shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality. The story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell. (p.7)

Narrative inquiry was chosen for it's ability to depict descriptive and personal stories for the reader, but also for it's ability to offer the participants and researcher the opportunity to reflect on and come to discover ourselves and our personal truths through the telling of our experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (1990), describe the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry, which is used to create the meaningful story of the participant, but also explains how space is made for the voice and story of the researcher. In this way, both participants and researcher gain a deeper personal understanding through this process. This benefit of narrative inquiry fits well with current writings on indigenous/non- relationships. For example, Regan (2010) expresses a necessity to focus research on the non-indigenous researcher or practitioner as a way to reveal perceptions, prejudices, privileges, and sometimes painful experiences of working towards being an ally. She explained that through the expression of personal stories and experiences, we come to know ourselves more deeply and raise the opportunity to challenge our own beliefs. Most importantly, narrative inquiry allows for what Regan (2010) describes as a necessary shift in focus, moving away from the colonial tradition of "white" or "western" researcher, versus "indigenous" or "Aboriginal" subject, and makes room for non-indigenous

practitioners to explore their own stories as related to their work with indigenous populations, essentially turning the lens inward. Denzin (2008) describes how tenants of colonialism have been upheld by western scientists who, "discovered, extracted, appropriated, commodified, and distributed knowledge about the indigenous other" (p. 438). Indigenous people have become weary of outsiders who want to research their communities, due to the link between research and colonialism (Smith, 1999). Therefore, in following the recommendations of Regan (2010), this research aims to disrupt the historical research focus of "Aboriginal", "First Nation", or "other", and refocus on the critical examination of "white", or "western", or "ourselves" as a method of decolonization.

Two research questions emerged as central to this research. The first began with a necessity to understand the history that has formed the relationship between First Nations and non-First Nations people within the formal Canadian education system today. By understanding this history, we can better understand the needs of First Nations youth today, and the role non-First Nations workers play in supporting these need. This research asks: How do historical and current colonial practices impact First Nations youth in their educational experience? This question was explored through a detailed literature review outlined in the second chapter of this thesis. Secondly, by turning the research lens towards non-indigenous practitioners, this research asks: How do non-First Nation school social workers perceive their role in working towards supporting First Nations youth and families to have a culturally safe school experience? This question was explored through participant stories, and analyzed through principles of narrative research.

Following this, participant and researcher narratives, as well as colonial impact on students' educational experiences as revealed through the literature, were compared against the

tenants of cultural safety. These tenants guide the exploration of how to create an educational space for First Nations youth and families that is culturally safe.

Theoretical Framework

This research began for me as a concern for lower attendance rates of First Nations youth in schools. Seeing as there has already been research conducted on why youth leave school (RCAP, 1996; Silver et al., 2002), I wanted to explore the role social workers play in helping to keep youth in school. As much literature speaks of the inter-generational effects of residential schools, colonialism, oppression, and racism in schools (Barnes et al., 2006, RCAP, 1996; Silver, et al., 2002), I was looking for a model that emphasized the acknowledgement of this history in Canada, and the ongoing impact on youth. I felt strongly that without this acknowledgement, there would always be a barrier to effectively supporting First Nations youth and families. This led me to the concept of Cultural safety, as it is focused on the education and self-reflection of the service provider, with a strong emphasis on colonial history and power differentials between service provider and recipient (Kirkham, et al., 2002, Fact Sheet: Cultural Safety, 2006). Thus, cultural safety emerged as a theoretical framework and set of guidelines that both aligned with my goals, and opened up new pathways of understandings for myself. Although this model was created specifically to address oppressive relations between non-indigenous medical service providers, and indigenous patients in New Zealand (Ramsden, 2002), I believe this model is applicable not only to the Canadian context, but can be applied to education as well. As described earlier in the literature review, cultural safety places the responsibility of creating and delivering services that are culturally safe in the hands of the service providers, while the service recipients have the power to deem whether the service is in fact safe for them to approach and use (Ramsden, 2002). The four objectives of cultural safety are:

1. To educate non-indigenous service providers of the historical and colonial processes that have created today's existing oppression of indigenous people;

2. To teach service providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work;

3. To encourage open-mindedness and flexibility with attitudes towards people they provide service to who are culturally different; and

4. To produce a workforce of service providers who are educated and self-aware, and able to provide services that are culturally safe, as defined by those that they serve (Ramsden, 2002, p.94).

In the context of this research, school social work is the service that was compared against the objectives of cultural safety, and First Nations students and families are the service recipients. The four objectives were used to guide the interview questions, and analysis of the narratives.

Participants

As narrative research is best used to explore the detailed stories and experiences of an individual or a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2007), I aimed to interview between 4-6 non-First Nations school social workers. My First attempt at participant recruitment focused solely on the Child Guidance Clinic, through the Winnipeg School Division. The Child Guidance Clinic works within the Winnipeg School Division as a multi-disciplinary team that supports students, families, and schools through clinical services. School social work is part of this team that offers "preventative, consultative, diagnostic, and intervention services" (http://ww.wsd1.org/childguidance/cgchome.htm) through the mandate of the Clinic. The Winnipeg School Division was chosen as they have a large population of First Nations students.

According to the Winnipeg School Division's Aboriginal Education Fact Sheet (2010/11), of all students who declared an ethnicity on their voluntary declaration form, 20 per cent stated they were Aboriginal. Of this 40 per cent, 34 percent declared they were First Nations. Other ethnic groups that were declared under the umbrella of Aboriginal were Metis (32%), Aboriginal (16%), Ojibway (12%), Anishinaabe (11%), and Cree (9%). The Fact Sheet also notes that students could declare up to three ethnic groups (Winnipeg School Division Fact Sheet, 2011). Due to the high number of First Nations students, my hope was that there was a good possibility that some of the school social workers within this division would have experience working with First Nations youth and families, and would be willing to share some of these experiences.

Participant recruitment was attempted through contact with the Child Guidance Clinic. Initially, the Director of School Social work was contacted via email, and was asked to circulate a recruitment poster. Through this process, two participants contacted me, interested in participating. Concerned that I would not meet my desire for 4-6 participants, I decided to contact all other School Divisions in Winnipeg, in the same fashion. I contacted via email the director of School Social work, or Clinical Services, of River East Transcona School Division, Pembina Trails School Division, St. James School Division, Seven Oaks School Division, and Louis Riel School Division, and requested that they circulate a recruitment poster. Through this method, two more school social workers contacted me expressing their interest to participate. Of the four participants who volunteered to participate, all described themselves as non-First Nations, and three described themselves as white.

Sources of Data

Participant Interviews. Data collection was performed through one-on-one interviews. Participants chose the setting of each conversation. Participants were informed that interview

space could be made available at the Inner City Social Work Campus, as that space is within the parameters of the Winnipeg School Division, or at an office space provided by myself, or any comfortable, private, and safe space of their choosing.

Due to the storytelling nature of narrative research, a conversational style of interviewing was used (Fraser, 2004). A topic-based interview schedule was created, but attempts were made to keep interviews flexible and sensitive to the direction that participants chose to take, as suggested by Fraser, 2004. The following is a list of questions that guided each dialogue:

A. Building Rapport Questions

    1. What lead you to become a school social worker?

    2. What does the role of school social worker mean to you?

    3. What has been your experience as a school social worker? What do you like and dislike?

B. Understanding First Nations issues questions

    1. Can you describe to me your understanding of who First Nations youth are?

    2. Can you describe to me your understanding of the history of education and First Nations people in Canada?

    3. What is your understanding of the Residential School System?

    4. How do you perceive the impact of this history First Nations youth and families today?

    5. Have you witnessed any traumatic impact from the residential school experience in families you work with today?

    6. How does this/would this impact your work with these families?

    7. How do you think this might affect school attendance?

8. As a non-First Nations person, how do you learn about First Nations people?

C. Relationship Questions

1. Can you describe what your experience with First Nations people was before becoming a school social worker?

2. Can you describe what your experience with First Nations people has been since becoming a school social worker?

3. What role do you believe school social workers play in supporting First Nations youth and families to have a positive school experience?

4. Can you tell me what it's like for you to work with First Nations families?

5. Can you tell me what becoming an ally means to you?

6. Do you feel that becoming an ally is part of the role of a school social worker?

7. Has becoming an ally with First Nations youth and families been part of your experience as a school social worker?

    i. Can you explain How?/Why not?

8. Can you tell me how you approach working with First Nations families?

9. As a non-First Nations social worker, what barriers do you believe exist for you in supporting First Nations youth and families within the school?

    i. Differences in language?

    ii. Differences in culture?

    iii. Differences in values?

    iv. Differences in understanding?

10. What do you need to be more effective in supporting First Nations youth?

Personal Narrative. Baskin (2005) states that, "western approaches to research tend to

focus on the participants with little or no attention paid to the researcher other than his or her academic qualifications" (p. 9). Through narrative research, this narrow focus is broadened by employing reflexivity as a source of data. For the researcher, reflexivity calls for, "the reflection upon and critical examination of the nature of the research process and their role in it" (Kimpson, 2005, p.74). Reflexivity "permeates every aspect of the research process, challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture, and politics of those we study and those we select as our audience" (Hertz 1997, as cited in Etherington, 2007, p. 31).

Self-reflexivity reflects a resistance to the traditional understanding of a researcher, one who is "neutral, disinterested, objective, and disembodied" (Kimpson, 2005, p. 74). The idea that research can be conducted with objectivity and neutrality is not accepted, as all researchers view research through their own epistemological lens (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Kimpson, 2005). Webster and Mertova (2007) state, "Merely listening, recording and fostering participant stories, while ignoring the researcher's stories, is both impossible and unsatisfying" (p.88). Instead, the researcher, her/his history and her/his goals must be acknowledged as an integral piece of the research (Kimpson, 2005; Etherington, 2007), and their story becomes interwoven within the stories of the participants. As a source of data within this research I have articulated my own history that lead to this research, as well as my thoughts and experiences as a researcher throughout this process. By acknowledging the impact of the researcher on research, and challenging myself to be reflexive, I am resisting the Eurocentric notion of the "neutral" or "objective" researcher.

Ethical Considerations

This research received human ethics approval by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, prior to implementation. Participation in this study was voluntary, participants were clearly explained their rights to withdraw from the research at

any point during, or following the interview, without consequence. Participant consent was obtained in writing via a detailed informed consent form (see Appendix A). The nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study was provided to them in a written study information sheet before they agreed to participate (See Appendix B). Participants were informed that the information gathered through the interviews will be used as data for the Masters studies thesis, and may also be used in whole or in part in future publications.

Participants were asked to reflect on their own work experiences, which may have had the potential to become emotional, although unlikely to be emotionally disturbing. Due to the possibility of emotional responses, each participant was made aware of support services available to them, should they require such services following the interview (Appendix K). The information gathered was used for data for graduate thesis, and will be published as such. Participants were also informed that data could be used for other future publications, and consent was given. However, no names or other forms of identifying information are used in the final report. The raw data from the interviews were only seen/heard by myself, the graduate student, and my advisor. There was no deception of research participants.

In terms of ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality, anonymity was not possible as I, the graduate student conducted, transcribed and coded, the interviews, therefore have knowledge of each individual and their story. However, confidentiality was maintained as all digital recordings and transcribed interviews were coded so that identifying information (such as names, specific schools) do not appear on the data, therefore anyone reading the transcript will not be able to identify the participant.

Study participants were informed about their right to confidentiality. They were also informed that the results of the interviews was be used as data for the graduate thesis, and

potentially future publications. Each interview was used in conjunction with the responses of the

other participants. Only the graduate student and the advisor have access to the research data that

has identifiable information. Full transcripts, which contain no identifiable information, were

only be seen by the graduate student and the advisor. Participants were made aware of this prior

to their involvement in the study (see Appendix D) and during the process of informed consent.

All digitally recorded interviews were kept separate from transcripts, which were number coded

and inputted to pass code protected computer files. Only the graduate student has access to these

numbers. Hard copy data and other research materials (printed transcripts, and informed consent

forms) have been stored in a secure area (locked safe) at the graduate students home. Digital

recordings of the interviews were permanently erased from the digital recorder once uploaded

onto a computer for transcribing and analysis. The digitally recorded interviews and transcripts

will be destroyed five years after publication of the research results. This amount of time for

keeping the data allowed for the review of the data in case of questioning of the research findings

after being made public.

Analysis

Creswell (2007) describes the first element of analyzing narratives as restorying.

Restorying is the process by which a researcher analyzes the interview script and begins to piece

together the chronology of the narrative. Through this process, typical elements of any story are

highlighted, "such as time, place, plot, and scene" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 332). After

restorying, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, as cited in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) describe

the Three-Dimension Space Approach to organizing texts. The three dimensions referred to in

this approach are interaction, continuity, and space. Narratives are analyzed, and information

gathered is organized into these three categories. Interaction refers to both the personal and

social interactions that participants express through their stories, such as personal thoughts and

expressions of conversations with others. Continuity refers to relevant aspects of the stories that develop over time, therefore events and experiences may occur in the past, present, or future. And the third dimension is space, which refers to the places or landscapes within which stories are described (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Analyzing narrative research involves collaboration with research participants by way of feedback to ensure accurate representation of their stories (Creswell, 2007). Narrative research offers the opportunity for participants and researchers to work together to express a story that is personal and reflective of the participants' experiences. Participants were given the opportunity to read their restoried narratives, and were encouraged to make changes where a concept was misunderstood, clarification was needed, or addition/omission of information is beneficial to the story. This was done to increase the integrity of the stories, and ensure that participants were actively involved in the presentation of their words. Three of the four participants were satisfied with their restoried narratives, and one chose to meet in person to clarify a few points that they felt were not reflective of the story they had wanted to tell. We re-worked the story together until they was satisfied with the narrative.

Narrative Criteria

As narrative research is a unique and human-centred process, the criteria by which it is judged will differ not only from quantitative research methods, but also from other forms of qualitative research. Webster and Mertova (2007) have written a succinct review of narrative literature, and outline the common criteria used to evaluate human stories. They write about seven criteria; access, honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity, familiarity, transferability, and economy. Access refers to information on participants, cultural context, and collaboration of knowledge construction with participants and researcher that is made accessible to the readers. Honesty is achieved through the process of collaboration and negotiation between participant and

researcher to create a truthful interpretation of the interviews or data. Verisimilitude refers to the plausibility of the stories, and their ability to either resonate with other stories, or open up new areas of understanding. Similar to verisimilitude is the concept of authenticity, which may be achieved through coherence of the narrative reports, and critical others, experts in the field whose research provides support. Familiarity, for the purposes of evaluating narratives, refers to re-examining what has become familiar or habitual, dissecting it in order to find lessons. Transferability requires the researcher to offer sufficient detail so that another person could apply a similar approach in another setting and results could be comparable. And finally, economy refers to the identification of critical events within the narratives that support the indication of important issues and research outcomes (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Next I will outline how this research did or did not meet the criteria.

Access, the first criteria, was achieved within this research, firstly through the participant characteristics outlined in the participant recruitment section of the Methodology chapter, which gave an idea as to who recruitment was aimed at, this being non-First Nations school social workers working within Winnipeg, who have experience working with First Nations students and families, and are willing to share some stories. Without jeopardizing confidentiality, the restoried narratives aimed to include as much descriptive information as to create a good understanding of the experiences of each participant. Perhaps the interview questions could have been designed to capture a better understanding of participants' personal culture and characteristics. As described in the Methodology chapter, each restorying was presented back to the participants. All but one were satisfied with the first draft, and after meeting in person and making a few small changes, the fourth participant was very satisfied with their story as well. All of this information is made clear for the reader.

Honesty, the second criteria was similarly achieved. As described above, once the narratives were restoried, they were emailed to each participant, and participants were invited to meet again if they were interested in making any changes. Three participants emailed back expressing their satisfaction with their story, while the fourth felt that some wording needed to be changed to accurately reflect their experiences.

Verisimilitude was the third criteria achieved. I believe it was achieved in this research as all four stories shared some similar aspects. While each participant had unique experiences, each story expressed some similarities regarding their understanding of First Nations students' needs within the school, as well as direction they were getting from school administration and divisional policy as to how to work with First Nations youth. I also believe that the narratives opened up new areas of understanding by bringing awareness to the unique role school social workers can play in creating educational spaces that are culturally safe.

Authenticity was also achieved. Throughout the narratives shared by each participant, stories of witnessing difficulties experienced by First Nations students in the classroom and the wider school system were told. These stories are coherent with the writings of Battiste and McLean (2005), The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), and Silver et al. (2002), who have all written of how education remains for many First Nations youth a negative experience. Each narrative alludes to a general lack of cultural safety for First Nations youth and families throughout the larger school system, as well as significant areas for improvement within each participants understanding of the benefits tenets of cultural safety, and adhering to them within their work supporting First Nations youth. This supports Brascoupe and Waters, (2009), who write that the cultural destructiveness of The Residential School system in Canada, and the continued failure of the Canadian education system to support the needs of First Nations

students, can be addressed by the application of the cultural safety model.

By drawing out common themes from each narrative, the fifth criteria, familiarity, was achieved. While each social worker told a very unique story, all of them recognized the impact of historical colonial processes, and the inter-generational trauma that many First Nations students experience today. Despite this common recognition, all four stories described either personal difficulties in incorporating this knowledge into their practice with individual students, or a lack of direction from school administration or divisional policy to do so. This familiar theme throughout each story demonstrates how even when there is awareness of colonial processes and inter-generational trauma, the application of this knowledge to every day social work practice can be challenging, without the application of a model such as cultural safety to guide practice.

I believe transferability was also achieved through the information presented in the Methodology section. Through detailed description of the narrative approach, cultural safety as the guiding theoretical framework, and transparent outline of participant recruitment, interview schedule, and method of analysis, another researcher could apply a similar approach and the results would likely be comparable. I believe that some of the similarities in the stories, and how each of the four social workers shared some awareness of colonialism and inter-generational trauma, could be characteristic of someone who would be willing to respond to my specific call for participants, and therefore not generalizable to all school social workers. However, someone following a similar call for participants would likely also attract other participants with similar understandings, willing to share their knowledge.

And finally, economy was also achieved. It was demonstrated through the themes outlined above, and the comparison of aspects of each narrative to the teachings of Cultural Safety.

According to the criteria outlined by Webster and Mertova (2007), I believe this research has

met the common standards used to evaluate human stories. Next, the benefits to participating in this research are outlined.

Benefits of this research

There are several benefits for the participants of this research. First, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on and share their stories of experience working with First Nations youth and families. Through sharing these stories, they offered insights as how they as non-First Nations social workers can better support First Nations youth and families, and perhaps came to new understandings for themselves of the important role they play. Also, they were able to offer suggestions of how both individuals and whole educational systems could function better to support the needs of First Nations students.

