Increasing Awareness of Racial Identity among *White* Social Workers - A Narrative Approach

By

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Abstract

This study was developed on the premise that lack of *white* racial identity awareness is a contributor to the experience of racism in the social services by Indigenous people. It sought to increase racial identity awareness among social workers who identified as *white.*

This study was a process evaluation intended to discover if individuals felt that their racial identity awareness had changed after participating in the study. Nine social workers were interviewed before and after an intervention, in which they spent two hours a week, for eight weeks, in a narrative working group examining *whiteness*. Data was analyzed using dialogical/performative analysis examined through the lens of critical whiteness theory, and an Indigenous framework.

The findings indicated that participants felt an increase in their ability to talk about *whiteness* and more confidence in addressing racism in their lives and workplaces after participating in this study.

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Dedication

To my fellow *white* social workers.
May we grow to know ourselves better in order that we may do better.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Here in Canada, outcomes for Indigenous people involved within our social service systems have been, and continue to be, grim. Indigenous people face higher rates of incarceration, and are overrepresented in the child welfare system and face higher rates of physical and mental illness than other Canadians. While there are many factors contributing to these outcomes, social workers, and the Eurocentric systems in which they operate, continue to be highlighted as one critical contributor to the problem (Adams, 1999; Blackstock, 2005; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Ives & Loft, 2013; Yellow Bird, Coates, & Gray, 2013).

Use of cultural sensitivity workshops and cultural awareness programs have not resolved the racism that many Indigenous academics, community members, and service users continue to report experiencing within the social service system. Many have argued that these programs only serve to exacerbate the problem by 'other-izing' individuals who are not *white* (Baltra-Ulloa, 2013; Josewski, 2012; Loya, 2011; Pon, 2009). This happens when programs focus primarily on distinct features of culture and stereotype these features across individuals and groups. When those who are members of the dominant group attend these courses and workshops, they leave with a reinforced sense that they and their culture is 'the norm' and anything different is 'other.' As a result, there is no examination of systemic racism, *white* superiority, or the power imbalances that affect Indigenous people in such negative ways.

This study, informed by critical *whiteness* theory, situated within critical race theory, seeks to point the lens of observation back onto the dominant group when seeking the root causes of injustice and oppression. Clarke and Garner (2010) stated that, "[t]he

assertion that whiteness denotes an absence of specificity, or is an invisible non-raced identity, is the traditional starting point for discussions of whiteness" (p. 39). Aylward (2007), Helms (1990), and Sleeter (2011) described contradictory phenomenon, where everyone except *white* people can see and name *whiteness* and its characteristics. In essence, *whiteness* is characterized by 'lack of insight' or 'lack of reflexivity'. The power of this 'invisibility' is that it affords the *white* community the ability to determine what is 'normal' and judges all else by these standards, thereby proclaiming *whiteness* as superior.

Making *whiteness* visible is an act of reflexivity that is essential to reducing oppression in social work practice and systems. The use of italics for the term *white* or *whiteness* is intended to mark *whiteness* in the same way naming *whiteness* points to its specificity as opposed to writing it as unmarked which is what *whiteness* often is, in society. Brekhus (1998) notes that in the English language, the term 'man' is unmarked and is often used to refer to all of humanity and the term 'women' is marked and only speaks to a specific group. In this way, I have attempted to mark *whiteness* throughout this paper.

Critical *whiteness* theory focuses on challenging the values and identity of those who are in positions of power and privilege, primarily *white* people, and proposes that this focus could help to bring about the changes needed for better outcomes for Indigenous peoples (Seawright, 2014; Wamsley, 2009).

Critical theory classes have been offered by universities in a variety of disciplines and attempt to do just that. These classes have been met with strong reactions, and even anger, among students and instructors alike (Boatright-Horowitz, Marraccini & Harps-

Logan, 2012; Crowley & Smith, 2015; Schniedewind, 2005; Todd & Abrams, 2011). The authors point to a variety of concepts that explain the anger expressed by participant in these programs. They note that the concept of *white* superiority is threatened when *whiteness* is named, as it lowers the status of *whiteness* to being just one of many perspectives and not simply 'the standard of normalacy.' They also note that anger may also be in response to the feeling that *white* students' and instructors' identity as 'good people' is being threatened.