Through this analysis, it is intended that the narratives of the participants will bring deeper understanding of the strengths and barriers school social workers possess and encounter when working with First Nation youth and families. It is also intended that this understanding will bring a social work voice to the larger conversation on educational reform with regard to meeting the needs of First Nations people, and hopefully lead to action that strengthens the role school social workers play. Ultimately, it is thought that this research will support the creation of educational space that is reflective of and culturally safe for First Nations youth.

Summary

With the goal of eliciting rich and meaningful insights into the perceived relationships between school social workers and First Nations students they have worked with, a Qualitative methodology was chosen. More specifically, narrative inquiry was used to offer research participants the opportunity to reflect and discover personal truths through the telling of their stories, which fits well with writings on research of indigenous/non-indigenous relationships, encouraging examination of non-indigenous researchers and practitioners (Regan, 2010).

Cultural safety was chosen as a framework by which to guide interviews and analysis, and offer suggestions for change, due to its focus on cross-cultural relationships. This framework puts the onus for providing culturally safe services on service providers, in this case the school social workers, who are working with First Nations youth and families. Now, having an understanding of how participants were chosen, how data was collected, the methods for analysis, and the intended benefits of this research, we move into the next chapter, which provides the narratives. A restoried narrative from each of the four participants, and an interweaving of the concepts drawn from all four narratives with the tenets of Cultural Safety, in addition to my own personal narrative, are provided in the following section.

Chapter 4 - Data

As personal narratives are the main source of data used in this research, this chapter provides information that has been gathered from each participant, and restoried into individual narratives. Accompanying the four participant narratives are two of my own stories. The first was written prior to participant interviews, and reflects the path that led me to this research. Following the participant narratives, this chapter closes with my second narrative, written after the process of interviewing, restorying, and analysis, and reflects my thoughts and learning during this process.

Personal Narrative – Pre-Interviews

Something that drew me to narrative inquiry was how this form of research often included space for the narrative of the researcher. In trying to acknowledge what brought me to social work, and specifically to this research, I felt that it was fitting to choose a method of inquiry that could challenge me to reflect on, and include as part of the data, my own narrative.

Education was always a central focus in my childhood. My mom was a teacher, and my dad was very proud of the perfect attendance record he attained during his own schooling. The emphasis and value my parents placed on my education was not unique among my friends, schoolmates, and neighbors. Attending school daily was the norm; no one skipped school, or could be seen walking the streets of our neighbourhood during school hours. Although, I do think my parents placed an emphasis on attendance that was perhaps a little beyond the norm. I remember one time in elementary school there was a blizzard and all the buses were cancelled, but schools remained open. I went to a school where the majority of students were bused in, and when I heard buses had been cancelled, I immediately started dreaming of my lazy day at home in my jammies. However, my parents had other plans. If school was open, then I shouldn't miss class! They braved the snow, and drove my friend and I to a school completely empty of

students, with a handful of teachers who I'm sure were none too happy to see us! And that is just one example of the importance my parents placed on education.

As a white, middle-class student, attending schools with mostly white teachers, and mostly white students, I never found that the education I was receiving was contrary to my own or my families values. I never felt that the history I was learning didn't quite make sense, or that the expectations of me challenged, demeaned, or oppressed who I was. Reflecting back, I can see how the education system I participated in was designed for me, and others like me to feel comfortable, and ultimately succeed. It wasn't until I had graduated high school, and decided to volunteer at a homework club in the north end of Winnipeg, that I started to realize that not everyone had the same relationship with education as I did. Volunteering at this community centre, I was exposed for the first time to school habits that were drastically different than the ones I had grown up with. Many youth that I met attended school sporadically when they were younger, and then often not at all when they became teenagers. Although I was initially shocked that kids could just not go to school (Just not go? That was an option?), I quickly realized that there must be something different in our histories, in our experiences, that would make our relationships with education so different. This remained in the back of my mind for a few years, until several events occurred a few years later. The first event began when I applied for my pre-masters in social work. While going back to school I took a part-time job at an inner city community club. Again, I saw young kids missing days of school at a time, and teens leaving school all together. I thought over and over again, where is the support for these kids? How can this be such a common occurrence? Why is this happening, and what changes need to be made so that these youth will chose to attend school regularly? This time, being in school myself, I decided to focus my research on this area. I also had the great fortune of being placed in several

classes with a professor who exposed me to the idea of colonialism, and it's impact in Canada. This was the first time I was challenged to critically analyze my own world, the way I was brought up, and how I measure others to these values I grew up with. This was also the first time I was exposed to the term "privilege" in a way that was directed at my own life. I had previously thought privilege was a term reserved only for children of parents with gads of money, and never thought how it could apply to my own position in society, my family's middle class success, and our assumptions about why others do or do not achieve what we deem as success. Until this point, my education and my thoughts on social work had been very much focused on the *other*, the client, what was wrong with them, and how to help *them*. It was through these teachings that I began to piece together some answers to the questions that had been swimming in my head years ago about the difference in educational experiences between myself and the youth I worked with in Winnipeg's inner city and north end. It also brought about more questions.

For my pre-Master's practicum, I had the opportunity to work in the school system, learning about the role of school social work. The school division I did my practicum in was just beginning to acknowledge how large a population of First Nations and other Aboriginal students they had, and were implementing programs to support them. There was an Aboriginal Achievement coordinator, a position that at the time was held by an Aboriginal social worker. After school powwow clubs and various other programs intended to incorporate Aboriginal culture in schools were established in certain schools. School social workers often participated in these programs, sometimes facilitating them, sometimes as support while other school staff took the lead. As a student, only one of the schools I was assigned to ran an Aboriginal culture program. As I discussed in the Literature review section, no guidance was provided as to how to support individual students in a way that was culturally appropriate. There was some discussion

about how the division was finally recognizing that they had a population of Aboriginal students, who had unique needs within the school system, but no one spoke of the cause of these needs. No one spoke about colonialism, about oppression, about racism, about respecting difference in culture, and values. No one spoke about the power inherent in the role of social work, and the need to work towards balancing power within social worker/student relationships. And no one talked about systemic changes that would need to happen in order for First Nations and other Aboriginal students to feel confident and respected in the school system. Barriers to education were discussed in terms of behaviors in the classroom, and solutions focused on methods to modifying behaviors, and sometimes looked at influences on behavior such as difficulties at home, or diagnosis of behavior issues, and needing medication. My practicum provided a glimpse of the many barriers to education that students can experience, but the focus was very much on present, individual barriers. Historic influences, and structural or systemic barriers to education were not considered. I was left wanting to explore further what has lead to so many First Nations students leaving school early, and the role non-First Nations school social workers can play in supporting them in school today.

I started to read and learn more about the Indian Residential School system in Canada. I read more about colonialism, the early educational relationships between First Nations peoples and settlers in Canada. I also read about how this history has left such a great impact on communities, families, and youth today. I had read a few studies that focused on First Nations and Aboriginal youth and their experiences in school. My initial research desire was to do something similar, to do a small qualitative study that helped draw out the stories of educational woes of First Nations youth in Winnipeg's inner city. But the more I read about cross-cultural research, and more specifically doing research with indigenous populations, I began to feel that

my motives were selfish, I was just another White researcher trying to understand the indigenous

other, and the stories I thought I wanted were not mine to gather and tell. Furthermore, this

research would not help me answer another burning question in my heart; what was my role in

all of this?

With all of my newly gained knowledge about the history between First Nations people

and western settlers in Canada, I could not help but feel an immense guilt for "my peoples" role

in this history, and how I personally have benefitted from colonialism. At times I felt paralyzed

by this guilt, thinking the only option was to quit social work, as I couldn't wrap my head around

how could I help, and not hinder, how many First Nations youth experienced education. I knew

that my initial research idea lacked self-reflexivity, and critical examination of the role of a

social worker. And I knew it was not going to answer the questions I needed answered. After

already having submitted my proposal to my committee and it having been approved, I fretted

for a bit about what to do. I felt like everything I was reading was telling me this was not my

research to do. Eventually, I couldn't justify the small amount of work I had done on my

proposal as being the sole reason holding me back from changing my research focus. I called my

advisor, scared and a little panicked, and told him what I was thinking and feeling. He was

extremely supportive, and assured me I had to go with my gut. It was at this time that he

introduced me to the teachings of cultural safety. Immediately I knew this model was what I had

been searching for, and articulated what I had never quite been able to express. Through learning

about cultural safety, I was able to find the clarity to re-focus my research to where I was

comfortable, and where I knew the stories would not be infringing on First Nations people, and

where I could find my own story within in it.

With new perspective, I moved forward with my research. As the teachings of cultural safety express the need for non-indigenous support workers to understand colonial histories, current day impacts of these histories, as well as reflection on personal values, this was how I framed my research. I decided to interview several school social workers who had experience working with First Nations youth. I asked them about their understanding of colonial histories, specifically with respect to the residential school system in Canada, how, if it at all, they felt this impacted students today, and also asked them to reflect on their own culture and values that they bring to work. The method of research I chose is narrative inquiry, as the goal of this form of inquiry is to gain rich and meaningful stories of personal experience, which tied in to the self-reflexivity required in cultural safety, and also provided space for my own narrative, my own story, my own reflection on this process, which I felt was integral in my own learning process.

In the next section, the interviews from four different school social workers have been restoried, in order to provide a chronology of their reflections on working with First Nations students. Following their stories is a continuation of my story, and my reflection on this process of inquiry, as well as themes that have been drawn from each narrative and compared to the tenets of cultural safety.

Candace

Candace describes herself as a new school social worker, having done two placements within the field of school social work for both her Bachelor's of Social Work, and her Master's of Social Work. As a new school social worker, she draws upon her education, as well as previous work experience, when thinking about her role in supporting First Nations youth and families within the schools.

When asked to describe her understanding of who First Nations youth are, she is cautious in her response. She explains her belief that assuming someone's cultural identification is not a

good idea, therefore it is best to ask, or wait for someone to disclose. Ultimately, she described her understanding of First Nations youth as "somebody who defines themselves as that" (Line 70). When describing how she approaches working with First Nations youth and families, she explains; "I think I approach working with First Nations families the same way I would approach working with any family " (line 273). She goes on to say; "I start very basic, family trees, who's in your life, what's important to you, what are your cultural values, do you have any special traditions, what holidays are important to you, just really learning about, like the basis of that family, or of that student" (line 274).

However, Candace describes some of her experiences working with First Nations families as being "a bit uncomfortable" (line 217), at first. She attributes this discomfort to what she defines as a common experience for non-First Nations social workers, who lack a good understanding of the lived experiences of many First Nations People in Canada. She explains, "I think most social workers, working with First Nations, don't understand, they haven't lived through the things that these families have gone through, they haven't, they're not a part of history, so, we learnt about it in school, and we read about it, we hear about it, but we don't truly know what that's like." (line 217). Different histories, and different experiences contribute to a consistent barrier for non-First Nations social workers working with First Nations people. She also admitted that "not understanding that history, not understanding what it's like", has sometimes lead her to thoughts that are unhelpful: "I do find myself thinking you know, it's time to move on, you know our society has changed, the world has changed, things like this have happened elsewhere, like sometimes, and I'm not proud of this, I don't think that it's helpful, but sometimes it's like, okay, let's move on, what are we going to do to move on, you're stuck, let's move on" (line 295). She attributes these thoughts partly to a sense of racism towards First

Nations people that is often invisible in our society; "sometimes you hear in society about Aboriginal or First Nations people, it's racist, and that it's so um, it happens so much that we don't even think about it, people don't, if people said what you hear and see about Aboriginal people about a black person, shit would hit the fan! But not, so, I think it's almost ingrained in us, not ingrained, but we're so exposed to that" (line 301). She also explains how a lack of understanding of how to support First Nations people contributes to her negative thoughts, stating; "and probably part of that is because I think nobody has the answer, it's a huge, huge issue, it's, you know it's generational, you know it's not … so what do we do to help these people?" (line 298). In order to combat negativity, Candace believes "it's so important to be self-aware so you don't have those thoughts" (line 301).

Further reflection on her experiences working with First Nations people reminded her of some discomfort she felt in a previous social work role where her clients and most of her co-workers were Aboriginal, herself being white. She often felt as though people were thinking "oh, here comes the white girl, coming to take our kids away" and "what are all these, you know, white people doing working with our people?" (lines 221 & 224). While being labeled a "white person" by others, both clients and past co-workers, Candace said that she has not really reflected on what that means for herself, or how her own culture, and the colour of her skin, impacts the interactions she has with clients. She admits "I'm not really strongly tied to any of my historic roots so, I am a mix of things, of European, I think, things, I never really thought, ya, in terms of my, historic culture, or identity, I've never really explored that." (line 242). In order to combat the discomfort that she has experienced as a white person working with First Nations people, she focuses on learning more about her clients, and having them teach her about who they are. She explains that in order to gain a better understanding of clients she works with

today, she refrains from making any cultural assumptions, but says she feels very comfortable asking questions.

As Candace points to the lack of knowledge of First Nations experiences as a barrier to her own work as a white social worker, she describes her understanding of the history of education and First Nations people in Canada as very limited, and confesses, "Probably I should know more." (line 76). In explaining her knowledge, she began with describing European interruption in traditional First Nations education, and the development of Residential Schools. She was aware that many First Nations youth were forced to attend these schools, and of some of the abusive occurrences at these schools, such as "their heads were shaved, or they could have been abused in numerous different ways" (line 82). She went on to say that she could see the effects of residential schools in students today: "There's still trauma I think, within that population of people" (line 99). In her own endeavor to understand the impact of residential schools, she drew parallel's between residential school survivors experiences, and those of First Nations youth today who are taken from their home communities and placed in foster situations in Winnipeg:

> We see kids who are maybe brought into care and placed in Winnipeg, and they're kind of, if they're from one of their home communities, or reserves, and they're placed in Winnipeg and just kind of expected to fit in, so I kind of think, that has made me think of what it would be like for the people however many years ago, that were living off the land, were more free, and brought to a Residential School, even though a reserve is not even comparable to what the lives they used to live, the shock that you see in the kid, even just living in Winnipeg with all these cars, and fitting into this structure of school setting, you can see that that's, that's difficult. (line 85)

Candace has noticed that in a lot of ways, many First Nations youth have trouble fitting in to the structure of school in her school division. She suspects that low school attendance of First Nations youth may be due to differences in understanding of the value of education, or possibly fear or discomfort passed on generationally due to the impact of residential schools:

> It definitely, I think it definitely affects school attendance because, like I said school isn't made a priority either, I'm not sure why, because maybe traditionally school wasn't as much, or our school system is a new thing for them, so the way I think that a lot of First Nations people learnt in the past isn't the way they learn, so maybe they don't understand the value of it, or maybe they're scared, or they're not comfortable with it, but it definitely, definitely impacts their attendance… I think parents, maybe didn't have the chance to be educated, they don't understand the importance of that, or like I said, maybe they're scared or uncomfortable with it, but they're not passing that value on to their children, it's not a priority in their lives. (line 151)

She then reflects on her own upbringing in an urban setting, where education was a valued priority, and how this difference in the value of the education system can be hard for her to understand sometimes;

> Growing up in an urban setting this is just kind of what you do, that's my experience, you go to school, it's important, you don't miss, you do your best, that's how I grew up, so it's hard to understand how these parents, like First Nations parents no doubt want the best for their kids, like which parents, like who doesn't if you're a parent, right? But there's that, I guess, kind of gap, or they don't, because of their history of trauma, they don't understand, I think sometimes, the importance of education, which in turn then, I don't understand why they don't understand that, right? (line 341)

While observing the challenges that some First Nations youth face in attending school, and drawing a connection to cultural and historical factors related to these challenges, Candace explains that as a social worker, she does not receive direction from school administration to take these factors into consideration when supporting First Nations youth and families, and others are not taking this approach either:

> Hmm, I don't know if school social workers do that, um, I think they try to encourage families in general to feel comfortable in the school and safe, but I don't think it's a priority for school social workers to take into consideration the history of Aboriginal people, the residential schools, the trauma that they've experienced, and use that, use the history to help families today. I don't think that's happening. I haven't seen that happening, that's not a priority for me even at the (name of school) that I work at. So that's not the direction that I'm getting from administration, so, I don't think they are. I don't think that's something that is regularly talked about or discussed, or direction is given to use, to do that. (line 167)

Although this was not the direction she was being given, she did feel that historical and cultural considerations could be beneficial, but explains her understanding of why this was not happening:

> I think definitely that taking into consideration, that the history and the culture, with any kind of, with any culture would be beneficial, um, I think maybe that's not happening because … when teachers or principals come with need, it's not, they don't even define it as a cultural need or, it's more um, well, surface things I guess, depression, anxious, can't sit still. (line180)

She then recalls an example of a specific youth she was working with who she describes as having a "traditional Aboriginal" lifestyle before being put in an urban foster placement. To her, it was obvious that he was missing his former way of life, yet culture and his traditional way of life were not a consideration when developing a plan for this youth:

> …he's missing that, he's lost, and, although that's recognized, I'm not asked, and how could I, help fix that, right? So I'm asked how can he, how can I help him develop coping skills, to cope, so he can be in class, so he can learn. (line 187)

She attributes this focus to what she describes as the "culture of education", which is academically driven. She explains that while behaviors and home-life of students may be considered in social work intervention, the goal of intervention is always to improve academics:

> I don't know if I can define it but, it's totally education driven, so even sometimes when kids are having behavioral issues, or you know struggles at home, those are all considered, but at the end of the day it's, we need to do what we need to do so kids will learn, so kids can read, so kids can write. Um, so it's very academically driven, it's a very academically driven culture I think. (line 433)

Looking forward, Candace feels that support for First Nations youth and families could be improved by more access to cultural supports within the schools, facilitated by "Aboriginal people". As a non-First Nations person, she feels it is not her place to be facilitating "Aboriginal programing", "I couldn't create that role, I don't know that history, I don't live that history. I haven't, I'm not involved I guess in that culture" (line 374). While the idea of facilitating culturally specific programming does not feel right for her, she says that education for school staff and students on different cultural values and traditions could be beneficial, "I think it could benefit everybody. I think for all students to learn about all cultures in school, because they're

living in communities where there's not just white people walking around" (line 382). She goes

on to say:

> But to understand why are people looking different, doing different things, why are they
>
> leaving in the middle of whatever to go pray, so, ya, I think other students should get
>
> involved in that, to understand, to maybe stop the racism or, to help Aboriginal people in
>
> general feel more, like comfortable with their culture in society. (line 393)

 As she describes earlier, lack of knowledge of First Nations history and experiences is a barrier

to meaningful support for First Nations youth and families. Candace believes that through

cultural education for students, and more inclusion supports facilitated by Aboriginal people, the

cultural needs of all can be met.

Erin

Close to retirement, Erin has had over 20 years experience working in the core area of

Winnipeg, before becoming a school social worker. It was through this prior experience that she

realized the great need for Aboriginal youth to have support within the school; "I applied to

(name of employer) because I felt that there was far more of a need for liaison and support for

Aboriginal kids in care, to have at school" (line 10). This was where she felt she could really

support the needs of First Nations youth, thus beginning her career as a school social worker.