This study raises racial identity awareness among *white* social workers, and to explore the outcomes of this lack of awareness on social work practice, which operates primarily within systems of colonization. The intent was to examine racial identity at a personal and collective level and its influences on an individual and systemic level. It sought to answer the following questions: Do participants experience a change in their racial identity awareness, as a result of the intervention? How do participants enact their racial identity within the interviews? What do participants see as influencing change? How do participants experience the intervention? And, what do participants find 'triggering' or define as a 'critical incident' within the intervention?

This study used a narrative approach within the intervention, based on narrative therapy practices. Indigenous scholars and practitioners, such as King (2003) and Richardson (2011), spoke about the use of storytelling as a way of deconstructing, and reconstructing dominant narratives, particularly to do with colonial narratives, which continue to oppress. Hylton (2012) pointed to the importance of the use of storytelling in critical race theory. "Critical race theorists recognize that stories or discourses have been the privilege of those historically influential in knowledge generation and research.

Counter-stories, however, can present views rarely evidenced in social research" (p. 27). Narrative therapy is founded in post-modern social constructionism and was birthed within social work practice. It utilizes story telling as a means of personal, group and institutional change. It is for these reasons that Narrative Therapy was chosen as the process for this intervention.

Participants were practicing social workers who self-identified as *white,* and who indicated an interest in engaging in a critically reflexive process regarding racial identity and practice. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling in Winnipeg (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Nine social workers plus myself, also a *white* social worker, as a participant/observer participated in this study. The group utilized narrative therapy elements, as outlined by White and Epston (1990), such as 'mapping the influence of the problem'; 'externalizing the problem'; and 'deconstructing dominant narratives' in the context of a critically reflexive narrative working group. The group met weekly, for eight weeks, with each session lasting two hours. The purpose of the study was to find out how the intervention changed racial identity awareness among participants and to find out how the participants experienced the intervention.

Data was collected from audio-recorded pre- and post- intervention interviews; from weekly session 'check-in's', which were also audio recorded; from participant journals; and from documents and work created by participants, within the intervention. The data was analyzed using narrative thematic analysis and dialogical/performative analysis (Riessman, 2008), in order to examine the way in which racial identity is performed; to evaluate the participants' experience of the group intervention; and to

determine if participants felt that their racial identity awareness had changed after participating in the intervention.

The findings showed that, while we did enact *whiteness* at various times throughout the study, we were able to increase our ability to see our *whiteness,* to talk about *whiteness* and to start to find ways to move forward, within our practice, and our lives, and address *whiteness* and racism through participation in this project. Overall, participants did not experience strong reactivity within the intervention, and all intended to continue examining this aspect of their identity and its the ways it affects their practice after the completion of the study.

The chapters to follow will examine the events and ideas that led me to this topic, along with the historic and current social work context surrounding the problem of racism within the social services. I will look at the response by various professional organizations, agencies, and academic institutions to this problem and the theories that influenced this study, in particular. I will review the methods used, and the findings from the data collected. This will be followed by a discussion the themes which emerged from the findings as well as the implications of these findings.

Chapter 2 - Background

Self-Placement

As a second generation Canadian and grandchild of immigrants from Holland and Britain, I am a *white* settler. Shortly after the Second World War, my maternal grandparents were able to procure farmland in Algonquin territory, in Southern Ontario, on which to farm and raise their 11 children. My biological paternal grandparents immigrated from England to the same area of the country, around the same time. My adoptive ancestors came to Canada from Scotland, and ultimately settled in Treaty 1 territory, approximately three generations ago.

I grew up in an evangelical Christian church. From a young age, I had wanted to be a missionary in order to 'help' people. In my late teens, I joined a mission organization and went on a short-term mission trip through Alberta and Saskatchewan called "Heal our Land." The focus of this trip was to acknowledge the broken relationship between Indigenous and settler Canadians and to attempt to heal that relationship, primarily through prayer. At one point, the team leader brought us to a reserve and we all climbed through a fence to pray on the land. I felt uncomfortable with this, but went with the group. While we were praying, two people from the reserve drove up and spoke with our team leader. I could see that one of them was quite upset. I was very uncomfortable with the situation. Soon our team leader came over and told us that the people who came were upset that we were on their land and that one of them was 'reasonable' and the other had probably been drinking.