Reflecting on being a non-First Nations social worker, working with First Nations

families, Erin explains that some Aboriginal families can be somewhat hesitant upon meeting

her, but says that she herself has always felt very comfortable working with Aboriginal families;

"I've always enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed working with First Nations families. At times I

would rather work with them than middle class professionals" (line 191). Erin describes some of

the things she enjoys about working with First Nations families; "their humility, their enjoyment

of one another, um, even in the midst of addictions there is a huge sense of caring and

connectedness and enjoyment of one-another" (line 196). She goes on to make some

comparisons between First Nations and other families:

> It's real hard for me to get my brain around you know, upper-class families who are just
>
> expecting, expecting from me, expecting from the kids, expecting from the schools,
>
> whereas these people usually come in and they're fairly intimidated until they get to
>
> know you, and then once they know you, they know you for life. Uh, so the way the
>
> connecting relationship is very special. (line 198)

Creating relationships is something that Erin really valued as part of her initial role as a school

social worker, and felt honoured when First Nations families she worked with were open to

engaging in supportive relationships with her. She recalls:

> Some moms want me to just come and see them. You know, and it wasn't, it had nothing
>
> to do with white versus… they knew I was respectful, and could help them a little bit, tell
>
> them where they could get stuff, and just form a relationship with them. (line 177)

In order to make First Nations families feel comfortable in building a relationship with her, being

a non-First Nations social worker, Erin says it is important for her to:

> give them the sense mostly of how long I've been working with Aboriginal families, and
>
> that I worked in the core for a long time, so they don't see me as an upper middle class
>
> female social worker that wants to tell them what to do. (line 209)

She feels that her experience, along with "the fact that I enjoy spending time with them" (line

215), helps families "figure it out after a while" (line 215) that her intentions to support them are

earnest. She goes on to say, "When I walk into an Aboriginal household, I feel very comfortable.

I feel extremely comfortable. I'm not ill at ease at all because I've done it for a long time. And,

putting them at ease is probably the most important thing to do" (line 235). Erin also speaks of

the role of being an ally to First Nations families as being important to her. She describe what

this role involved: "Well, having their back, having a sense of their worth, um, having a

knowledge of what's important in their family, uh, important in their culture" (line 231).

Looking back on her experiences as a school social worker, Erin describes a very

different experience in her early days of school social work than what is expected of her now. As

she describes her previous role as liaison and community connector between youth and families,

the schools, and community resources, she reminisces:

> Um, but so much of the time you were more than that, you were far more than that with
>
> (employer) because you really became a significant part of the family. Lots of family
>
> visits, lots of times spending with not just the child or the student, but supporting and
>
> validating the needs of the family with resources in the community. (line 20)

Today, Erin describes her role as being focused predominantly on IEP's (Individual Education

Plans), where she spends most of her time in meetings with other school professionals, and often

doesn't meet with students at all. Speaking about students that are referred to her, she says;

"sometimes those are kids I don't even see, or the families". Instead her meetings are with "other

social workers, and other specialists in the community, and clinicians" (line 28). The focus on

education plans neglects what she calls the "social needs" (line 25) of many students. This has

resulted in a drastic change in what is expected of her. Erin no longer considers family liaison as

part of her role, which she describes as a "very powerful" (line 51) piece of what school social

work used to do. The decrease of this role is one that Erin feels has had a particularly hard

impact on First Nations youth and families within the school. According to Erin, division-wide,

support for Aboriginal youth has shifted to curriculum based, and no longer includes

programming, family involvement, and family support. She explains that the need for family

support and family involvement is particularly needed for Aboriginal youth in schools because of

the trauma that she sees in so many students. Erin describes First Nations youth as "kids that

more than likely see far more trauma, um, there's addictions in every society and every culture,

but unfortunately I think those kids are less protected from it" (99). She explains that this lack of

protection comes from "the loss of the role of parenting caused by residential, um, residential

schools" (line 111). And this has resulted in "…extreme trauma. Extreme Abuse. Extreme

neglect"(line 102). Furthermore, Erin says:

> Um, I think the addiction issue, is generational, and um, I think a lot of people who were
>
> abused, and I don't believe for one minute that there wasn't a huge population that were
>
> sexually abused because you what, look at the Roman Catholic church and all the secrets
>
> and how they dealt with things and managed things, um, why wouldn't they, and why
>
> wouldn't they attract those kind of people. But I think, even if it was the grandfather or
>
> the father that was in residential schools, the way it's impacted is these people dealt with
>
> things by numbing themselves with different types of um, drugs or alcohol. And so, what
>
> begins to happen is, is that generational abuse continues, and people have more of a
>
> relationship with alcohol or medication, and don't see the needs around them. (line 157)

Because of these social and emotional factors, Erin believes that curriculum-based teachings and

a clinical focus solely on education, fails to properly support Aboriginal families. She explains:

> …if you were given the freedom to do what we used to do, in terms of being a clinician,
>
> um, I used to do a lot of work with Aboriginal families, helping them get connected and
>
> just maintenance with them, you know, *what do you need*, and *how's it going*? (line 172)

Recalling a real sense of relationship-building through family participation before, she states

"this policy has really separated us" (line 57), "it's setting a curriculum for teachers to teach

Aboriginal history and stuff, so it's again it's one degree of separation from the real experience of doing that with your Aboriginal seniors in your community" (line 66).

In addition to the challenges of a new division-wide direction in supporting First Nations youth, Erin also describes some challenges she has had working with professionals from Child and Family Services (CFS). She feels that often she is not recognized as being able to support First Nations youth, and her experience is minimized. "I don't like that sense that you know *I'm the CFS worker and I'm telling you that that's not good enough*" (line 245), she says about her interactions with some professionals. "And for them I would just say *I was good enough yesterday, now all of a sudden I'm not*?" (Line 246). Erin feels that this strain in relationship between CFS and school professionals can become a barrier to properly supporting First Nations youth.

Erin also describes educators' lack of experience and training on working with First Nations youth as being a significant barrier to adequately supporting First Nations youth in the education system. "There's lots of teachers who've had actually no exposure, like teaching is a middle class profession" (line 300), "there's no training that says *this is how you relate to them in terms of their culture*. So, that's a huge deficit" (line 303). One way she suggests balancing the lack of experience that she sees in many educators would be having more First Nations people working with First Nations youth, although she warns that her perception of a switch to predominantly Aboriginal social workers within child protection has not been a necessarily successful model to follow. She says:

> I've got Aboriginal kids and families that would not move to an Aboriginal agency, um,
> and there's reasons for it. Whether it is distrust, or the inconsistency of the workers,

because it's always hit and miss, whether you can get a phone call or not get a phone call

(laughs), I think that's a pretty big barrier." (line 340)

As far as her own role as a school social worker, Erin is very disappointed with the changes in

her division that have immensely impacted how she can support First Nations youth and

families. She longs for "more freedom to um, to do what I used to do" (line 372), "to not be

confined by policy that doesn't allow us to work at an informal level with families, Aboriginal

families in need. That would be the biggest issue for me" (line 376).

Jean

Jean began her career as a school social worker 12 years ago, when she was looking for a

social work position that would benefit from her knowledge of working with families. She says

"I was a parent of children in the school system, and I was a parent volunteer in their schools,

and I thought that this would be a good fit" (line 4). She says she was right about her decision to

go into school social work, that indeed this position has been a good fit for her.

Prior to working as a school social worker, Jean had worked for child and family services

(CFS). Through both her work at CFS, and the past 12 years working within a school division,

she has had many experiences working with First Nations youth and families. When asked to

reflect on these experiences, Jean describes her first experience going to a First Nations reserve

as a CFS worker, and says, "um, well I've grown a lot from my first time I was on the reserve, to

where I've come now" (line 261). She relays the following story of a difference in values and

way of life that played into her decision regarding the future of a young girl:

When I graduated I was a middle-class blonde-haired social worker that was in charge of

a reserve, so one of the first things I was asked to do was a home study on a family on a

reserve, grandparents on a reserve versus the grandparents in the city, for this little girl.

Mom was incarcerated, so these two were vying for her. Um and I had, first of all I

wasn't a parent, second of all I had never had any exposure to the kind of family life that

I saw on the reserve, that was so foreign to me. Um, and I know my report was more

biased towards the city people who seemed to have more of the values that I had. Um, so

whether or not, like I think my biases played a part in the recommendations that I made

for that little girl. Whether or not that was the best choice for that family, or for that little

girl, I will never know, but I know that my experiences and my biases about the home

that I saw on the reserve, and the fact that the reserve home had lots of family members

living there, there wasn't really a bedroom for this little girl, there wasn't, you know, it

was a different type of family experience than what I was, than what my upbringing was,

so I think that you certainly have, you bring your own values to the table. (line 158)

Reflecting on how she works with First Nations youth now, as opposed to then, Jean says "I do

try and find out a little more about um, kind of generational values in parenting and experiences,

so just trying to get a better sense of how that generational piece has had an impact on that

particular family" (line 280). Jean believes this generational piece is particularly important when

working with First Nations families due to trauma caused by the Residential School system,

which has been passed down generationally:

I think that the uh, that I think our First Nations People have, are still being affected, by

those poor little young people that were taken away to go to residential schools. And the

huge impact that had on how then those children were raised in a system that wasn't a

family oriented system, so it broke families apart, it didn't allow for role-modeling, it,

what it allowed for was future generations then to kind of see the trauma effect that that

has had, and people deal with trauma through all kinds of things, through alcohol abuse,

and drug abuse, and violence. And I think those things are a clear impact on people's

experiences, which is filtered down through the generations. (line 139)

However, she believes that this recognition of intergenerational trauma is not often

acknowledged among educational professionals; "I think we're too focused on the results of the

trauma, than, you know so we're too focused on the drug abuse, the sniffing, the violence, you

know, we're trying to manage that, and unfortunately we've not addressed it" (line 432). Jean

says this may partly be due to a lack of application of any knowledge about intergenerational

trauma within schools:

> I think that maybe generally they might have attended a workshop on what that might
>
> look like, but does that really affect that student in that class? I don't think so. I think that
>
> it's glossed over. I still think that we have middle class values in the classrooms, and
>
> they, you know, don't really get it. (line 154)

She explains that this lack of understanding of First Nations students and imposition of middle

class values is reflective of the earliest relationships between First Nations People in Canada and

the formal Canadian education system. Describing this relationship she says "I think it's never

been an easy one, I think it's always been imposed, I don't think it's been as a result of

compromise" (line 116). She goes on to say:

> we're expecting all different peoples, including First Nations, to that mentality of what
>
> we think education should be. And by "we" I'm meaning the people in power, I guess
>
> starting with the church people, to um, down the line, and so, I don't think our education
>
> system really does meet the needs of our Aboriginal youth, especially in the city. (line
>
> 118)

In her role as a school social worker in Winnipeg, Jean describes how she works towards meeting the needs of First Nations students and families. Jean explains that for her, it is easy to work with First Nations students and families. She describes some cultural similarities between herself and some families that she has worked with, that she uses to build a relationship:

I feel like it's easy for me to connect, um, my own family's background is hunting and fishing and so I, that's a lifestyle that I don't have any issues with, so it's easy for me to, I've brought moose meat to a family that missed you know, having wild meat, because I had some. (line 263)

She does admit:

I wouldn't say I am enmeshed in their culture, because I don't attend lots of things that have to do with First Nations culture, but I certainly am respectful of it. I think that the teachings, you know the Seven Teachings are very valid, I think it's a really positive experience for all, not just Aboriginal youth but, it's a promising way to look at the world, to view the world. (line 266)

However, she does recognize that several barriers do exist that can impede her ability to connect with and support some students. The first, she describes as a difference in history and experience. She tells a story of working with a young boy who had recently come from a reserve, who told her "He's seen crazy and I'll never get what crazy is" (line 296). She goes on to say:

When I asked him what he meant by crazy, he looked at me and gave me this little smirk, and you know, he had a dog die in his arms because the RCMP shot it because there were too many dogs running around the reserve so, the RCMP were shooting their, shooting everybody's dogs, and you know, because they look like a wild pack, but he had a dog that he was connected to. You know, he'd seen his parents, his dad had been incarcerated,

mom's been picked up by the police, he's been when he was seven, he's seen three

suicides. (line 395)

She agrees with the young boy, saying "I have not had those types of experiences" (line 297), "I

haven't had any challenges in my own family around, you know, parenting issues, or anything

like that, other than you know, raising boys (laughs). But in terms of, you know I've always had

a supportive family" (line 302). She goes on to say "book knowledge is one thing, and, but

seeing the day to day experiences…" (line 301). She also reflects "I think that that's not any

different from working with any other families, but maybe there's a different layer there" (line

305).

Another barrier she faces in supporting First Nations students is negative beliefs and

media-messages about First Nations people, which can impact how other educational

professionals perceive and respond to the needs of those students. She says:

I think globally, I think there still is this message that they should you know, should just

get a job, and they should just get help, and so globally I still don't think there's that buy-

in as to how that effect, as to what that trickle down effect has meant to that student in the

classroom. (line 183)

She goes on to say:

I think if you can be more focused with the individual, you can have some success with

that individual, but I, in terms of maybe changing some thoughts case-by-case, but I think

unfortunately you know every day we are shown pictures of homeless people who are

Aboriginal, and any news thing is you know, Aboriginal people who are fighting, or you

know, incarcerated. It isn't always balanced. (line 193)

In order to counteract some of these negative beliefs held by some education professionals, Jean explains that as a school social worker, she often plays the role of an advocate for Frist Nations students. This role includes helping to "educate the school team as to the student's needs, and life experiences, and diagnoses with trauma, and again how that can play into working towards their day" (line 228). She then tells a story of a young boy she is working with, whose needs she has worked hard to advocate for within the school:

> The school is seeing all these problems and rather than saying look we need to build a
> relationship with this kid, and we need to treat him as a kid, rather than you know a kid
> who's seen all this trauma. (line 218) I have found that my role is to keep advocating for
> this student, for schools to keep seeing his trauma and his growth, as part of the reasons
> we have to keep working to keep this kid in our school, and not ship him off, because the
> school wants to ship him off. (line 215)

This story reflects Jean's belief in the necessity for school social workers to become advocates for students' needs within the school. Jean does admit that advocating for the needs of First Nations students can become tricky when trying to incorporate culture, especially when families don't seem to adhere to what is believed to be traditional First Nations culture. Jean explains, "it is also interesting to find, you find the families that want nothing to do with culture, and so what's that about?" (line 283). She compares this detachment from traditional First Nations culture to other cultures within Canada, "you certainly have Ukrainian people who don't want to perpetuate being Ukrainian, right?" (line 286). She then questions:

> So what is the difference? So I find that kind of interesting, so is it because of their
> upbringing? Because of how they were raised? You know, in an environment that wasn't
> conducive to their culture? What, like what is it about that? (line 287)

In relation to her questions about First Nations People who do not identify with a traditional First Nations culture, she tells a story of a boy who she was working with, and his mother's reaction to the school's attempt to incorporate cultural ceremonies into his life. She explains:

> And the mom, it was very interesting because the mom was raised with a Catholic background and didn't want, doesn't believe in her cultural…so it was, it wasn't really a language barrier but it was a difference in her values, where you make the assumption that connecting to culture would be helpful, but in this case, this mom who doesn't have this child in her care anymore, but obviously there's a strong connection, you know there wasn't, did not do any types of cultural connections with her children. And in fact, really did not even want to participate when she was hearing that her son was going to a Sweat, and her son had an Aboriginal name. She was, you could see that she was very frustrated, she did not believe in that. (line 342)

Jean reflects on the lack of understanding of this family's history: "So I guess maybe not knowing where she was coming from, and again not knowing how she got to that point" (line 351), while recognizing "but his grandma was um, his great grandma was a resident of the residential school, so you wonder, okay so where did that come from" (line 356).

Thinking about the future, working with First Nations students and families, Jean would like to see a division-wide acknowledgement of the impact of trauma on First Nations youths' lives. She explains how schools recognize the impact of trauma on many newcomer students, and work to support them appropriately, yet still fail to support First Nations students from reserves in a similar way. She explains:

> I think that we're putting a lot of effort into trying to help children from other countries who've experienced trauma, war, whatever they're experiencing in other countries,

they're coming to Canada for a fresh start, so our new families, we're putting a lot of

effort into making them feel settled, respecting their culture, and giving them a better

opportunity to then get into the regular school system, and we're not doing that for our

students that are coming from reserves. (line 374)

She goes on to say:

We're just plopping them into a classroom, and not recognizing as well that they are

coming from traumatized backgrounds, and then expecting them to be successful… (line

380) I think we need to do a better job of assessing where these kids are at before putting

them in the system, and maybe looking at what are the obstacles getting in the way of

these kids being successful, rather than putting them in it and having to be reactive, rather

than proactive. I don't think we're proactive enough. (line 382)

As Jean tells the story of her experiences working with First Nations youth and families, she

describes a lot of personal growth from her early biases, to her deeper understanding of

intergenerational trauma. While her own abilities to support First Nations students have

improved, she feels that as a whole, the school system's ability to meet the needs of these

students remains hindered by a lack of acknowledgment of the impact of trauma, stating "I think

it's not recognizing the impact of, um, the generational issues that these youth are experiencing"

(line 392). But she remains hopeful for the possibility of change; "I think that is a huge area

that's lacking, and maybe you know, with more and more studies being done, and more and

more successes, then perhaps some changes will be made" (line 456).

Dale

Dale has recently begun his career as a school social worker in Winnipeg. In the few

months that he has been working as a social worker within the school system, he has gathered a

number of experiences working with First Nations youth, and he reflects upon what he feels is important when supporting these youth and their families.

In describing who First Nations and Aboriginal youth are, Dale recognizes that "sometimes those terms are political terms" (line 35). He goes on to explain:

Typically when I think of someone who is First Nations, it's someone who might be status Indian or non-status, um they may be registered, they may have a connection to a First Nations community, um ya, so I think that would be my definition, or my understanding. (line 36)

He then adds "And also those folks who identify as First Nations, um it can get kind of murky when you're talking about the different kind of levels, who has status, and who lost status, and that type of thing" (line 39). Dale also reflects:

Um, you now it's interesting when you look at it, sometimes you know when they're First Nations, sometimes you don't. And what does that mean in terms of working with that family, or what does that mean for that family? So some of them may be traditional or spiritual, and some may not, and may not want to examine any spiritual or cultural aspects. But I think with First Nations families, as with all families, you need to have an open mind, um, and I think you need to recognize that when you're working with First Nations folks and other Aboriginal peoples that um, there is a whole colonial history there, right? (line 171)

Due to the nature of the role of school social work, Dale admits there are challenges working with any family, as he says "if you're asked in on a case there's a specific reason, something that kind of needs a bit of focus, so there definitely can be challenges" (line 122). But specific to working with First Nations youth and families, Dale refers to systemic issues and again to the

impact of colonial histories; "one of the issues is that we're dealing with really large issues,

right?" (line 124). Dale goes on to describe some of the colonial history he refers to, "There's

been hundreds of years of colonization and missteps by the government, including the school

systems, in trying to work with families, and I think that, um, you have to have an understanding

of that" (line 178). Speaking specifically about the school system, Dale explains:

> Well I think that the First Nations folks and education systems in Canada haven't been
>
> that great, like when we talk about that, or even when we're working currently in the
>
> school system, I think we need to recognize the role Residential Schools have played, the
>
> inter-generational effects, the legacy of, um, you know First Nations young people being
>
> taken from their families, and you know, trying to get the Indian out of the child, and
>
> change their culture, and even their looks, to assimilate them into Canadian society. (line
>
> 46)

Dale then describes the intergenerational effects experienced by First Nations youth who are in

school today:

> I think it has a great effect on youth and families today, I mean, we know that residential
>
> schools are a recent thing as well, they didn't only happen hundreds and hundreds of
>
> years ago, but there are some that are more recent. (line 59)

Furthermore, Dale explains, "Um, so I think you know the intergenerational effects, so you

know if maybe your parents didn't go to residential schools but maybe your grandparents did,

and that definitely can have an effect on, you know, what's happening today" (line 64). Dale

expands on the effects on families that he has witnessed, saying, "you know breaking those

family ties I think is something that has had a great impact on First Nations people and

communities" (line 61). He also says:

I think that that can carry down, in terms of you know, attendance, whether or not folks

are encouraged to go to school, or see that real connection with the school, and I think

that that has had a negative impact. (line 82)

Reflecting on his role as a school social worker, working with First Nations youth and families,

Dale says:

So we're dealing with a lot of systemic issues, so how do we, how does that have an

impact at the individual level when we're called in to work with students and families.

You know, and what does that really look like at that level?

Dale describes how he works towards recognizing the systemic issues that impact students' lives,

and how he supports First Nations youth through his role as school social worker. First, he talks

about the role of becoming an ally:

I think becoming an ally involves, um, an understanding of the issues of affected

communities, um, I see it as kind of working in conjunction with those communities.

Kind of walking side-by-side with a common goal, so it's not about me coming in as the

expert, and being *I'm the expert, listen to what I say, do what I say*, I don't think that's

becoming an ally, it's working together. (line 132)

However, thinking about whether or not becoming an ally is necessarily a part of being a school

social worker, Dale is uncertain; "yes and no. Yes in the idea that I think it should be, no in that I

don't really know how many school social workers consider themselves allies or think about the

relationship in that way" (line 140)

Dale then describes several barriers he has witnessed while trying to support First

Nations youth and families. First, he explains some relational barriers between social workers,

and the desires of individual school administrators:

> There's a disconnect between social workers and even in the schools, right? And even
>
> school-to-school, it's kind of based on the principal of the school, and how they want to
>
> run things. So it all really comes down to that. Um, so even if as a school social worker
>
> you wanted to do something, but, and the principal doesn't want to, typically you don't.
>
> (line 91)

Administration at a school can really impact the support he can offer to students as a school
social worker:

> It comes down to how the principal wants to do things at the school. So sometimes
>
> there's schools that are really open and want to try new things, and really are working,
>
> you know, to work with the First Nations students, and then there's some that don't
>
> really. (line 223)

Another barrier that Dale describes, is a misunderstanding by other educational professionals of
how to use "culture" in an appropriate way to support students:

> The school division has done over the years, as have many places, has tried to increase
>
> people's knowledge, people's cultural knowledge, or cultural sensitivity around working
>
> with other people, you know not just Aboriginal peoples, but, you know, that's kind of
>
> one of the big ones. Um, but I think there's still a lack of understanding.

First he describes a situation of exclusion of a meaningful cultural tradition; "for example you're
not really allowed to smudge in most schools, right? So that's kind of a challenge there." He then
describes witnessing attempts at cultural inclusion that can fall short of being meaningful:

> I think another challenge is that sometimes what they think, sometimes folks think
>
> they're trying to incorporate culture, or be open to it, but really the only thing they're

wanting to do with the youth is make dream-catchers, right? So, (laughs), we need to

move beyond that, right?

Dale also comments on his experience with other professionals who are quick to prescribe what

they believe to be "cultural interventions", without getting an understanding of the student and

their personal culture first. He gives an example of a discussion with another professional who

was seeking his advice on how to support a First Nations student. In speaking with this

individual he says:

> You know one of the questions I had was, you know, are they connected to a community,
>
> like connected to a First Nations, or an Aboriginal community? Um, and they weren't
>
> sure, so for me that's something I would kind of investigate more.

He goes on to say:

> Sometimes I think that they just see an Aboriginal person but they don't really get into it
>
> or know much, and all of a sudden everyone just thinks oh they need cultural support and
>
> cultural interventions, and I don't know if that's necessarily the case most of the time.
>
> (line 278)

Instead, Dale approaches working with First Nations youth from the perspective of an ally,

describing this role as "having an understanding of the issues, but recognizing that the First

Nations families and students are the experts of their lives" (line 162). Furthermore, Dale

explains:

> I think that as social workers, one of the defining aspects of our profession is social
>
> justice, right? So when we're talking about social justice we need to have an
>
> understanding of the issues, but, not step in and take them over. (line 147)

And lastly, Dale describes the apprehension some families can have about working with a social

worker, which can make providing a supportive relationship challenging. Dale admits that "as

social workers we have a pretty bad history as a profession in terms of working with indigenous

peoples in Canada" (line 198), that needs to be recognized by social workers. Dale explains how

just the term *social worker* can cause uneasiness:

> I think sometimes working with families, they can be apprehensive about being involved
>
> with social workers, so when you say "*social worker*", a lot of the times they think that
>
> you work for C…Child and Family Services, so I think that can be a barrier. (line 251)

When thinking of the future, and trying to support First Nations youth and families in schools,

Dale believes more First Nations professionals represented within the schools is needed:

> So I think generally there's a lack of, um, not only First Nations but all Aboriginal people
>
> in the school system. You know, whether it be teachers or support staff or social workers,
>
> principals, um, there's definitely a lack of First Nations folks, and I think that, I think
>
> schools need to be representative of the population that they're working with. (line 319)

In addition to a greater representation of First Nations professionals, Dale notes the lack of

literature specific to the role of school social work supporting First Nations students when he

says:

> Um, most of the literature when we're talking about, you know, Aboriginal stuff in
>
> schools, is based on curriculum, as opposed to social work, um so a lot of it is based on
>
> how to incorporate stuff into the curriculum, I'm not sure schools are really doing that in
>
> the most effective way. (line 298)

Throughout Dale's reflection, he points to lack of knowledge, and lack of understanding that

hinder the support available to First Nations students; "I think that there's definitely a lot of

challenges, and really a kind of lack of understanding of First Nations reality in Canada" (line

333). Dale believes that for him, understanding of colonial histories, and intergenerational

trauma, is key to being able to provide support for First Nations youth and families.

Personal Narrative – Post-Interviews

Having no prior research experience, preparing for my first four interviews was a

daunting task. Many thoughts flew around my head. I wanted to come across as a confident

researcher, knowledgeable, patient, encouraging. Having worked a considerable amount with

youth, I had experience talking one-on-one, aiding in problem solving, being a good listener, but

this was different. I was interviewing other professionals, likely with more experience than

myself, and they were not looking to me for help, I was looking to them for help in answering

some burning questions about the role of a social worker. I felt in this case the participants

themselves held a lot of power, a lot of knowledge, and I was nervous. I thought a lot about the

four upcoming interviews, and how humble I was for them to have agreed to share their stories,

and how I wanted to express my respect and gratitude. When the time came for each interview, I

admit it was a bit of a haze. I have a hard time reflecting on how the interviews impacted me as

they were happening. While listening to and transcribing the recorded interviews, I realize I was

focused on making sure I asked the questions that were in front of me, and was concerned about

not taking up too much of their time. I feel that this resulted in fairly shallow interviews, and

missed opportunities to ask participants to expand on certain details. I regret not having been

able to draw out some of the information that I had really wanted. After transcribing the

interviews, I spent some time trying to figure out why the interviews didn't elicit the kind of

stories I had hoped for. I soon came to see that the questions I asked did not lend well to the

telling of a personal narrative, instead they elicited responses that let the participants focus

outwards on their assumptions of the experiences of their students, rather than inwards reflecting

on their own personal experiences, and lacked the depth to gather some emotional self-reflexivity of the impact social workers have on their clients.

Upon trying to restory each interview, I found some aspects of what I was trying to accomplish, but essentially comparing personal stories to the tenets of cultural safety was a difficult fit with narrative inquiry. As the first tenet of cultural safety requires knowledge of colonial history and current-day oppression, the questions that I asked each participant drew out knowledge, and not experience. Their responses were informative when comparing to cultural safety, but very challenging to restory as is the process in narrative inquiry. Re-telling their knowledge does not elicit the elements of a good story, such as Interaction, Continuity, and Place (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Questions such as "How do you use this knowledge when working with First Nations Youth" were asked, which did lend to better stories of experience, therefore some pieces were better fitted to narrative inquiry.

The second tenet of cultural safety requires self-reflexivity of non-indigenous service providers on their own histories and values, and their impact on clients. This piece could have lent quite well to a rich narrative story, however, the questions I asked about personal culture or values received fairly superficial answers, possibly due to the way I asked them, and I was not able to help them dig deeper for a more substantial response. I feel that my trepidation to ask these questions in a way that would get a more thoughtful answer, as well as the lack of willingness to offer deeply self-reflexive answers, may also be indicative of how social work in general spends much time focusing on the client, and can fail to give us the tools to critically examine ourselves, our histories, our cultures, and our values, all of which have great impact on the work we do with our clients. Furthermore, I found naming "whiteness" out loud, beyond the safety of referencing other people's words through my literature review, a challenging thing to

do. While this is a topic I feel passionate about exploring and reflecting on personally, I struggled with being able to talk about it openly within the interviews. Part of my struggle in naming and exploring whiteness and white privilege openly stems from an experience I had in one of my graduate classes. In this class, the instructor challenged us to reflect on ourselves as white social workers who are part of a culture who has benefitted from the colonization of First Nations people in Canada, and how this impacts us as social workers. This was the first time I had experienced group anger and discomfort in a class. I was very open to this self-exploration, to me, it meant discovering a path to better social work. Others in my class took it as a personal attack, the room quickly became quite hostile, and I didn't find any other classmates who shared my willingness to explore this subject. I thought of this often while composing my interview questions, and while conducting my interviews. I did not want to ask any questions that could be understood as an attack, I did not want the interviews to turn hostile, I was not prepared for that type of emotional response. Through my fear of negative response, I lost the ability to explore the topics that really interest me, and that I think are important in order to conduct meaningful social work. The responses that I got proved challenging to restory. Furthermore, I experienced a similar trepidation of a negative backlash from the participants in my research when conducting the analysis. I found myself being caught between recognizing elements in their stories that I believed to be culturally unsafe, and feeling indebted to each participant who volunteered their time and shared their experiences with me, to frame each of their stories in a positive light. I found this very challenging to rectify throughout the analysis. Furthermore, I think it needs to be recognized that participants' responses and stories are just a snapshot in time, they do not convey each individuals whole story, and whole experience. Also, their responses are subject to my interpretation for the purpose of this thesis, as well as the unique interpretation of everyone who

will read this. My hope is that my analysis and interpretation of these stories can be used to generate personal reflection, discussion, and further research.

What I have learned most from this research experience is that asking people to be self-reflexive, to explore their own relationship with colonialism and racism, and to reflect on what they bring to the social worker/client relationship is tricky, requires a lot of thought and sensitivity, and also involves risking upsetting people along the way. It has also solidified my own personal belief in the importance of self-reflexivity, and continually asking myself what I bring to each client relationship, and how my own history and values impact that relationship.

I do feel I have gathered some relevant information that can be used as a starting point into further research, while my experience has also given me much insight into what I might do differently next time.

The following chapter contains the analysis. I have tried to achieve an interweaving of relevant elements from each story, while comparing and contrasting to the tenets of cultural safety. I have also knit within the analysis elements of my own reflection, and supporting literature.

Chapter 5 - Analysis

In this chapter I have interwoven the stories of each participant with the teachings of cultural safety, and relevant literature, while critically analyzing the cultural safety within the stories told. This chapter is divided into five sections, one for each of the tenets of cultural safety followed by a section on becoming an ally. Within each section, one tenet of cultural safety is described, and examples from each narrative are compared and contrasted to the teaching. As described in the previous chapter, critical analysis was a challenge for me, and as a result required additional research on my part in order to complete this chapter. This is outlined further in the second section of this chapter. Furthermore, my own thoughts are interwoven throughout the analysis.

Cultural Safety

First Tenet

The first tenet of cultural safety is: *To educate non-indigenous service providers of the historical and colonial processes that have created the oppression that exists today for indigenous people that they provide service to* (Ramsden, 2002). As the focus of this research is on education, my desire was to look at school social workers' understanding of historical and colonial processes that have directly impacted education, the impact this has on First Nations youth today, and how their understanding shapes their work with First Nations students. As the literature explains, the history of education with respect to First Nations people in Canada has focused on assimilation (Battiste and McLean, 2005), and has been rife with abuse and other forms of maltreatment (Battiste, 1998; Milloy, 1999). The negative impact of this system has been one that spans inter-generationally, affecting families and whole communities, often resulting in fear and mistrust of schools today (Battiste and McLean, 2005; Barnes, et al. 2006; Silver et al. 2002).

Before analyzing themes of service providers knowledge of historical and colonial processes, I think it is important to first look at how the service providers in this research expressed understanding of the indigenous people they provide service to, in this case First Nations students and families. From use of terminology, to descriptions of, and beliefs about adherence to First Nations cultures, service providers must first understand who their clients are in order to provide services that are culturally safe.

I found it interesting that throughout each interview, while I consistently used the term "First Nations", participants often answered questions using the term "Aboriginal". This is important to note, as First Nations and Aboriginal are not interchangeable terms. According to the National Aboriginal Health Organization (n.d.) and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2012), the term "Aboriginal" includes all original peoples of Canada and their descendants, which consists of three groups, Indian (First Nations), Metis, and Inuit. The term should only be used when referencing all three groups together, as each group maintains "unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs" (AANDC Terminology, 2012). While the term First Nations does not have a legal definition, it is commonly used in Canada to replace the legal term "Indian", both status and non-status, as many people find this term offensive (NAHO Terminology, n.d.). Use of these terms interchangeably is therefore inaccurate, and not culturally safe. The frequent use of the term Aboriginal in response to questions about First Nations youth could stem from several causes. While trying to find information on First Nations youth and specific supports in the different Winnipeg school divisions, I found that most data and programs focused on Aboriginal youth, and Aboriginal supports or education. Therefore, as employees of Winnipeg school divisions, participants may have been using language that is most commonly used within their schools. Also, youth they

work with may not need to, or may not voluntarily disclose which Aboriginal group they belong to. However, in order to provide services that are culturally safe, understanding differences and preferences in terminology is important.

Next I want to analyze how the understandings of First Nations cultures were described through participants' stories. When referring to culture, participants often described practices, customs, or traditions. For example, Candace refers to culture through traditions and values:

> I think it's important to look at that person, and see how, or ask them about how they would define themselves, what traditions, I guess, or cultural values do they have. Is it the traditional First Nations cultures and values? Or is it not (line 66).

Here Candace does not give a detailed explanation of her understanding of First Nations cultures, but expresses her belief in the importance to not make assumptions, but rather to learn from each client, which is in-line with the teachings of cultural safety. But her response also leaves me asking several questions; first, her understanding of culture seems focused on traditions, does it therefore neglect modern expressions of culture? Second, when she says "traditional First Nations cultures and values", does this imply a belief that there is only one First Nation culture, rather than recognizing the varying cultures of each First Nation across Canada? I cannot make an assumption about the exact meaning of her response, but will use it as an opportunity to support the need for discussion on the necessity for non-First Nations workers to ensure they understand what culture means for the clients they work with, in order to provide services that are culturally safe. Dale tells a story of witnessing reliance on a narrow understanding of culture that is only traditional in scope, and lacks recognition of the diversity within and throughout First Nation cultures.

> …sometimes folks think they're trying to incorporate culture, or be open to it, but really the only thing they're wanting to do with the youth is make dream-catchers, right? So, (laughs), we need to move beyond that, right? And I mean, and I can definitely see, I can definitely recognize that, you know, doing crafts, or doing traditional crafts, um, you know, it's not really, that's not really necessarily the intervention, it's one of the tools we can use, right? It's relationship building, um, you know if folks are busy, if they're hands are busy sometimes you know, they talk about stuff when they're doing it. So it's not necessarily about that dream catcher, about making that dream catcher, but sometimes when all the school's want to focus on is making dream catchers, it's like, that can be a barrier. Right? (line 235)

The Aboriginal Nurses Association (2009) write that while culture includes beliefs, practices and values, it cannot be reduced to these three things alone. History, economy, politics, gender, religion, psychology, and biology are all inseparable from each person's experience of culture. Dale has recognized instances where professionals' understanding of culture is limited, focusing on a single practice or a symbol of a First Nations culture, neglecting the many conditions that influence individual relationships to, and experiences with, culture. When "culture" is understood generically, or only recognized in terms of visible traditions and ceremonies, cultural safety cannot be achieved. Both a broad and flexible understanding of culture must be adopted in order to meet the cultural safety needs of service recipients. In her thesis outlining the concept of cultural safety, Ramsden (2002) discusses how education of traditional Maori customs and traditions for service providers are much less necessary than education of the colonial history, and current-day experiences with oppression and racism that affect the lives of Maori service recipients. She describes Maori people as "highly diverse, colonised and urbanised people"

(2002, p. 88), who's day-to-day lives often have little incorporation of traditional customs and symbols, or as she describes them "postcard and tourist imagery" (2002, p. 88). While this is not to neglect the often very meaningful incorporation of traditions, customs, symbols and ceremonies in many people's lives, it is meant to bring to light colonialism, oppression, and racism, all of which have a greater impact on both if and how indigenous people approach and use a service that was designed by non-indigenous people. Candace's brief description of culture being traditional, and Dale's story of professionals focusing solely on dream-catchers, are two examples of narrow definitions of culture that are not representative of First Nations students' current-day experiences of culture. Jean describes another example of being part of a professional team who's consideration of culture focuses solely on a generalized understanding of First Nations traditions, lacking recognition of historical influences and modern-day expressions:

> And, um, for this little guy we ended up bringing his birth mom, in from the Reserve for this, and as well as his foster family, and his social workers and his respite workers, and everybody who was now getting him connected to his culture. And the mom, it was very interesting because the mom was raised with a Catholic background and didn't want, doesn't believe in her cultural…so it was, it wasn't really a language barrier but it was a difference in her values, where you make the assumption that connecting to culture would be helpful, but in this case, this mom who doesn't have this child in her care anymore, but obviously there's a strong connection, you know there wasn't, did not do any types of cultural connections with her children, And in fact, really did not even want to participate when she was hearing that her son was gong to Sweat, and her son had an Aboriginal name, she was, you could see that she was very frustrated, she did not believe in that. So I

guess maybe not knowing where she was coming from, and again not knowing how she

got to that point. (line 339)

As the Aboriginal Nurses Association (2009) explains that culture is inseparable from history,

they also write that individuals will both resist and redefine their culture throughout their lives.