At the time, I was relieved that our presence was accepted by the person who had not been drinking and attributed the anger of the other to his apparent intoxication. At no

point did we discuss settler colonialism or crimes committed towards Indigenous people by *white* settlers or what we were doing there. It was assumed that the reason for the relational conflict was that there had just been some historical misunderstandings. As a teen, I understood the situation to be that both sides had harmed each other in the past, through wars and raiding and that we just needed to pray for better understanding and love in order to fix these rifts.

Later, at the age of 19, I lead my own mission team with the same organization and the same theme (Heal Our Land II), travelling through Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and was surprised at the intense messages by other *white* evangelical Christians, that Indigenous people, and their culture, were inherently 'fallen' or influenced by the devil, and in need of saving.

While in my 20s, my partner and I were members of an evangelical church which had their offices, and a drop-in centre, at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Main Street, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where they provided meals and hampers to street involved individuals who were primarily Indigenous. My partner had taken several Native Studies courses during his education degree and felt that the stereotypes that we were developing of 'native' people were not helpful. We reasoned that it might be beneficial to us to move to a First Nations community in order to get better insight into what brought Indigenous people to the streets of Winnipeg. We didn't expect to make any major positive changes to this community but, also, did not consider if our presence might be harmful in any way. We moved to Norway House, Manitoba, where my partner taught high school for two years.

While in Norway House, we attempted to make new friends by attending the local churches and were horrified by the messages we heard about Indigenous culture and language being evil, coming from Christian Indigenous leaders. We questioned how Christianity had become so distorted, assuming that this interpretation of Christianity was somehow influenced by the self-hatred originally sown by earlier missionaries to the area, and not by any current outsider influence. In hindsight, my lack of understanding of the ongoing role of colonialism, even in the absence of a *white* face in front of me, contributed to my confusion about the messages I was hearing from Indigenous Christians. At the time, I wondered if somehow the influence of capitalism, and the greed that drove development at the time when missionaries had first come to that area, had warped Christianity. I tried to read Adam Smith to see if I could separate capitalism, which I saw as the driving force of colonialism, and Christianity. I was becoming suspicious that evangelical Christianity as I knew it, had become too entwined in capitalist ideology to be universal. I blamed capitalist leaders for using Christianity as a tool of colonization and felt that Christianity had done much more harm than good in the community I was living in. I did not want to risk further harming the community, or people in it by promoting Christianity. I wondered how much harm promoting evangelical Christianity might be doing worldwide, and decided to distance myself from it, hoping to find some deeper spirituality that I could practice, which was not as entrenched in mainstream economics.

Upon returning to Winnipeg, my partner and I moved into a house purchased by our home church, with a federal grant from the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, in order to house and support people at risk of homelessness. We spent seven

years living with people who were at risk of homelessness, due to physical disabilities, addictions, mental illness, or due to being refugees. It was during this time that I began to study at the Inner City Social Work program where I learned about the history of colonization in Canada.

I worked in community development for a year before becoming frustrated with the process of carrying out the priorities of privileged *white* residents, who were mostly concerned with the appearance of the neighbourhood, while trying, without success, to coerce vulnerable and impoverished people to volunteer their time to the association. All the while, I felt like the fact that the economic policies and histories of colonization that made this community eligible for a development worker in the first place, were not being addressed.

I later worked in mental health in the Interlake/Northeastman region and soon noticed that in our filing cabinets, we had entire shelves devoted to single extended families from First Nations communities. In this context, mental health was not seen as a systemic social issue, but a medical issue. This perspective pathologized individuals and, under the auspice of privacy laws, kept workers, focusing primarily on the 'problem,' which was, more often than not, defined as the individuals' lack of motivation, or other moral failings. When systemic issues were discussed, my co-workers were often skeptical or resigned. They would respond by saying, the issues are "unfortunate," "just the way things are," "outside of anyone's control," or "outside our scope of practice."

During this time, I was also a part of a group focusing on anti-racist activism, made up of a couple professors from the inner city social work program, several other students, and a large group of individuals working within various aspects of human

services. Within that group, an article was circulated regarding *white* anti-racist activism and the need for *white* people to become more aware of their own racial identity. This article by Michael and Conger (2009) described the ways *white* people, who are working against racial injustice, may perpetuate oppression among the very people they are seeking to support, due to their own lack of racial identity awareness. In response to this article, those of us who identified as *white,* decided to meet, as a small group, in order to explore our own racial identity. The experience of this group, and the mentorship and support I received there, inspired me to return to school and to engage in this study.