Jean explains how trying to get this boy "connected to his culture", through sweat ceremonies

and naming ceremonies, without consideration or comprehension of historical colonial

influences that have impacted his family's evolution and expression of culture, proved very

upsetting to his mom. At the end of this story, Jean begins to reflect, *"So I guess maybe not*

knowing where she was coming from, and again not knowing how she got to that point". Not

knowing these two things resulted in providing a service that was culturally unsafe for this boy

and his mother. If the professional support system involved in this boy's life had have had a

broader definition of culture, could they have been cognizant and empathic of the cultural history

of this boy's family? Would the process have been different? And could this situation have been

approached in a way that promoted the cultural safety of both mom and child?

In this story told by Jean, she describes the boy's mom who, as far as she knew, did not

offer any cultural connections for her son. This was confusing for the professionals who felt

these connections could help this young boy. Candace made a similar observation of clients who

appeared to not be connected to their culture. In describing some youth with whom she had

worked, Candace explains, "they don't identify with that culture at all". Then again later, when

describing how she approaches work with Aboriginal people, she states that she is careful not to

make assumptions of people's cultural beliefs, as she has worked with people who have told her

"I look Metis, or I am Metis, but I don't do any of that, I don't go to the pow wows, I'm not

interested in that, my family doesn't do that". As Candace states, it is important not to make

assumptions. A question that came to me when reading through the transcripts was, whether people express an adherence to specific cultural traditions or not, is this still an expression of culture, molded by colonial influences? Jean poses a few questions related expression of culture in her narrative:

> It is also interesting to find, you find the families that want nothing to do with culture, and so what's that about? Um, you know the other piece is interesting, and you certainly have Ukrainian people who don't want to perpetuate being Ukrainian, right? So what is the difference? So I find that kind of interesting, so is it because of their upbringing? Because of how they were raised? You know, in an environment that wasn't conducive to their culture? What, like what is it about that? (line 283)

Jean asks some important questions here that require understanding in order to address historical racism and oppression that have been experienced by many First Nations people, and the varied influences on current day relationships to culture. It is also necessary to explore how adherence or non-adherence to culture for First Nations people is or is not different than adherence or non-adherence to other cultures, such as Ukrainian, in Jean's example. While Jean questions whether non-adherence to any culture may stem from similar experiences, cultural safety explicitly outlines the need for professionals working with indigenous people to have a deep understanding of historical and current colonial processes that have impacted the lives of those they work with. In working with First Nations families, consideration must be made of the deliberate attempts by the Canadian government, often through the process of education, to eradicate many First Nations cultures, and enforce assimilation into dominant Canadian culture (Milloy, 1999). In addition, acknowledgement of systemic and inter-personal racism and oppression that is experienced by many First Nations people today should be recognized as having an impact on

ones expression of culture.

The residential school system in Canada represents one of the most harmful legacies of colonialism and oppression created by non-First Nations people. Next, the understanding of the residential school system, and how it can impact many students today, is explored through participants' narratives.

All four narratives made reference to the residential school system, and demonstrated awareness as to how the intergenerational trauma from that system, passed down through families, may impact some students today. Dale describes his understanding of how Residential Schools impact not only individuals and families, but whole communities, and acknowledges that these experiences can be quite recent, not just 100 years ago:

> Uh, I think it has a great effect on youth and families today, I mean, we know that residential schools are a recent thing as well, they didn't only happen hundreds and hundreds of years ago, but there are some that are more recent, you know breaking those families ties I think is something that has had a great impact on First Nations people and communities, as well as, you know, everyone else, right? So we know that that didn't exist, there were many folks involved in that. Um, so I think you know the intergenerational effects, so you know if maybe your parents didn't go to Residential schools but maybe your grandparents did, and that definitely can have an effect on, you know, what's happening today. Um so I think that there's definitely a lot of trauma from that. (line 59)

Pieces of both Dale and Jean's stories describe their awareness of the negative impact residential schools had on families, and how this breakdown of family and community has lasting effects on youth today:

I think the breaking down of the family ties definitely has an impact, you know even if

you weren't necessarily abused in the schools, I think that that disconnect, trying to break

that connection with people and their families and communities is definitely what we're

seeing today, and I think that a lot of folks have a mistrust of the education system

because of that. (Dale, line 71)

Uh, well I think that the uh, that I think our First Nations People have, are still being

affected, by those poor little young people that were taken away to go to residential

schools. And the huge impact that had on how, then those children were raised in a

system that wasn't a family oriented system, so it broke families apart, it didn't allow for

role-modeling. (Jean, line 139)

Both of these statements reflect an awareness of a colonial system that was destructive to many

First Nations people, and how the effects of this system continue to impact families today.

Furthermore, Dale makes the connection between experiences with residential schools and

mistrust of the school system today.

Erin and Jean tell of their beliefs that addiction, as a form of coping with trauma, is one

of the serious results of residential school experiences, being passed on inter-generationally:

Um, I think the addiction issue, is generational, and um, I think a lot of people who were

abused, and I don't believe for one minute that there wasn't a huge population that were

sexually abused because you, look at the roman catholic church and all the secrets and

how they dealt with things and managed things, um, why wouldn't they, and why

wouldn't they attract those kind of people. But I think, even if it was the grandfather or

the father that was in residential schools, the way it's impacted is these people dealt with

things by numbing themselves with different types of um, drugs or alcohol. And so, what

begins to happen is, is that generational abuse continues, and people have more of a

relationship with alcohol or medication. (Erin, line 158)

…What it (residential schools) allowed for was future generations then to kind of see the

trauma effect that that has had, and people deal with trauma through all kinds of things,

through alcohol abuse, and drug abuse, and violence. And I think those things are a clear

impact on people's experiences, which is filtered down through the generations. (Jean,

line 143)

While both Erin and Jean recognize some of the ways that people cope with trauma, it is

important to be aware of how systems such as education, continue to perpetuate the causes of

trauma. Traumatic experiences in school are maintained when education continues to validate

only western, non-First Nations values, histories, and ways of knowing, and deny both

intergenerational traumas and oppression that exists today. Furthermore, when systems focus

solely on the effect of trauma (addiction), and don't work to remove the cause (oppression,

racism, traumatic school experiences), culturally safe school environments cannot be achieved.

Erin goes on to explain how she believes that claiming residential school trauma is often used as

an excuse for what she deems inappropriate behavior. She explains her beliefs about Chiefs who

are "driving 2 or 3 SUV's and a condo in Phoenix", and then says "so that's an issue for me,

around Aboriginal spending and accountability, and *Oh it's because I went to residential school*.

I'm sorry, I think I have a balance in the way I see it, like you have to be accountable if you if

you're going to be a leader". Erin's statement does not validate the very real traumas caused by

residential schools, and the lasting effects for many people and communities today. It also makes

some serious western-positioned judgments about leadership and accountability. Beliefs such as

this, born out of misinformation or misunderstanding, reinforce the necessity of education and

understanding of history and colonialism, as expressed through the first tenet of cultural safety.

When asked if intergenerational trauma caused by the residential school system was

something that was acknowledged by the schools when working with youth, Jean said:

> Uh, no. I don't think so. I think that maybe generally they (schools) might have attended
>
> a workshop on what that might look like, but does that really affect that student in that
>
> class? I don't think so. I think that it's glossed over. (line 154)

When I asked Jean to explain why she felt that intergenerational trauma was not often considered

when working with individual youth, she felt that the focus was often on the result, missing the

cause.

> Um, I think we're too focused on the results of the trauma, then, you know so we're too
>
> focused on the drug abuse, the sniffing, the violence, you know, we're trying to manage
>
> that, and unfortunately we've not addressed it. (line 432)

Not recognizing the historical and present causes of trauma contributes to educational spaces that

are culturally unsafe for First Nations students. When talking about residential schools, Candace

makes a comparison to the trauma she has witnessed in children who come from rural

communities or reserves, and the expectations of them to fit into urban Winnipeg schools. She

explains:

> so we see kids who are maybe brought into care and placed in Winnipeg, and they're
>
> kind of, if they're from one of their home communities, or reserves, and they're placed in
>
> Winnipeg and just kind of expected to fit in… even though a reserve is not even
>
> comparable to what the lives they used to live, the shock that you see in the kid , even

just living in Winnipeg with all these cars, and fitting into this structure of school setting,

you can see that that's, that's difficult. (line 85)

She believes that trauma from residential schools still exists today, which manifests through

parental fear of the educations system, and a lack of education being made a priority by some

families. She says "parents are scared of schools, of teachers, it's (school) not a priority probably

because of fear, passed on from generation to generation, so ya, there's definitely a trickle

effect". Candace demonstrates an awareness of intergenerational trauma that exists for many

students today, but I wondered if her assumption that education is not being made a priority,

even if she believes it is due to intergenerational trauma, could potentially be a very culturally

unsafe assumption. This point will be explored further in the following section on self-reflexivity

of personal values.

While all four participants described their own awareness of the effects of

intergenerational trauma, they did not necessarily feel that this understanding was relevant, or

being used by school social workers to support youth in the schools today. When Dale explained

his belief in taking historical colonial circumstances into consideration when working with First

Nations families, I asked him if this was something he did on his own, or something that he was

encouraged to do by the school system he worked for. He explained that it was an individual

choice, and while some might do so also, others focused simply on the current presiding

response to trauma.

I'd say it was more of an individual thing, I don't know if it's necessarily a system wide

thing, there's obviously a lot of research work done, looking at residential schools,

looking at colonization, how does that affect um, the work that we do as social workers,

but also recognizing that as social workers we have a pretty bad history as a profession in

terms of working with indigenous peoples in Canada. Um, you know? So…so It's

interesting, I would say definitely some folks would definitely consider that, and some

folks who say we don't really need to think of that, we just need to kind of look at the

issue. (line 195)

When Candace was asked if she believed creating a culturally safe school environment was part

of the role of a school social worker, she responded:

I don't know if school social workers do that, um, I think they try to encourage families

in general to feel comfortable in the school and safe, but I don't think it's a priority for

school social workers to take into consideration the history of Aboriginal people, the

residential schools, the trauma that they've experienced, and use that, use the history to

help families today, I don't think that's happening, I haven't seen that happening, that's

not a priority for me…that's not the direction that I'm getting from administration, so, I

don't think they are. I don't think that's something that is regularly talked about or

discussed, or direction is given to use, to do that. (line 167)

When asked if she personally felt that working towards cultural safety could benefit the First

Nations youth and families she works with, Candace replied:

I think definitely that taking into consideration, that the history and the culture, with any

kind of, with any culture would be beneficial, um, I think maybe that's not happening

because … when teachers or principals come with need, it's not, they don't even define it

as a cultural need or, it's more um, well, surface things I guess, depression, anxious, can't

sit still…(line 180)

Candace explains here her belief that acknowledging the different cultures of all students can be

beneficial to school social work. In considering culture, it is important to be aware of the unique

history in Canada between First Nations and white westerners, and the colonialism and

oppression that has been a part of this relationship, executed namely through systems such as the

formal education system. As this relationship is so unique, and the effects of it are unique,

strategies to create system changes and facilitate better support for First Nations students must

adopt a model such as cultural safety that specifically addresses historical relationships and

resulting current-day power imbalances.

Beyond residential schools, colonialism that is inherent in the school system today was

also referenced. Battiste and McLean (2005) explain that colonialism manifests through an

education system that was created by western settlers, and continues to reinforce western culture,

values, knowledge, and ways of learning. Education was described throughout the interviews as

adhering to "western culture" (Candace), being a "middle class profession"(Erin), and

propagating "middle class values in the classroom" (Jean). Erin talks about teachers who

predominantly belong to middle class culture, and are not taught how to work with Aboriginal

students whose culture is different from their own:

> There's lots of teachers who've had actually no exposure, like teaching is a middles class
>
> profession. And they're teaching at least a third of the kids classrooms in (school area)
>
> and more likely 90 percent in the core, are Aboriginals, and there's no training that says
>
> *this is how you relate to them in terms of their culture*. (line 301)

As outlined above, culture remains a tricky thing to both understand and communicate about.

Here Erin explains her perception of the lack of education many service providers, in this case

teachers, receive about the culture of many of their clients/students. While stating there is no

training for teachers, she seems to be suggesting that training would be beneficial. Included

within any training or education on Aboriginal culture, it should be important to distinguish, as

discussed above, that the term "Aboriginal" encompasses the three groups of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit. As such, it must be recognized that these three cultural groups are unique and distinct from one another, as well as having wide variation within each group, therefore any training should acknowledge there is no one way to relate to all Aboriginal people that would be respectful and safe in terms of their personal culture. Furthermore, in-line with the teachings of cultural safety, education on First Nations cultures would have to include the impact of colonialism and oppression, both historic and present-day. Erin does not express whether or not she feels social workers receive adequate training in this area. As professionals providing a service within the school system, school social workers should be equally educated on how to provide services to First Nations youth and families that are culturally safe.

It is evident from the interviews that all four school social workers have an initial awareness of historical and colonial processes that impact the educational experiences of youth today, but this knowledge is not understood as necessary in order to fulfill the role of school social worker. Ongoing education and consideration of theses processes are not always a personal priority within their work, or an explicit priority within school systems. Additionally, some understandings drawn from the interviews demonstrate beliefs and positions that are culturally unsafe. As a profession concerned with the successful school experience for students, further education and understanding of colonial processes within the education system which impact First Nations youth today could greatly strengthen this role, and lead to services that are culturally safe for First Nations students and families.

Next, we will look at the second tenet of cultural safety, which shifts the focus from outwards, understanding the experiences of others, to inwards, reflecting on our own histories and values.

Second Tenet

The second tenet of cultural safety is: *To teach service providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work* (Ramsden, 2002).

A common reality for many social workers in Winnipeg is being white, and working with non-white clients. In the examination of personal realities and the values that social workers bring to their work, I believe that naming and analyzing whiteness is integral on the path towards building culturally safe relationships with non-white clients. The role of social worker itself brings a level of power to any worker/client relationship. As the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics outlines, social workers need to use the power they hold responsibly, ensuring that it supports "the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice" (p.6, CASW, 2005). The power imbalance between worker and client can be even greater when the worker is white, and the client is First Nations. Acknowledging the power held by white social workers in their working relationships requires exploration. However, I admit that I found this a very challenging task personally, both in conducting and then analyzing this research, and I noticed this was a challenge for the participants as well. In this section of analysis, I am going to focus on whiteness, drawing from literature on white racial identity to explore both my own challenges and the challenges I found within participants narratives.

Although my intentions from the beginning were to name and critically analyze the impact being white has on a cross-cultural therapeutic relationship, I did not set-up the research in a way that facilitated achieving this goal. One of the criteria for participation in this research was that the social workers be non-First Nations, but as noted in the Methodology chapter, the criteria for participation was not described as "white". Although literature on cultural safety namely explores the relationship between non-indigenous service providers and indigenous service recipients, the understanding of non-indigenous is often "white". However, I did not use

the description "white" in my call for participants. There are three reasons that I used the description "non-First Nations" instead. First, non-indigenous is the most common terminology used within the writing on cultural safety, and as I wanted to focus more specifically on the educational experiences of First Nations youth, I chose the term non-First Nations. Secondly, I was uncertain of how well acknowledged research on whiteness is in social work education, and I feared that without context, my call for participants might appear racist, seeking only the input of white professionals. And thirdly, while I personally feel passionate about understanding whiteness, and how being white impacts the work I do as a social worker, I had a hard time naming it in both my call for participants, and in my research questions. I was worried that using the term "whiteness" might make people defensive, and ultimately deter them from participation in the research. Furthermore, as the call for participants stated "non-First Nations", the research questions also reflected this terminology. Within the interviews, if a participant called themselves white, I was able to question them further on this topic. However, the information specifically naming whiteness was limited. Another challenge I experienced was one participant who did use the term "white", but after reading their restorying, asked me to remove all instances of the word "white", leaving me with even less data to call upon during analysis. Frankenberg (1993) states that naming "whiteness" is essential in bringing forth visibility to the power and privilege of white racism that can be so easily hidden under the guise of normativity. When the word "white" is removed from data, visible and open discussion on the use and meaning of the term becomes even more challenging.

Furthermore, during initial analysis, due to my feelings of indebtedness to each participant for having offered their time and stories of experience for the purpose of my research, I found being critical of pieces of their stories emotionally difficult. I even found myself leaving

out pieces of their stories that I found particularly culturally unsafe, in order to protect them,

which caused even more personal discomfort. These challenges eventually led to a greater belief

in the necessity of exploring whiteness, what it means to be white, and the impact this has on

research that explores white/ First Nations relationships, and front line work with First Nations

clients. In order to accomplish this through my analysis, I needed to further my research and

understanding of whiteness. This brought me to the writings of Helms (1993), who outlines

stages of White racial identity development. Learning about these stages has helped me to better

reflect on how whiteness was discussed and understood within the narratives, and also my own

apprehension in both naming it and encouraging further exploration of it from the participants.

Helms (1993) writes:

> A basic assumption of my model of white racial identity development is that white people
>
> are born the benefactors and beneficiaries of white racism, although they may not be
>
> aware of the bequest…I argue that whites must become consciously aware of the ways in
>
> which racism works to their advantage and make a deliberate effort to abandon it in favor
>
> of positive nonracist definitions of whiteness. (p. 241)

Helms' argument here fits well with this second tenet of cultural safety, *to teach service*

providers to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work (Ramsden,

2002). In order to bring awareness to the ways in which white social workers benefit from

racism, and perpetuate it through the unexamined values and assumptions that guide their

personal work, Helms' stages of White racial identity development can offer some insight into

the continuum of racial identity that impact cross-cultural therapeutic relationships. Below is an

overview of these six stages:

1. Contact – the least cognitively mature stage, where white people lack awareness of institutional racism, and the sociopolitical implications of race, as well as their own white privilege.

2. Disintegration – consciousness of racism emerges, comforts of ignorance are replaced by discomforts of guilt. May attempt to relieve guilt through denial of severity of racism and white privilege, or avoidance of the topic of racism.