Based on these experiences, growing up within religious institutions, exploring social justice within social work institutions and practice, and finally, connecting with others who were seeking insight into their own racial identity, I felt drawn to study racial identity further.

At this time, I decided to apply to the Master's of Social Work program and explore the concept of *whiteness* and how the lack of racial identity awareness affects the way social workers practice. I also wanted to look at the role social workers play in perpetuating racism when they support and strengthen systems of oppression through their practice. The following speaks about the context in which my studies occurred, historically and currently, and the role that social work, as a profession, as well as individual social workers, such as myself, play in this context.

Historical Context

This project takes place in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Several recent events, local, national and international, have impacted our city, such as the court case regarding the murder of Tina Fontaine, an Indigenous youth; the recent increase in numbers of refugees

and asylum seekers coming to Winnipeg; the completion and release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and recommendations; and the American election, Social workers operating within the social services industry are also touched, as a result of these events. It has been over two years since *Maclean's* magazine named Winnipeg the most racist city in Canada with its headline: "Welcome to Winnipeg Where Canada's racism problem is at its worst: How the death of Tina Fontaine has finally forced the city to face its festering race problem" (MacDonald, 2015, cover). This headline sparked conversations about racism in the media and among the general public. City Hall and the new mayor, Brian Bowman responded swiftly with a surprisingly non-defensive stance, organizing discussions about ways to respond to the issue (Annable, 2016). Anti-racist conferences and activities, including protests, have subsequently occurred, sometimes with individual social workers' participation, and occasionally with agencies' involvement.

We have reached the second anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (TRC), (Sinclair, Wilson & Littlechild, 2015). Many social service organizations are grappling with the 'calls to action' (Sinclair, Wilson & Littlechild, 2015b) and how to respond or implement them. Reconciliation circles are popping up throughout the city (Circles for Reconciliation, 2017; and Jonah Community Projects, 2017), some led by social workers who are often volunteering their personal time to these activities. Statements of reconciliation, apology, or commitments to the TRC calls to action have been made by a number of organizations (Jones, 2016; Marks, 2016; and Soussman, 2016).

After electing Liberal Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who promptly pledged to sponsor 25, 000 Syrian refugees in order to assist with the crisis abroad (Government of Canada, 2017), the City of Winnipeg is hosting a number of new settlement programs and services. These agencies are asking for additional government support to address the increased numbers of newly arrived refugees. At the same time, anti-immigrant sentiment and overt racist rhetoric have increased, particularly since the American presidential election, according to Whiteside (2017). Some agencies are responding with educational materials regarding various cultural groups and the international refugee crisis on social media and mainstream media. Individual social workers, and some agencies, are promoting organized responses, and encouraging individual Canadians to donate supplies for the wave of refugees crossing the US/Canadian border in Emmerson, Manitoba. I've received two personal e-mails from individuals collecting supplies for refugees crossing this boarder. Rainbow Resource Centre, a non-profit organization that supports the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trangender, Transvestite, Queer, 2 Spirited (LGBTTQ2S) community in Winnipeg, has also put out a call for donations for refugees on both public and social media (Grabish, 2017).

Many of these issues are a direct result of historical and ongoing, colonization in Canada, and the United States, in particular, settler colonialism. Evans (2004) distinguishes settler colonialism from other forms of colonialism, such as 'franchise colonialism,' used in places such as Africa and South Asia to extract labour or resources. In settler colonies, the land *is* the resource. Britain used settlers to convert the land into privately owned, potentially taxable property for economic development. Lowman and Barker's (2015) describe colonialism as having 'three pillars:

> (a) invasion continues through 'the social, political, and economic structures built by the invading people (b) settlers intend to stay which is characterized by their denial of Indigenous presence, and (c) 'the settler society becomes so deeply established that it is naturalized, normalized, unquestioned, and unchallenged' (p. 25).

Tuck and Yang (2012) point out that, despite the dominant narrative regarding the development of Canada, we are not an immigrant nation since immigrants are required to assimilate to the ways of the Indigenous population of the land they move to, but "…[s]ettlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies. Therefore, settler nations are not immigrant nations" (p.6-7). This is a very important distinction that is lost on nearly all of the narrative around inequality, resettlement and Indigenous peoples.