3. Reintegration – pressure from other whites to maintain status quo of racism, may blame people of colour for causing racism

4. Pseudo-Independent – begin to associate more with people of colour, and attempt to abandon beliefs of white superiority while still unintentionally perpetuating racism. May believe that in order to combat racism, people should be helped to be more like white people.

5. Immersion/Emersion – discomfort with racist definitions of whiteness, search for positive, nonracist identifications of whiteness. May look for white antiracist role models, and attempt to reeducate other whites.

6. Autonomy – The final, and most cognitively mature stage, where whites relinquish the personal benefits of racism, and adopt a positive, nonracist white identification. At this stage, becoming an ally to non-whites is easier due to authentic antiracist behaviors. This stage is also identified by a commitment to ongoing education and reflection of racial matters. (Helms, 1993)

Stories within participants narratives that either examine, or neglects to examine their own culture and values, will be analyzed against these six stages put forth by Helms.

Helms (1993) also writes:

If the researcher is unable to examine the effects of her or his own racial development on

her or his research activities, then the researcher risks contributing to the existing body of

racially oppressive literature, rather than offering illuminating scholarship (p. 242).

My desire for this research is that it does not fit in the above category described by Helms. In

addition to analyzing participant narratives with respect to White racial identity, I reflect on my

own whiteness, the difficulties I had in naming whiteness within the research, my lenience

towards protecting the white identities of the participants in this research, and how I was

challenged to more thoroughly examine the theme of whiteness.

In my interview with Candace, she spoke of her first position as a social worker being in

an Aboriginal agency, where she felt that others were making assumptions about her. She felt

that clients were thinking, "*oh, here comes the white girl, coming to take our kids away*", while

co-workers also felt that a white woman should not be working with their people. She expressed

feelings of discomfort, stating that it was hard for her, and likely other white social workers, to

connect with Aboriginal clients, and coworkers:

I think most social workers, working with First Nations, don't understand, they haven't

lived through the things that these families have gone through… so, we learnt about it in

school, and we read about it, we hear about it, but we don't truly know what that's like.

(line 217)

Here Candace tells a story of whiteness in relation to First Nations experiences, acknowledging

different histories, and different realities. Cultural safety asks of service providers to

acknowledge these differences, while recognizing that they too are bearers of culture, shaped by

colonial histories, who now bear the responsibility to challenge the and unequal power relations

that have resulted (NAHO, 2006). Brascoupe and Waters (2009) also write about the need for

"white professionals in particular, to understand themselves and their own race and culture, rather than learning about their clients' races and cultures. This element of self-knowledge is integral to cultural safety and any possible redefinition of power relations" (p.15). When we can understand our own positioning, we can become more sensitive in our interactions with others who may have apprehensions towards us.

        After hearing Candace's story of feeling discriminated against, I asked her: Have you thought about what it means to be white? Or, thought about your own whiteness? Candace explains:

> No, I haven't, I'm not really strongly tied to any of my historic roots so, I am a mix of things, of European, I think, things, I never really thought, ya, in terms of my, historic culture, or identity, I've never really explored that. (line 242)

Candace tells the story above about being aware of her own whiteness when in a work situation where she was a minority. However, she then says that she has not really explored what being white, or her own culture, means to her. As the teachings of cultural safety necessitate the acknowledgement of cultural origins, beliefs, and practices (Kirkham, et al., 2002), exploration of what Candace describes as historic culture or identity becomes important in knowing yourself as a service provider. Furthermore, the implications of being white are not just historical, but have a very real and current impact on working relationships today. In other areas of her narrative, Candace describes situations where self-reflection could have strengthened her understanding of differences between herself and clients. Throughout her narrative, Candace spoke of a difference in valuing education between First Nations families and herself. She explains:

they don't understand the value of it, or maybe they're scared, or they're not comfortable

with it, but it definitely, definitely impacts their attendance… I think parents, maybe

didn't have the chance to be educated, they don't understand the importance of that, or

like I said, maybe they're scared or uncomfortable with it, but they're not passing that

value on to their children, it's not a priority in their lives. (line 151)

While this phrase is focused on her perception of families' understanding or priority of

education, pieces of what she is saying can be related to several of stages within Helms' model

of white racial identity development. Although Candace recognizes some historical causes of

fear of education, she attributes low attendance of First Nations youth to a lack of understanding

of the value of education, rather than on a system that has not been culturally safe and inclusive

of First Nations values. Helms' third and fourth stages of white racial identity development

describe how in these mid-stages of development white people may blame people of colour for

causing racism, or believe that to combat racism, people of colour should be helped to be more

like white people. While Candace attributes a lack of understanding of the value of education for

the lower attendance rates of many First Nations students, she also admits "they don't

understand, I think sometimes, the importance of education, which in turn then, I don't

understand why they don't understand that, right?". The teachings of cultural safety ask service

providers to go beyond simply recognizing a difference in values, by exploring power, prejudice,

and attitudes that lead to these differences (Ramsden, 2002, The Aboriginal Nurses Association

of Canada, 2009). As literature outlined previously explains, the education system in Canada was

created by white middle class people, and perpetuates white, middle class values through its

structure and curriculum. First Nations students have expressed feelings of alienation in a system

that is not reflective of who they are (Battiste & McLean, 2005; Silver et al., 2002). This is not a

difference between valuing education and not, it is a difference in the guiding values that shape

the system to the benefit of white, western, middle class students, and to the detriment of First

Nations students. Understanding the meaning of this difference in values requires of white

service providers to recognize how their own values are reflected almost invisibly within the

education system, and the impact this has on First Nations clients whose values are criticized,

demeaned, misunderstood, or simply denied within this system. After the above statement,

Candace recognizes the negativity of her thoughts, and states "it's so important to be self-aware

so you don't have those thoughts", demonstrating that even when you believe in being self-

aware, challenging your own thought patterns can be difficult.

Candace describes another personal narrative she experiences while working with First

Nations people, that she admits is unhelpful, but nonetheless present:

> I do find myself thinking you know, it's time to move on, you know our society has
>
> changed, the world has changed, things like this have happened elsewhere, like
>
> sometimes, and I'm not proud of this, I don't think that it's helpful, but sometimes it's
>
> like, okay, let's move on, what are we going to do to move on, you're stuck, let's move
>
> on. (line 295)

Although she recognizes these thoughts as unhelpful, they are still part of her thought process

when working with First Nations families. Her thoughts reflect a lack of comprehension of

colonialism, oppression, and racism that still exist today, and places blame and onus for societal

change on First Nations people. There is a lack of reflection of the responsibility white culture

has in relinquishing the privileges of white racism in order to balance power differentials. This is

also reflective of Helms' (1993) third stage of white identity development, Reintegration,

whereby a white person blames a person of colour for the racism they experience.

Candace tells of a school where Aboriginal culture is incorporated within the school day,

yet a concern she has heard from other clinicians is how the time spent on cultural activities,

such as smudging and sharing circles, takes away from academic learning in a population who is

already academically behind. Candace says "it's hard, I've seen the value of the circles, of the

smudging, so it's hard to balance, I think it's hard to find that balance where you can incorporate

culture, but um, also prioritize education". Again, while Candace is trying to recognize the

benefits of incorporating Aboriginal culture into mainstream education structure, she highlights a

common situation where western academic learning is attributed more value than cultural

learning. Although academic learning is not named as a western or white value, instead it is

understood as a universal value, and the incorporation of another culture should only be done if

the interference with academics can be balanced. This belief is reflective of Helms' fourth stage

of white racial identity development, where white people believe the best way to help non-whites

is to help them become more like whites. Concern for academic learning above cultural learning

demonstrates a desire for the children at this school to be more like white children. In order to

support these children in a way that is culturally safe, non-First Nations service providers need to

recognize how the value placed on academic learning over other forms of learning within the

school system is a white, western value, and may not reflect the beliefs and values of other

cultures within the school.

In sharing her experiences working with First Nations people, Candace describes some

challenges in understanding the impact colonial processes in Canada have had on them, as

"they're (white social workers) not a part of that history". This is an important statement towards

understanding white culture, and our place with respect to First Nations culture. While white

social workers have not experienced the negative impact of the history of colonialism in this

country, we have, however, experienced this history as the beneficiaries of it. As one of the main assumptions of Helms' (1993) white racial identity development theory postulates, "white people are born the benefactors and beneficiaries of white racism" (p.241), even if they are unaware of their position. Cultural safety requires that we reflect on our own cultural positioning, specifically with respect to power imbalances that have resulted from colonialism. Sherene Razack (1998, cited in Gunew, 2007) asks us to consider our own experiences through this question: "We may know how colonization changed Aboriginal people, but do we know how it changed, and continues to change white people?" (p.143).

In Erin's narrative, she reflects on what it has been like for her to work with First Nations families. She says that often when she meets First Nations families, they are "fairly intimidated" until they get to know her. She goes on to say "I've always enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed working with First Nations families. At times I would rather work with them than middle class professionals" She explains that she enjoys working with First Nations families because of "their humility, their enjoyment of one another, um, even in the midst of addictions there is a huge sense of caring and connectedness and enjoyment of one-another" (line 196). While asking Erin to reflect on her own experiences, her response is focused on the characteristics that she commonly enjoys in the clients she is working with. She explains that "putting them at ease is probably the most important thing to do", and offers the following description of how she accomplishes this;

> I give them the sense mostly of how long I've been working with Aboriginal families,
> and that I worked in the core for a long time, so they don't see me as an upper middle
> class female social worker that wants to tell them what to do. (line 210)

As social workers, we need to recognize the power that we hold in any client relationship, but

even more so in cross-cultural relationships between white workers and First Nations clients. The power that is held due to privileges of being white, the dominant culture whose values most often shape the work we do, must be considered. Furthermore, many First Nations families have endured frighteningly powerless relationships with social work professionals through apprehension of children. In order to minimize this power imbalance, it needs to first be acknowledged. Erin explains that giving a sense of her experience working with Aboriginal clients helps new clients feel more at ease with her, but does not explain how this experience has shaped or changed how she approaches working with families. She adds: "Having their back, having a sense of their worth, um, having a knowledge of what's important in their family, uh, important in their culture" are all key in developing positive supportive relationships. What is still lacking is a sense of personal changes or self-reflections she makes about her own values and experiences when working with First Nations families. Cultural safety also explains that only First Nations clients can decide when workers are being culturally safe or not (Ramsden, 2002). Erin does not explain whether clients have told her that they don't see her as "*an upper middle class female social worker that wants to tell them what to do",* or whether this is her own assumption.

Later in her narrative Erin tells about some difficulties she has faced working with social workers from Child and Family Services (CFS). She feels as though her input and experience are not validated when it comes to support plans for First Nations students.

I don't like that sense that you know *I'm the CFS worker and I'm telling you that that's not good enough…* And for them I would just say *I was good enough yesterday, now all of a sudden I'm not*? (line 246)

Erin seems to be talking about a difference in values here, her own versus those of CFS workers who may have more power and control in the lives of students who are in their care. This is an interesting situation where Erin finds herself on the less powerful side of the scale, and is uncomfortable with this position. However, this example depicts feelings of powerlessness and dismissal of her experiences in a professional setting, her personal life and values are not being questioned, as is the case for so many First Nations families who are trying to navigate the educational system. This is an interesting story whereby an opportunity exists for Erin to reflect on why what she is bringing to this professional relationship is no longer being accepted as enough. Is it a difference in values? In experience? In culture? Without self-reflection, questions like these are unlikely to be answered.

In Jean's narrative, she describes a story about her first experience working as a social worker on a reserve, and the decision she made regarding the future of a young girl. In this story, Jean tells of her own lack of exposure, and lack of understanding of a different value set, and a different way of living, which lead her to make a decision about the future of a young girl who's culture was different from her own; "it was a different type of family experience than what I was, than what my upbringing was". Reflecting on this early experience, she acknowledges the values and experiences that we bring to our work, saying "I think that you certainly have, you bring your own values to the table". Being able to reflect in this manner as to how her own un-examined values led to a decision that may or may not have had the client's best interest in mind, is a telling example of the importance of self-reflection. Being able to look back on experiences and learn from them, can lead to more culturally safe practices in future work.

When asked how she approaches working with First Nations clients, Jean describes how aspects of her own family background have some similarities with some of the families she works with, and she uses these similarities as a way to connect with them.

I feel like it's easy for me to connect, um, my own family's background is hunting and fishing and so I, that's a lifestyle that I don't have any issues with, so it's easy for me to, I've brought moose meat to a family that missed you know, having wild meat, because I had some. (Line 263)

In this statement Jean describes her comfort in working with First Nations families, but does not explore how comfortable or not they feel with her. While similarities may be used to create connections, Jean, like Erin above, does not comment on how the power she holds as a white social worker influences the relationships she has with First Nations families. Sue and Sue (1990, p. 114) write that "white people do benefit from the dominant-subordinant relationship evident in our society. It is this factor that whites need to confront in an open and honest manner." One of the benefits that both Jean and Erin speak of is their own sense of comfort and ease in working with First Nations students and families. Their sense of comfort may be the result of the power they bring to that relationship. Families, understanding the power of a social worker, may be more compliant, and less likely to voice confidently their needs or discomforts. Helms' (1993) fourth stage of white identity development, Pseudo-Independence, describes a white person who tries to abandon beliefs of white superiority, while seeking more interaction with people of colour. The good intentions of this stage can be negated by unintentionally perpetuating white racism by means of unacknowledged power imbalances. Furthermore, this stage is characterized by attempting to "help" people of colour, rather than change the beliefs of white people. Cultural safety calls for individual reflection and recognition of the power non-First Nations service

providers hold within their relationships with First Nations service recipients, and how this power can further oppress their clients.

(http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/courses/csafety/mod3/glossary.htm)

In Jean's narrative she tells a story about a boy who challenges her by telling her she can't possibly understand him, as she has not experienced "crazy" like he has. She admits that an extreme difference in life experiences can be a barrier in understanding the needs of some students she works with. She says "book knowledge is one thing, and, but seeing the day to day experiences…". Recognizing differences in life histories and experiences is key to being able to conduct culturally safe social work. Jean goes on to say "I think that that's not any different from working with any other families, but maybe there's a different layer there" (line 305). This different layer that Jean alludes to, but cannot name, could be the history in Canada between First Nations and non-First Nation people that has manifested in drastic power imbalances that still exist today. Cultural safety is unique from other models of cross-cultural work in that it requires making visible these power imbalances that have been entrenched over time, and to have non-First Nations service providers understand their own power in relationships with First Nations clients (The Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2009; NAHO, 2009) . Doutrich et al. (2012) state that self-reflection is foundational in being able to "understand power differentials or to know deeply one's own story" (p.145), in order to provide services that are culturally safe.

When asked what it's like for him to work with First Nations students, Dale admits there are challenges, which are mostly due to the fact that the role of school social work is to intervene when a problem already exists. However, he says "but personally, I think it's fine for me", he goes on to say:

One of the issues is that we're dealing with really large issues, right? So we're dealing

with a lot of systemic issues, so how do we, how does that have an impact at the

individual level when we're called in to work with students and families? (line 124)

Dale demonstrates a keen awareness of macro issues that impact the lives of the clients he works

with, but when asked to reflect personally on his own experiences, his responses revert back to

systemic issues. Later in the interview, Dale is asked a similar question, "Can you tell me how

you approach working with First Nations students?". Again, his response remains very focused

on the macro, neglecting the opportunity to reflect inwards:

I think with First Nations families, as with all families, you need to have an open mind,

um, and I think you need to recognize that when you're working with First Nations folks

and other Aboriginal peoples that um, there is a whole colonial history there, right? (line

175)

His statement is in line with the first tenet of cultural safety, but while each tenet is important on

it's own, all four need consideration. As has been seen from each of the narratives, the element

of self-reflection was difficult to draw out through the interviews. Furthermore, naming

whiteness, and understanding the power and privilege it brings in social work relationships with

First Nations clients is nearly non-existent within the narratives. Different comments reflect

different stages of white racial identity development, demonstrating that further exploration of

the need for self-knowing and finding positive definitions of white identity are required.

The final theme I would like to discuss in relation to the second tenet of cultural safety is feelings

of power and powerlessness within the role of school social worker. Already discussed under this

heading has been how inherent within the role of social worker is power over their client.

Cultural safety requires exploration of this power imbalance, and the Canadian Association of

Social Workers states the need for social workers to, "strive to use the power and authority vested in them as professionals in responsible ways that serve the needs of clients and the promotion of social justice" (p.6, CASW, 2005). Something brought forward by each of the participants were stories that expressed feelings of powerlessness that they experienced within their field of work. Two participants described situations where despite having ideas about how to support First Nations youth, if these ideas were not supported by teachers or administrators, then they could not be used. Dale explains, "it comes down to how the principal wants to do things at the school. So sometimes there's schools that are really open and want to try new things, and really are working, you know, to work with the First Nations students, and then there's some that don't really". Jean describes her belief that, "the powers that be" do not recognize "the impact of, um, the generational issues that these youth are experiencing" when trying to provide support for First Nations youth. She goes on to tell about her frustration of having to advocate to schools to keep one of her clients there, when all they want to do is "ship him off". Furthermore, Erin spoke of feeling "confined" by new divisional policies that prevent school social workers from working at in informal level with "Aboriginal families in need". School social work is unique in that it performs social work within the system of education, and sometimes the values and approaches of these two professions can conflict. However, as workers within the school system, participants described having to take direction from educators, even if it conflicted with their own ideas. Two questions arose for me in thinking about this conflict. First, how can school social workers feel confident, and offer support that is culturally safe within a larger system that may not share those ideals? Second, how do social workers use the power that they do have to advocate for their clients within this system? Although social workers may

find it tricky to navigate this path, working as a social worker within the system of education, they do still hold quite a bit of power when it comes to relationships with First Nations clients. It is here that they need to be cognizant of this power, and ensure to the best of their capabilities that their personal approach to working with First Nations students strives to be culturally safe. Furthermore, it is the duty of all social workers to advocate for the best possible service for their clients. This might involve advocating for change within the system of education.

Third Tenet

The third tenet of cultural safety is: *To encourage open-mindedness and flexibility with attitudes towards people they provide service to who are culturally different (Ramsden, 2002)*.