In Canada, like the United States (US), the earliest settlers were *white* and European. Since then, being *white* Anglo Saxon and protestant have been considered the 'norm.' Painter (2010) pointed out that anything other than *white* Anglo Saxon and protestant is considered 'other' and is sought to be, either assimilated into the dominant culture, or rejected by strict immigration laws and intentional marginalization. She said that, throughout history, "[t]o be *American* was to be *Saxon*" (p. 164). This has been the experience of almost every wave of newcomers to Canada (Davies, 1973; Fukushiam, 1992; Johnstone, 2016; Luhovy, 1994) and overwhelmingly, of Canada's Indigenous populations (Higgins, Madden, & Korteweg, 2015; Hughes, 2013; Jeffries & Bond, 2012).

Through an analysis of the history of race and racism, we now understand race to be socially constructed (Levine-Rasky, 2013; Painter, 2010; Salter, 2013). All of our systems, here in Canada operate within the assumption that *whiteness,* and the values of

settler colonial nations, in our case England and France, are normal, ideal, and aspirational. Johnstone (2016) described children's clubs created in Toronto in 1912 for impoverished immigrant communities which sought to engage the children in various activities designed for assimilation. She quotes James (1997) who states that "through this exercise in self-government the Toronto Boy's Dominion Club and the participating settlements not only presented the forms and practices of the Canadian state system as normal, natural and legitimate but as the paramount government form" (p. 1735). Social workers have not been exempt from this socialization and have often been the tool of colonization. Johnstone (2016) spoke about Canada's "history of adherence to the codes and performances of British civility with a display of the British notion of fair play through tolerance, negotiation, and diplomacy. This discourse included a benevolent mission to 'educate' and 'civilise' less fortunate people" (p. 1727). Robert and Seltzer (2010) summarize the perpetuation of colonialism through these words:

> [T]hose most often responsible for undermining the self-confidence of the colonized were not the soldiers, overseers, and other brutal agents of colonialism, but rather its more benevolent missionaries, teachers, administrators, and social workers educated persons united in their desire to help in various ways those defined as in need of assistance, guidance, and protection. (p. 124)

Jennissen and Lundy (2011) argue that social work in North America is founded on two benevolent ideologies noting that religion was a primary influence in the way people understood social problems and solutions for both ideologies. One was the housing settlement movement and the other the charity organization movement. Both had begun in England and emerged in Canada in the last 1890s.

The authors distinguished between these two groups by stating that the settlement workers focused on social change and social action, seeking to critique and challenge the

systems of colonization and The Charity Organization Society workers focused on determination of who were the "worthy poor" and the most efficient ways to administrate charity to them.

In Canada, social work has looked to the US for direction when developing its profession; particularly, in the area of social work education (Lundy & van Wormer, 2007). Isenburg (2016) speaks about the American social workers espousing the ideology of moralism and work ethic, found in the puritanism tradition. This tradition is idolized by Americans who see the pilgrims, a group of puritans seeking religious freedom who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, as the first 'real' Americans. Lundy and van Wormer (2007) described the early Puritans as "religious dissenters who were regarded as strange and fanatical in their day. Their creed was built on a strong work ethic and strict punishments for sloth and lust. The Puritans were weak on compassion and the tolerance of dissent" (p. 737). Capitalism was the dominant economic approach of the US, which built itself upon these values and used moralism and work ethic, "…to legitimate class differences and to blame many of the poor themselves as undeserving of aid" (p. 728).

During the early arrivals of immigrants to Canada, social workers were utilized to provide services to them and assisted in assimilating into the *white* settler culture. A famous manual written by J.S. Woodsworth for immigration social workers was critiqued for having a hierarchy of nationalities and ethnic groups beginning with British immigrants and ending with 'The Orientals' 'The Negro' and 'The Indian' (Johnstone, 2016). Johnstone (2016) describes a Canadian social work organization called The Imperial Daughters of the Empire (IODE). The director of IODE promoted ideas

currently supported by the growing *white* supremacist organizations in the United States (US). She advised social workers that:

> It is our duty as well as our privilege to help these foreign-born to a realization of the freedom and integrity of British citizenship ….The Chinese and Japanese immigration is a peril to white civilization. Many undesirable nationalities may settle in colonies and present a very difficult problem for assimilation, but the oriental races absolutely will not assimilate. If the number of yellow men and women increase, the inevitable will follow –a struggle as to whether or not the Pacific coast of our fair Dominion shall remain a possible [sic]white man's home. (p. 1730- 1731)

These ideas were inspired by the work of scientific racism, being promoted in the US, at the time, by individuals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, who followed the tradition of eugenics, according to Painter (2010), and whose ideas were widely accepted in European and North American academia.