One concern that was seen throughout the narratives was that while school social workers believed they could be open-minded and flexible with their attitudes, the ways in which they could support families was restricted by individual schools, or school systems, that often had a more narrow or rigid focus. Candace explains:

> when teachers or principals come with need, it's not, they don't even define it as a cultural need or, it's more um, well, surface things I guess, depression, anxious, can't sit still, some kids, like one kid in particular who I'm working with lived on the reserve for his, like a huge portion of his life, … and he's missing that, he's lost, and, although that's recognized, I'm not asked, and how could I help fix that, right? So I'm asked how can he, how can I help him develop coping skills, to cope, so he can be in class, so he can learn. (line 182)

 Dale also tells of the direction of his practice being based on the desires of the school or principal:

>I think one of the challenges is that, um, school systems, there's a disconnect between social workers and even in the schools, right? And even school-to-school, it's kind of based on the principal of the school, and how they want to run things. So it all really comes down to that. Um, so even if as a school social worker you wanted to do something, but, and the principal doesn't want to, typically you don't. (line 92)

In Erin's narrative she told of a change in her school divisions policy that has restricted the flexibility in her role, namely the ability to personally connect with students and families. In her current role as more of a consultant, she doesn't feel she can be as effective in really supporting the needs of First Nations students and families. When asked how she thinks this change has affected families, Erin says:

>Well, you know the thing is we don't interview the families, we don't see it, but I mean there's lot's of kids coming to school with needs, that they act it out in school, and the families get pressure on them, then I might get invited to a meeting, just to sort of see what's happening with them, but to be open to them and see them, and figure out what they need in their family, it's gone. It's gone! line 80)

The above examples show some frustration in the ability for school social workers to be flexible in how they approach working with First Nations students, but are not telling of how they are flexible with their own attitudes when providing services to clients who are culturally different. In one of the stories Jean tells about recognizing differences in values between herself and clients she works with, she explains:

>I do try and find out a little more about um, kind of generational values in parenting and experiences, so just trying to get a better sense of how that generational piece has had an impact on that particular family. (line 280)

Understanding generational values and experiences of her clients has helped her become more flexible in her attitudes and decisions about how to support students today.

Dale also expresses open-mindedness as a top priority for school social workers working with all families, while recognizing specifically with First Nations families that:

there is a whole colonial history there, right? It's not, there's been hundreds of years of colonization and missteps by the government, including the school systems, in trying to work with families, and I think that, um, you have to have an understanding of that. (line 177)

In Candace's description of her approach of getting to know new students, we can see how she endeavors to understand clients who are different from herself, but whether or not she is flexible with her attitudes or understandings is not described:

I start very basic, family trees, who's in your life, what's important to you, what are your cultural values, do you have any special traditions, what holidays are important to you, just really learning about, like the basis of that family, or of that student. (line 274)

She explains her beliefs about understanding other cultures:

I think it could benefit everybody. I think for all students to learn about all cultures in school, because they're living in communities where there's not just white people walking around …But to understand why are people looking different, doing different things, why are they leaving in the middle of whatever to go pray, so, ya, I think other students should get involved in that, to understand, to maybe stop the racism or, to help Aboriginal people in general feel more, like comfortable with their culture in society. (line 393)

The concerns brought forward through the narratives demonstrate that flexibility in approach to work with First Nations students is desired, but not often available. Flexibility and open-mindedness, like self-reflection, was not well expressed.

Fourth Tenet
The fourth tenet is: *To produce a workforce of service providers who are educated and self-aware, and able to provide services that are culturally safe, as defined by those that they serve* (Ramsden, 2002, p.94*).* It requires all service providers within a system to be educated and self-reflexive, in order to provide services that are indeed culturally safe for First Nations students and families

A common frustration throughout each narrative was navigating the role of a social worker within a system designed by education professionals. Participants described situations where they were unable to provide the support that they saw fit, based on their education and experience, because it did not fit with the desires set by educators, school administrators, or school system policy. School social workers felt that their role was often limited within the parameters of the education system. This lead me to question how using cultural safety to guide school social work could be beneficial if the school system as a whole did not adopt the same approach?

Looking specifically at examples of cultural safety within the narratives, it is evident that each school social worker has some awareness of colonialism, and when asked, can reflect on some of the ways it might impact youth in the school system today. However, only one social worker felt that this personal knowledge was used within their work supporting First Nations students and families. The other three indicated that while they were aware of this history, it did not alter the way in which they made support plans for students, especially if this wasn't the

direction given by their superiors. Furthermore, none of the stories described a system-wide

process by which education professionals are made aware of the effects of colonialism, or how to

work with First Nations people in a way that ensures cultural safety. This was however, a

concern conveyed through the narratives. Erin expressed her view that many educators and social

workers are white middle class professionals working with large populations of First Nations

youth, without any prior exposure to First Nations cultures, or any training on how to relate to

First Nations youth and families in a way that is understanding of cultural differences. Jean

describes the way that schools work with some of the issues that First Nations youth are

experiencing in schools is often reactive, rather than proactive. When asked to expand, Jean

explained that she sees a lack of recognition by the "powers that be" of the "generational issues

that these youth are experiencing", which results in services for youth that focus solely on the

individual and their current behaviors, ignoring generational experiences with trauma. Jean

further explains:

> We have an idea in our head how education should be, and we're expecting all different
>
> peoples, including First Nations, to that mentality of what we think education should be.
>
> And by "we" I'm meaning the people in power, I guess starting with the church people,
>
> to um, down the line, and so, I don't think our education system really does meet the
>
> needs of our Aboriginal youth, especially in the city (line 117).

Dale felt that there are many people within the school who try, but "there are folks who don't

have an understanding of First Nations reality in this country." He attributes this to a lack of

reflection on ones own privilege, going on to say "it's really hard to get people to look at their

own privilege, and for their privilege to be challenged. Especially if they're in a position that has

privilege or of power." The information coming out of these stories suggests there is a lack of

both education about colonialism and the resulting oppression that many First Nations youth and families experience today. Although a system-wide application of the teachings of cultural safety would lead to a greater chance that all First Nations students could experience cultural safety within their schools, individual workers can still make positive changes through personally adhering to these teachings. As cultural safety teaches, the personal understanding, values, and experiences we bring to our work impacts the relationship we have with our clients.

In addition to more knowledge of First Nations issues, and self-awareness of non-First Nations professionals, participants felt that more First Nations professionals within the schools would help make students feel culturally safe. While suggesting that more Aboriginal professionals in the schools would be helpful, Candace went further in stating her own discomfort in facilitating programming that is Aboriginal in focus. She explains that having resources within the schools to help facilitate "traditional or cultural" work would be helpful, and then adds, "As a person who's not First Nations, how am I supposed to do that anyways, right? Um, I'm not, that's not my background, I wouldn't feel comfortable you know, facilitating that kind of thing." This statement lead me to reflect on what it means for a service to be cultural, versus culturally safe. I think this goes back to our often narrow understanding of culture, focused solely on the symbolic and traditional aspects, neglecting less visible expressions of culture, such as values, experiences with colonialism and other forms of oppression, and ways of connecting and interacting with others. Cultural safety does not ask non-First Nations service providers to facilitate cultural ceremonies, such as a sweat ceremony, or teach traditional crafts, like the dream-catcher that Dale spoke of earlier. To provide services that are culturally safe, we need to be cognizant of these less visible aspects of culture, and provide services that are responsive to them. Erin gave an example of this in her narrative; in her opinion, one way to

make school social work services culturally safe for First Nations youth and families is to have

policies that are less restrictive, and allow school social workers to work with First Nations

families at a more informal and personal level. This includes visiting families in their homes,

building familiar relationships, and maintaining this connection consistently throughout the

school year, rather than working more as consultants, attending meetings, and having virtually no

contact with actual families. It is important to understand that as non-First Nations service

providers, providing services that are culturally safe does not mean providing programming that

is cultural. Whatever changes we do make to create educational environments that are culturally

safe for students and their families, we have to remember that education can only be deemed

culturally safe by students and families themselves (Ramsden, 2002). Since this research did not

focus on the experiences of First Nations students, but rather the experiences of the school social

workers who provide service to them, we cannot definitively answer this question. However, we

can see from the stories that were told by these four social workers that in some ways, some of

the tenets of cultural safety are being strived towards by individual workers, yet examples were

also given of situations where knowledge and adherence of the tenets of cultural safety could

have greatly benefitted First Nations students and families. Further to this research, investigation

would need to be done of the experiences of First Nations youth and families if cultural safety

were to be adopted within the school systems.

Becoming an Ally

The final concept I explore in this research is the idea of being an ally. As outlined in the

Literature Review, the idea of becoming an ally stems from the writings of Anne Bishop (1994,

2002). She explains that through the process of uncovering our own experiences with oppression,

both how we have been oppressed and how we oppress others, we can learn to align ourselves in

support of others who are differently oppressed, and often oppressed by ourselves (Bishop,

2002). This idea of knowing oneself, exploring personal relationships with oppression, and specifically understanding how we oppress others before being able to meaningfully support others, I felt aligned well with the tenets of cultural safety.

Through the interviews and this analysis, I wanted to find out how each participant understood the term ally, and if they felt that being an ally was relevant to the role of a school social work. Within the narratives, participants likened the role of ally to that of an advocate, or a supporter. Being an ally was described as first involving an understanding of those you were working with, "learning about them" (Candace), "having a sense of their worth, um, having a knowledge of what's important in their family, uh, important in their culture" (Erin), "an understanding of the issues of affected communities" (Dale). Candace added the role of either advocating for them, or helping them advocate for their needs; "advocating for them if they can't, or if they don't know how, or helping them to advocate for themselves" (Candace). Erin describes more of a support, as in "having their back" (Erin), while Dale describes it as a collaborative role: "I see it as kind of working in conjunction with those communities" (Dale). Each participant's understanding of ally was focused on the individual or group that they were trying to help, first understanding their issue, then trying to support them in a positive way. However, what was not part of their definition was any acknowledgement of self-reflection. This of course may have been due to a lack of familiarity with the term "ally". According to the literature on becoming an ally, exploring our own personal relationships with oppression, both how we have been oppressed, and how we have oppressed others, is key in being able to align ourselves with others, and bring strength to the collaborative role of an ally (Bishop, 2002). Within my own narrative in the previous chapter, I made a personal observation that one reason why participants may have focused their stories more on their perceived experiences of clients,

rather than reflecting on their own feelings and experiences, might be due to a consistent focus in social work education solely on the client, neglecting reflection of the self. I also described in my narrative my experience in a class where the professor challenged us to reflect on our own relationship with colonialism, and how we as white social workers have benefitted from it. This challenge resulted in considerable denial and hostility within the class. Taylor (2002) describes how acknowledging how we oppress others can be difficult due to shame, guilt, and denial. Despite this challenge, lack of exploration of our own personal relationships with colonialism and oppression creates a barrier to being able to support clients who may have been oppressed by our culture and ourselves. Additionally, it is a privilege to be able to so easily avoid the shame and guilt that is to be experienced upon being self-reflexive. Generally self-reflexivity is not required of us, and as social workers we can easily and successfully maintain focus on the lives and challenges of clients alone, without ever being challenged ourselves.

Throughout this analysis I have found examples of awareness of some of the elements of cultural safety, and examples where more education are required in order to provide education for First Nations students that is culturally safe. In the following chapter, I outline the significant findings, as well as my recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

With the goal of expanding on research aimed at improving educational experiences of First Nations students within the Canadian education system, this research focused specifically on the role school social work plays in supporting First Nations youth and families. Cultural safety was chosen as the guiding theoretical framework as it offers specific guidance to the examination of cross-cultural professional relationships where the cultural group providing a service has historically had power over a cultural group accessing this service. Through review of the literature and qualitative interviews, this research sought to achieve these two objectives:

1. Understand how historical and current colonial practices impact First Nations youth in their educational experiences today, and

2. Understand non-First Nations school social workers' perceptions of their role in supporting early, middle, and senior years First Nations students and their families to have a positive and culturally safe school experience in Winnipeg

The first objective was accomplished through review of significant writing and prior research on this topic. The review of the literature began with an outline of the earliest educational relationships between First Nations people and Canadian Settlers, which set the groundwork for the Indian Residential School system. The literature gives clear examples of racism, oppression, and abuse that many First Nations people experienced throughout their educational experiences. Additionally, research was outlined that details the ongoing inter-generational trauma that has been caused by these negative school experiences, which impact many families' relationships to the education system today. Several papers were reviewed that document the history of stated desires for educational reform by First Nations groups across Canada and in Manitoba. And furthermore, prior research that explored First Nations students

educational experiences were described to highlight how many youth today are still having

negative educational experiences. This review of the literature lead to the assumption that many

First Nations youth are not feeling culturally safe in schools. From this assumption, the potential

role school social work could play in helping First Nations youth experience cultural safety was

explored.

The second objective, which was to understand how non-First Nations school social

workers perceive their role in working towards supporting First Nations youth and families to

have a culturally safe school experience, was accomplished through qualitative interviews, and

subsequent analysis of participants stories.

Examination of the narratives found that the four school social workers interviewed value

their role in supporting First Nations youth, and they recognize this role can be different from

their role in supporting other students. Analysis of the data also found pieces of cultural safety

being exercised within individual social work practice. Each narrative described some awareness

of historical and current colonial processes that affect First Nations students today. Several

narratives expressed some self-reflexivity, as well as flexibility with attitudes. However, there

were many descriptions given of situations where use of cultural safety could have greatly

improved the process and outcome of an interaction with First Nations students and families.

There were also examples of interactions that were completely culturally unsafe. This research

has demonstrated how education of colonial processes is lacking in social work education, and in

school social work training. Even the participants who articulated an understanding of the effects

of colonialism on students today felt the direction they were asked to take in supporting these

youth often did not explicitly involve the recognition of this impact. This demonstrates a wider

issue of lack of understanding and validation of First Nations experiences throughout public

education systems. Furthermore, a considerable challenge found through this research was the desire or ability to be self-reflexive. Throughout each narrative, participants consistently deflected questions about personal values and their impact, and remained focused on clients' responses, or the behavior of other professionals. Identification of non-First Nations values and experiences that direct and define the role of social work and personal approaches to social work relationships with First Nations youth and students was minimal. Moreover, recognizing, naming, and reflecting on whiteness was challenging. This demonstrates a greater need for self-reflexivity of social workers, and emphasis on the removal of invisibility of "whiteness", and encouragement of open discussion and reflection on how being white impacts social work relationships with First Nations clients. Examples of flexibility of attitudes when working with First Nations clients were also few, but participants did express constriction of flexibility in their work, as directed by their superiors, as being a barrier to providing the best support they saw fit for their First Nations clients.

In comparing the themes drawn from each school social workers' story to the teachings of cultural safety, three recommendations have been determined:

1. System-wide education for public school-system professionals on colonial history, inter-generational trauma, and current-day oppression which impacts First Nations students in schools today.

2. Focus in Social Work education on being self-reflexive, and the importance of understanding ones own realities, and the impact of personal and cultural values have in practice

3. Create forums for school social workers to express ideas and advocate for change within the school system

4. Create measures to determine how/when First Nations youth and families feel

   Culturally Safe

Below, each recommendation is outlined in detail.

Education on colonial history, inter-generational trauma, and current-day oppression
The first tenet of Cultural Safety, as outlined by Ramsden in her 2002 thesis, is: To

educate non-indigenous service providers of the historical and colonial processes that have

created the oppression that exists today for indigenous people that they provide service to. In her

thesis, Ramsden (2002) speaks of the importance of investigating historical and current

experiences with colonialism and oppression in order to gain a better understanding of a client's

present life. Looking at the educational context in Canada, research has documented how the

maltreatment of First Nations youth in Indian Residential Schools has lead to multigenerational

mistrust of the school system (Barnes et al., 2006), as well as poverty, trauma, youth suicide,

substance abuse, and low graduation rates in families and communities that were affected

(Battiste & McLean, 2005). Without understanding the colonial history in Canada, which the IRS

was a product and mechanism of, and the resulting oppression that still exists today for many

First Nations people, we risk placing blame on the individual for the current situation. When we

blame youth for not being successful in school, we put the onus for change on them. Our

responsibility is focused on how to get them to change, and our solutions are narrow. From the

stories given by each social worker for this research, we can see that some awareness of

colonialism and history is present, but is limited in scope and depth, it is not being applied within

individual cases. As one of the values of social work outlined by the Canadian Association of

Social Workers is the Pursuit of Social Justice (CASW, 2005) whereby social workers "act to

reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are

marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs" (p.5, CASW, 2005), it

is well within the role of social worker to understand the roots of barriers that exist within the education system for First Nations students, in order to effectively work to reduce them. As school social workers are being connected with First Nations youth, it is important that they first have an understanding of First Nations experiences with colonialism in Canada, and second make the connection between these histories, and the barriers youth are facing today within the education system. My recommendation is for consistent and ongoing education for school social workers, as well as all educational professionals, on the colonial history in Canada, and the resulting current day oppression that many First Nations youth and families experience. With this understanding, we may begin to offer support in schools to First Nations youth and families that is culturally safe.

Focus on self-reflexivity

The second tenet of Cultural Safety is: To teach practitioners to examine their own realities and values that they bring to their work (Ramsden, 2002). Research on the education system in Canada has consistently demonstrated that education remains driven by white, western values (Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Battiste & McLean, 2005). Both the content and the way it is taught reflect dominant western values. Battiste (1998) acknowledges that there has been some effort to transform curricula to be more inclusive of Aboriginal content, but warns that it has mostly resulted in add-on, thematic content, rather than true reform. Schick and St. Denis (2005) write that despite efforts to make education in Canada more inclusive, "public education largely remains reflective of white, western, or Eurocentric interests" (p.298). McIntosh (1988, cited in Brascoupe & Waters, 2009) stresses that discussion on race needs to switch focus from non-white people being measured up against white values, to the unearned advantages of white people in a white-dominated society. Reflecting on and acknowledging unearned advantages can be challenging, and often uncomfortable. Cultural Safety challenges service providers working

with indigenous people to not only examine the values that they bring to their work, but the unchallenged superiority they are awarded in a white-dominant society, and the un-earned advantages embedded in their lives. Although school social workers are not responsible for the content of school curricula, they are able to either perpetuate, or challenge the idea that western, or white values are the norm, and whether First Nations' or any other culture's values are understood only in comparison to that norm, or not understood at all. The literature on cultural safety clearly stresses the need for self-reflexivity of professionals as integral if we are ever to balance the power relations between white and indigenous peoples (Kirkham et al, 2002; Brascoupe & Waters, 2009). As I discussed in the previous chapter, I found it difficult to explicitly use the term "white" or "whiteness" within interactions with research participants, which lead to a lack of meaningful discussion on white culture and values within the narratives. Furthermore, participants were reluctant to reflect on their own experiences and values that impact their work, choosing often to respond to personal questions with assumptions of how clients experience their work, or their own views of other professionals work. From the interviews, two social workers commented specifically on their own values, and the implications of their values on their work. Their examples highlight the importance of reflecting on and acknowledging our own experiences, which shape what we value, and how we approach our work, while respecting how this may be different from other populations we work with. Using this understanding is key in planning how to support clients from cultures that differ from our own, so that we are not creating plans that are culturally inappropriate, or culturally unsafe. According to Brascoupe and Waters (2009), the aspect of self-knowing in Cultural Safety is essential if we desire to redefine power relations in our work. Acknowledging power that is awarded to social workers, and ensuring that this power is used in a way that benefits the needs

of the client is one of the defining values of social work (CASW, 2005). Self-reflexivity is key to understanding power and using it positively within relationships. My recommendation is two-fold. First, for a greater focus on self-reflexivity within social work education, with emphasis on whiteness and the invisibility of white values and privileges within our society, and more specifically social work relationships. Without being given the tools to learn how to reflect on ones own culture and experiences, the impact it has on clients will not be acknowledged, and colonialism and oppression will undoubtedly be perpetuated through social work practice.