As part of their immigration work more recently, social workers focused on inner-city mothers in order to give instructions on child rearing to ensure that those children would be assimilated into the dominant culture. Social clubs were formed in impoverished neighbourhoods in order to promote the values of the dominant culture, including 'work ethic' and 'self-sacrifice.'

It was these same ideals of assimilation that influenced the formation of the first residential schools for Indigenous children in 1870. The last residential school closed, in Manitoba, in 1996, according to the Truth and Reconciliation commissioners, Sinclair, Wilson and Littlechild (2015).

Manitoba had 14 residential schools, all together. These were run primarily by the Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations. Blackstock (2005) speaks about how social workers participated in removing children from their homes, along with the RCMP, to bring them to residential schools. She also notes the complete lack of protest by the social

work community, regarding the treatment of children in residential schools, even after the report by Dr. Bryce, the chief medical examiner at that time, who condemned the conditions of residential schools, was made public. The damage done by the residential school system has been well documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners' report, which speaks of widespread sexual and physical abuse and neglect. Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair (2015) called the entire residential school system, a genocide.

During the 1930s depression era, social work continued to promote an individualistic focus within its work. Jennissen and Lundy (2011) told about "The Charity Organization Societies, guided by the motto 'Not Alms but a Friend,' who advocated for 'scientific philanthropy' based on the premise that relief contributed to pauperism by promoting dependence and a reluctance to work" (p. 9). This group voiced its support for the government's plan to deny access to aid for able-bodied working age men, indicating that the issue of poverty was a personal moral one and not related to the economic conditions or other inequalities of the time.

Johnstone (2015) described some social workers' protests at this individualized which moralized the issue of poverty, noting that many challenged the Canadian Association of Social Work (CASW) to become more politicized. The author states that this discussion polarized the members, but the majority moved towards a gradual reform with a focus on psychological based, individual casework. Others argued that conditions resulting from the Depression needed to be addressed.

This focus on moral failing pathologized the individual, even in the area of public health issues. In 1937, a tuberculosis outbreak in Indigenous communities became

epidemic. In Manitoba 31% of tuberculosis deaths happened within the Indigenous population, despite that population making up only 2.2% of the population (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). The authors added that:

> Galbraith's report to the provincial health minister, while containing useful findings, also reflected racist attitudes regarding Aboriginal peoples that were prevalent at the time. In an explanation for the high incidence of TB, he referred to social conditions, but placed emphasis on the 'racial lack of immunity' and how over the years this 'racial weakness' has been gradually corrected with 'the infusion of white blood.' In proposing a response, Galbraith admits that while little is known about 'Indian psychology,' 'in general it is a matter of treating them like children but in other ways they prove to have shrewd powers of deduction that could not in any way be credited to children.' (p. 49)

It was around this time, that the authors noted the CASW gave their support to the Indian Act and to the development of the Department of Indian Affairs.

Johnstone (2015) described polarization in the 1920s "…between those who adhered to conservative, Christian, imperial agendas of individual responsibility and those who were more socialistic and left leaning with community-based solutions" (p. 397). Jennissen and Lundy (2011) described one social worker's response to the conflict regarding social workers' roles in social reform in 1934:

> 'To what extent am I, a social worker, to act in the role of social reformer? Where does my responsibility lie, in my immediate job, or in the larger social issues which that job raises?' She concluded that social workers ought not to be apologetic for the lack of social reform activities, but should be unashamed of it and even glad of it and courageously claim: 'We are not social reformers: we are social workers.' (p. 51)

For those social workers who focused on structural issues and social reform, there were repercusions. Lundy and van Wormer (2007) noted that workers involved in peace activism and poverty reduction were often influenced by the social gospel movement and were sometimes labeled as communist.