Second, researchers like myself must overcome trepidation in naming and addressing their own whiteness, and openly exploring the topic within social work research. As Helms (1993) states: "If the researcher is unable to examine the effects of her or his own racial development on her or his research activities, then the researcher risks contributing to the existing body of racially oppressive literature, rather than offering illuminating scholarship." (p. 242). Although open discussions on whiteness can be difficult, and challenging others to see the impact of their own whiteness can cause discomfort for researcher and research participant, this must be overcome in order to conduct research that does not perpetuate oppression by leaving this topic unexplored. Cultural safety necessitates having service providers who are able and willing to examine their own values and experiences they bring to their work, and the impact they have on indigenous clients. In order to understand whether or not self-reflexivity is happening in social work practice, more researchers need to research this topic in an open, honest, challenging and self-reflexive manner.

Advocate for change

Within each interview, participants expressed either specific situations where, based on their social work training, they had a recommendation of how to support a student that was not

accepted by the educators or the administrators they were working with, or policies or changes

within their division that restricted their ability to perform social work in the best way that they

saw fit. The position of school social work is unique in that it requires navigation of the

knowledge and protocols that belong to the social work profession, but must also work within the

education system, which is directed by a different set of teachings and values. This requires a

balancing act on the part of school social workers, and as described within these narratives, can

result in feelings of frustration, and devaluation. As social workers, through their education and

by adhering to the Code of Ethics set out by the Canadian Association of Social Workers, have

understandings of clients and their situations which may differ from those of educators and

administrators, there must be an avenue by which social workers can advocate for their beliefs

when they are not being recognized within the school system. This could be a function within the

Canadian Association of Social Workers, to give stronger voice to social workers within the

education system.

Only First Nations youth and families can determine Culturally Safety
    What makes Cultural Safety truly unique, is the shift in power from the service provider to

service recipient. This shift occurs when the decision of whether a service is culturally safe or

not can only be made by the service recipient (AFN, 2008). According to the Assembly of First

Nations, "this is an intentional method to also understand the power imbalance that is inherent in

health service delivery, and changes these inequities through education" (AFN, 2008, p. 2).

Again, this can be applied to the education system, ensuring that only students and families can

decide whether or not the system is culturally safe for them, highlighting longstanding power

imbalances between educational professionals and First Nations people. The mistreatment of

First Nations youth in the Canadian education system has been well documented, although not

widely acknowledged (Battiste & McLean, 2005). From the damaging effects of the IRS, which

have impacted not only students, but whole communities who have lost children, languages,

histories and traditions (Antone, 2000; Milloy, 1999), to the current day assimilationist practices

that continue in Canadian schools through indoctrination of Euro-Canadian values, and the

inadequate telling of the collective Canadian history, and the absence of Aboriginal worldviews,

ways of knowing, and knowledge from standard curricula (Battiste & McLean, 2005; Silver et al,

2002). Research that has focused directly on youth who have left school early have found that

youth articulate similar reasons for their decision to leave. Silver et. al (2002) found that many

First Nations youth today are making the choice not to participate in a system that is alienating

and discriminating, and not reflective of their culture. The Canada-Aboriginal Peoples

Roundtable (2004, as cited in Battiste, 2005), describe the following reasons that youth gave for

leaving school early:

> Feelings of alienation after spending eight years in a school system that does not support
>
> their identity as First Nation; lack of First Nation languages, cultures, history and political
>
> issues in school environment and curriculum; lack of parental and community
>
> involvement especially where there are no local high schools; encountering racist
>
> attitudes that undermine self-esteem; the current emphasis of the public school system on
>
> intellectual cognitive achievement at the expense of spiritual, social and physical
>
> development; and the marginalization of youth in decision making about their education.
>
> (p. 6)

Cultural Safety is understood as working to eliminate services that are culturally unsafe,

which are, "any actions that diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well-

being of an individual" (Cooney,1994, cited in Brascoupe, 2009, p.7), or that cause cultural risk

when, "people from one culture believe that they are demeaned diminished and disempowered

by the actions and the delivery systems of people from another culture" (Wood & Schwass 1993,

cited by Kirkham, et al. 2002). Although the language in prior research does not specifically use

the term cultural safety within the youths' narratives, we can surmise that what youth are

describing are experiences that are culturally unsafe. Until First Nations youth and families

describe their educational experiences as empowering, respectful, meaningful, and culturally safe

for them to participate in, we cannot describe the work being done within the education system

as being culturally safe. My recommendation is for research focused on the experiences of First

Nations students and families, identifying their feelings of cultural safety/unsafety within the

school system. This research could then be used as measurement of how close or far school

social workers and entire school systems are from providing an educational experience that is

culturally safe for First Nations people.

Closing Comments

   In summary, this research began the process of investigating cultural safety as it applies

to the work of school social workers, their understanding of colonialism, self-reflexivity, open-

mindedness, and how they perceive it's relevance within their work. As a qualitative research

project, this inquiry looked at the self-perceived role of four school social workers, using a

narrative methodology to explore their stories and experiences working with First Nations

students and families. This research has brought insight into the meaningful role school social

work provides in ensuring the youth and families they are connected with have a positive school

experience, and the personal and systemic challenges that exist in providing culturally safe

support within the schools. This research has also illuminated 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. Personally, I have gained insight into my

own struggles with the impact of my white identity on this research, and the discomfort I

experienced in challenging others to discuss this topic openly, then to critically analyze

responses. It is my desire that this research helps open the doors wider to necessary self-

reflection of other white social workers and service providers, and leads to more in-depth

exploration of the importance of this topic, related to how we provide services to First Nations

youth and families.

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Appendix A – Project Summary

1. Summary of Project: Silver et al. (2002) report that the percentage of Aboriginal youth, ages 15-24, and attending school in Manitoba is 44.1%. While numerous recommendations have been made as to how education policy-makers, administrators and educators can work towards increasing this and similar attendance rates among First Nations youth across the country (RCAP, 1996; Battiste & MacLean, 2005), very little consideration has been given to the role school social workers play in supporting positive involvement of First Nations youth and families. Due to the multi-layered role of school social work, school social workers are able to collaborate with families, schools, and communities to strive towards the best educational opportunities for each student. Through this role many non-first Nations school social workers may become the liaison between schools and First Nations youth who are deciding to no longer attend school, and their families. As such, they have a unique and delicate role which plays importance in the larger goal of increasing the number of First Nations youth who attend school.

This study aims to fill this research gap through the following research goals; 1. Understand non-First Nations school social workers' perceptions of their role in becoming allies to support early, middle, and senior years First Nations students and their families to have a positive and culturally safe school experience, and 2. Explore how school social workers navigate an understanding of the relationship between historical and current colonial practices within the school system, their impact on First Nations Youths educational experience in Winnipeg, and how this impacts their work with First Nations families.

I will be using a narrative methodology whereby descriptive interviews will be conducted with approximately six school social workers. Each interview will be approximately 1-2 hours in length, and will follow the attached semi-structured interview schedule (Apendix B).

2. Research Instruments: Face-to-face interviews will be conducted by the graduate student using the attached semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix B). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) describe semi-structured interviews as a flexible way of drawing out personal narratives. Semi-structured implies that each interview is set around a flexible schedule of open-ended questions, whereby "participants are encouraged to reflect on and identify their true feelings" (Warren & Karner, 2006, as cited in Whiting, 2007). Researchers using a semi-structured interview are also prepared to ask other questions that emerge through information brought forth by the participants (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006), in order to draw out pertinent information, and to encourage participants to expand on pieces of their story that are most important to them.

3. Study Subjects: Approximately 6 non-First Nations school social workers will be recruited to participate in the study. Participation in the study will involve taking part in an approximately 1 to 2 hour interview conducted by the graduate student. Participants will be asked to answer questions relating to their perceptions of low school involvement rates of First Nations youth, and how they work to support youth and families. (see Appendix B). The interviews will either take place at the participant's office, school of choice, or another confidential location such as the Inner City Social Work Campus (485 Selkirk Ave).

Participants will be recruited from the Child Guidance Clinic, through the Winnipeg School Division as they have the highest population of First Nations students in Winnipeg. Contact information for the Director of School Social Work at the Child Guidance Clinic will be obtained via their website (www.w1sd.org). A letter will be sent electronically to the Director, requesting assistance in recruiting non-First Nations social workers who have experience working with First Nations youth and families. The Director will be asked to forward an email (see Appendix E) and put up the attached recruitment poster (see Appendix F) where it is visible to a high number of school social workers. The Director will be asked to confirm ability to support researcher via recruitment poster circulation. If the researcher does not hear back from the director within a timely matter (i.e., 2 weeks), a follow-up phone call will be made, requesting their assistance in recruiting participants, as outlined above.

Once the researcher has been contacted by potential research participants, she will converse with them by phone (Appendix I) or email (Appendix E), depending on how they have contacted her, and will explain the research in greater detail, and inviting them to participate in the study. Additionally, snowball sampling will be used to determine other potential research participants, whereby study participants will suggest participation in the study to other school social workers who have experience working with First Nations youth and families. The researcher will only ask those who have agreed to participate to pass on the research information to others, and will not ask participants to give her names of others to contact. Potential participants will only be contacted if they chose to contact the researcher first.

4. **Informed Consent:** Participant consent will be obtained in writing via the informed consent form (see Appendix D). The nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study will be provided to them in a written study information sheet **before** they agree to participate (see Appendix C). Participants will be informed that the information gathered through the interviews will be used as data for the graduate studies thesis, and may also be used in whole or in part in future publications. Participants will also be assured that they can withdraw from the research at any point during the research process. Participants may also refuse to answer any questions during the interview, or call after the interview and ask that all of their information be removed from the study.

5. **Deception:** There will be no deception of research participants.

6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** A summary of the study findings will be made available to interested participants by the researcher. Participants can indicate their interest on the informed consent form, along with how they would like to receive a summary of the study findings. Feedback will be available April 2013. Participants will also be given the opportunity to debrief with the researcher following the interviews, and due to the potentially sensitive questions, will be referred to a list of local counselling resources, as outlined below under Risks and Benefits. Participants will be thanked for their participation and invited to ask questions.

7. **Risks and Benefits:** Due to the nature of the questions, there may be some emotional challenge to the participants in being asked to reflect on their own non-First Nations experiences and roles as an ally, especially if this is something they have not explored, or a role they have not adopted. Participants will be given the opportunity to debrief

following the interview, and will be given a printed copy of local counseling resources (Appendix K). The information gathered will be used for data for graduate thesis, and will be published as such. However, no names or other forms of identifying information will be used in the final report. The raw data from the interviews will only be seen/heard by the graduate student, and the advisor.

The study is beneficial because participants will have the opportunity to reflect on and share their insights as how they as non-First Nations social workers can better support First Nations youth and families, and potentially identify areas of concern. Additionally, it will contribute to on going research in the field of schools social work and First Nations students.

8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality: Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Ensuring anonymity is not possible as the graduate student will be conducting the interviews, transcribing, and coding, therefore will have knowledge of each individual and their story. However, confidentiality will be maintained as all digital recordings and transcribed interviews will be coded so that identifying information (i.e., names, specific schools) do not appear on the data, therefore anyone reading the transcript, or any reports or publications, will not be able to identify the participant. Additionally, the decision to participate or decline will be kept confidential from the Director of School Social Work, as well as all colleagues

Study participants will be informed about their right to confidentiality. They will be informed that the results of the interviews will be used as data for the graduate thesis, and potentially future publications. Each interview will be used in conjunction with the responses of the other participants. Only the graduate student and the advisor will have access to the research data that has identifiable information. Full transcripts, which will contain no identifiable information, will only be seen by the graduate student and the advisor. Participants will be made aware of this prior to their involvement in the study (see Appendix D) and during the process of informed consent.

All digitally recorded interviews will be kept separate from transcripts which will be number coded and inputted to pass code protected computer files. Only the graduate student will have access to these numbers. Hard copy data and other research materials (printed transcripts, and informed consent forms) will be stored in a secure area (i.e. locked file cabinet) at the graduate student's home. Consent forms will be destroyed by April 2015. Digital recordings of the interviews will be permanently erased from the digital recorder once uploaded onto a computer for transcribing and analysis. The digitally recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed by April 2014, 1 year after the anticipated defense of this research, giving any participants wanting to challenge the information, time to appeal.

9.

10. **Compensation:** No compensation will be awarded to the study participants.

11. **Dissemination:** Portions of the interview transcripts will be used to support the final graduate thesis document. This document will be available through the Dafoe Library. Portions of interview transcripts may also be used in future publications in refereed journals.

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Allies in the Schools: School Social Workers' perception of their role in supporting First Nations Youth to stay in school

Principal Investigator and contact information: Amber McBurney, █████████████████████
███

Research Supervisor and contact information: Michael Hart, █████████████████████████

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. As a graduate student, the goal of my thesis research is to learn from your experience as a non-First Nations School Social Worker, who has worked with First Nations youth and families, in order to understand your perceived role in becoming an ally to support First Nations youth and families to have a positive and culturally safe school experience Additionally, I would like to understand, from your experience, how you navigate an understanding of the relationship between historical and current colonial practices within the school system, their impact on First Nations Youths educational experience in Winnipeg, and how this impacts your work with First Nations families.

2. Participation in this research will involve one qualitative interview, approximately 1 to 2 hours long. Interviews will follow a semi-structured interview schedule, consisting of several open-ended questions, as well as questions that are derived from information you provide, and the opportunity for you to expand on and describe your unique experiences. The interviews will either take place at the Inner City Social Work Campus (485 Selkirk Ave), or at a place that is most convenient for you, the research participant.

3. Permission is requested to use a digital recording device for each interview. You can indicate if permission is granted below on the informed consent form. If permission is not granted, I will hand-write the answers to each question.

4. This research will be beneficial to you in that it will give you an opportunity to reflect on and share

your experiences as a non-First Nations school social worker, working with First Nations youth and families.

5. Due to the nature of the questions, there may be some emotional challenge. If you find this interview to raise uncomfortable emotions you will be given the opportunity to debrief following the interview, and contact information of local counseling resources will be provided. The information gathered will be used for data for my graduate thesis, and will be published as such.

6. Ensuring anonymity is not possible as I will be conducting the interviews, transcribing and coding, therefore will have knowledge of each individual and their story. However, confidentiality will be maintained as all digital recordings and transcribed interviews will be coded, and identifying information such as names and specific schools, will be omitted from transcripts and will not appear in the data. Therefore, anyone reading the transcript will not be able to identify the participant. Additionally, the decision to participate or decline will be kept confidential from the Director of School Social Work, as well as all colleagues.

The results of the interviews will be used as data for my graduate thesis, and potential future publications. Your interview responses will be used in conjunction with the responses of the other participants. Only myself and my thesis advisor, Michael Hart, will have access to the research data that has identifiable information. Full transcripts, which will contain no identifiable information, will only be seen by myself and my advisor.

All digitally recorded interviews will be kept separate from transcripts, which will be number coded and inputted to pass code protected computer files. Only I will have access to these numbers. Hard copy data and other research materials (printed transcripts, and informed consent forms) will be stored in a secure area (i.e. locked file cabinet) at my home. Digital recordings of the interviews will be permanently erased from the digital recorder once uploaded onto a computer for transcribing and analysis. The digitally recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed by April 2014, 1 year after the anticipated defense of this research, giving me the opportunity to review the material in the event that information is challenged.

7. No compensation will be awarded to study participants.

8. You may withdraw from the research at any time, before, during, or immediately following the interview, with no consequence. If you chose to withdraw, any digital recording, material from your transcript, as well as your or transcript, will also be destroyed.

9. If you find that the research questions rais strong emotions, you will be given the opportunity to debrief following the interview, where contact information of local counseling resources will be provided.

10. A summary of the study findings will be made available to you if you are interested. You can indicate if you are interested below on the informed consent form, along with whether you would like a hard copy mailed, or an electronic copy emailed.

11. A brief summary (1-3pages) of the results of my graduate research will be made available to all participants in November 2012. If you choose to receive the summary, you may indicate by mail or email.

12. All confidential data collected for the purpose of this research will be destroyed after 1 year, giving

me the opportunity to review the material in the event that information is challenged.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.
The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.
This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____   Date _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature _____ Date _____

- -

I would like to receive a copy of the research summary by Mail: _____ Email:_____

Email Address:_____

Mailing Address: _____

Appendix C – Interview Schedule

Numbered questions will comprise the main focus of the interviews, while bulleted questions will be used as prompts when the researcher feels more information could be given by participants.

A. Building Rapport Questions

    a. What has been your experience as a school social worker?

        i. How did you become a school social worker?

        ii. How do you define the role of school social worker?

        iii. What do you like and dislike?

B. Understanding First Nations issues questions

    a. Can you describe to me your understanding of who First Nations Youth Are?

    b. Can you describe to me your understanding of the history of education and First Nations People in Canada?

        i. Do you feel that trauma from the residential school experience exists in families today?

        ii. What is your understanding of the residential school system?

    c. Can you tell me how you think this history affects First Nations youth and Families today?

        i. How do you think this might affect school attendance?

C. Relationship Questions

    a. What role do you believe school social workers play in supporting First Nations youth and families to have a positive and culturally safe school experience?

b. Can you tell me what it's like for you to work with First Nations families?

c. Can you tell me what becoming an ally means to you?

d. Do you feel that becoming an ally is part of the role of a school social worker?

    i. Do you work towards becoming an ally with First Nations youth and families to foster a positive and culturally safe school experience?

    ii. How?/Why not?

e. Can you tell me how you approach working with First Nations families?

f. As a non-First Nations social worker, what barriers do you believe exist for you in supporting First Nations youth and families within the school?

    i. Language?

    ii. Culture?

    iii. Values?

    iv. Understanding?

g. What do you need to be more effective in supporting First Nations youth?

Appendix D– Counseling Resources

Klinik Drop-In Counselling
- **Central/Downtown** 545 Broadway, R3C 0W3 (Klinic on Broadway) Mondays & Wednesdays Noon – 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays, Fridays & Saturdays Noon – 4:00 p.m.
- **Transcona/River East/Elmwood** 845 Regent Avenue West, R2C 3A9 (Access Transcona) One block west of Plesis Road Tuesdays Noon – 7:00 p.m.

The Family Centre
- 401-393 Portage Avenue, Portage Place, Winnipeg, MB R3B 3H6 (204) 947-1401 - Phone / (204) 947-2128   staff@familycentre.mb.ca

Aurora Family Therapy Centre
- The University of Winnipeg, Sparling Hall, 2nd Floor, 515 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9 (204) 786-9251