Jennissen and Lundy (2011) gave the example of the firing of a prominent social worker, Mary Jennison, based on the perception that she was promoting communist ideology. The authors noted that this was not an isolated event. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) kept a 'Red List' which included, "[m]embers of the [Communist Party of Canada] CPC, the [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] CCF, trade unions, women's organizations, gay and lesbians, and the peace movement…" (p. 125). Johnstone (2015) spoke about the influence of the 'Cold War' in Canada, from the 1940s to the 1950s, which resulted in a restriction on freedom of expression. She indicates that antipoverty advocacy was considered socialist/communist propaganda. Johnstone (2015) argued that this atmosphere contributed to multiple firings and monitoring of left leaning social workers in the US and in Canada.

During the 1960s, the federal government asked the CASW for their feedback on the 'white paper' and on concerns about poverty in Indigenous communities. They responded with concerns about excessive drinking among "Indian, Eskimo and Metis" attributing it to characteristics of "immaturity, grief, boredom & sickness." (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011, p. 248). These authors noted that the CASW was never considered a 'risk' by RCMP or government officials, at any point, but that individual social workers were targeted.

This is also the time in which social work was responsible for what is now commonly referred to as "the Sixties Scoop." Blackstock (2005) notes that social workers providing services on reserves, ignored the impacts of colonization and removed children from their homes in such large numbers that they would sometimes hire busses to take the

children away. This was a continuation of the cultural genocide perpetrated by the residential schools.

Conflict within the social work community between the push for professionalization of social workers and those promoting a focus on social justice was ongoing. These tensions revealed themselves repeatedly, becoming more obvious at times when campaigns for the legal regulation of social work were being debated in each province. In Ontario, during the Common Sense Revolution, massive budget cuts affected large portions of social services. Social workers neglected to challenge these cuts, instead, choosing to spend their energies on pursuing regulation in the field.

Manitoba was not exempt from these tensions. The licensing of social workers came into legal effect on April 1, 2015 after a long campaign by the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers. There was critique of the Social worker licensing bill, throughout the process, by members of the Aboriginal Social Workers, and other individuals who argued that the bill sought to control the practice of social work among Aboriginal people without their consent or participation.

Jennissen and Lundy (2011) claimed that registration does not protect society any more than it already is, as social workers almost all work within agencies with their own policies and supervision. Social workers who work privately often choose to register so that their fees will be covered by their clients' health insurance benefits. The authors argued that the focus on becoming 'legitimate' as a profession, to the other professions, moves social work into the same colonizing practices as the systems in which they work and reduces the likelihood of social workers challenging these systems. Back in the 1950', Greenwood warned that professionalization of social work may move attention

away from understanding those we work with to a focus on becoming experts of various methods and techniques (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011).

Current Context

Today, social workers practice in most areas of human services, including child welfare, the justice system, the healthcare system, the education system, mental health, and many more. In all of these areas, Indigenous people, in particular, experience significantly worse outcomes than non-Indigenous Canadians and continue to report experiences of racism within.

Some scholars and observers from outside of Canada, such as Mitrou, Cooke, Lawrence, Povah, Mobilia, Guimond, et al. (2014) have noted the disparities between Indigenous people and the rest of Canadians in terms of income, unemployment and level of education attained for individuals aged 25-29, and have joined their voices in pointing out the need for urgent change. Anaya (2014), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reported repeatedly about the situation of Indigenous people, in Canada, noting that the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, in terms of well-being, is increasing and that trust by Indigenous people towards the Canadian government is low.

Specific historical events, such as the residential school experience, and the 60s scoop, continue to reverberate around this country on a daily basis (de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010; Fallon, Chabot, Fluke, Blackstock, MacLaurin & Tonmyr, 2013). “The 60s scoop,” discussed by Dussault, Erasmus, Chartrand, Meekison, Robinson, Sillet, et al. (1996) and Kundougqk and Qwul’sih’yah’maht (2009) overlapswith the residential schools in its devastation on Indigenous peoples. Today, Indigenous children are taken

from their families, by the child welfare system, in far greater numbers than non-Indigenous children (Jeffery, 2009; Strega & Esquao, 2009). Hughes (2013) reported that "…[m]ore than 80% of Manitoba children in care are Aboriginal" and that, "[t]he picture is similar across Canada, and the numbers are growing" (p. 28). The outcomes for these children are terrible. Barker, Kerr, Alfred, Fortin, Nguyen, Wood, et al. (2014) stated that, "youth exposed to the child welfare system continue well into early adulthood with elevated rates of poverty, under-employment, housing instability, incarceration, unplanned pregnancies, and subsequent government involvement with parenting, mental health, physical health and substance use issues" (p. 2).

From the child welfare system to the justice system, Indigenous people are over-represented (Chartrand, Whitecloud, McKay, & Young, 2000; Jeffries & Bond, 2012; Owusu-Bempah, Kanters, Druyts, Toor, Muldoon, Farquhar, et al., 2014). Turnbull (2014) stated that in 2010–2011, Indigenous peoples comprised "21.5 % of the federal incarcerated population, despite representing only 4% of the Canadian population" (p. 386). In Manitoba, the figures are the highest in Canada, according to Owusu-Bempah, et al. (2014) who advised that Indigenous people in the provincial system are incarcerated at a "rate of 1,377.6 individuals in custody per 100,000 population..." (p. 2-3), which is 95% of the prison population. This is despite the fact that Indigenous people make up only 14% of the general population of this province, according to Statistics Canada (2011).

Within the justice system, Indigenous people are often seen as deficient, compared to *white* people, when colonial history is ignored. This discrimination contributes to the negative outcomes faced by Indigenous people within the justice system (Chartrand, Whitecloud, McKay & Young, 2000; Wesley, 2012).

The education system has not escaped charges of racism. Aylward (2007) posed that "Euro-centric public schooling in Canada perpetuates damaging myths about [I]ndigenous peoples and, through 'cognitive imperialism' and 'cognitive assimilation,' has contributed to the limitations of [I]ndigenous students' potential" (p. 2). Higgins, Madden and Korteweg (2015) and Neeganagwedgin (2013) agreed with this assessment of the education system. Seawright (2014) discussed the harm done to Indigenous students by enforcing Euro-centric curriculum that enforces a "'white norm' and poses as morally superior, thereby discriminating against Indigenous people" (p. 2). Lamb (2014) wrote about "early school leavers" who reject the Canadian school system for a variety of reasons, including "socio-cultural, institutional, and individual factors" (p. 157). This group of 'leavers' is greater in number in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population. Lamb (2104) cited Kunz, Milan, and Schetagne who found "that numerous Aboriginal and visible-minority youth report experiencing discrimination at both the individual and institutional levels from peers, teachers, and what many argue is a predominantly Euro-centric curriculum" (p. 157).

This "Euro-centric curriculum" is also dominant within our health care system, whose medical model has been found to be oppressive to Indigenous people in Canada. Wexler (2011) argued that the "Euro-American cultural framework creates systems of care that render complex social, political, economic and cultural phenomena into individual pathology devoid of context and in need of professional interventions" (p. 160). Kanta, Vertinsk, Zheng, and Smith (2013) agreed with both Anaya's (2014) and Wexler's (2011) arguments that "[i]f the Aboriginal peoples of Canada were considered as a separate national entity, that nation would have ranked 48th out of 175 countries in

the United Nations' Human Development Report, while Canada regularly ranks at or near the top" (p. 463).

At the service level, many have pointed out that evidence-based practice is based on Euro-centric models. Walker and Bigelow (2011) named 'Evidence-Based Practice' as a specifically Euro-centric practice, which they considered inappropriate when applied to Indigenous communities and individuals. These concerns were echoed by Furman (2009); Payne (2014); and Wexler (2011), who reminded the users that this practice is not "value-free" and privileges Euro-centric values above all others. Evidence-based practice is promoted and utilized by social workers, sometimes without discrepancy for who it is applied. If not reflexive about their practice, *white* social workers may represent and/or reproduce the oppression the systems produce toward the Indigenous clients they seek to serve.

Many have written about the high rates of mental illness among Indigenous people in Canada compared to the non-Indigenous population (Anaya, 2014; Elias, Mignone, Hall, Hong, Hart, & Sareen, 2012; Gone, 2013). Ignoring the history of colonization and ongoing trauma related to mental health challenges among Indigenous populations can result in social workers and other health care workers pathologizing Indigenous people (Cole, 2008; Rober & Seltzer, 2010; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschu, 2011). This is racism. This is harmful. Le Francois (2013) took an even stronger stance stating, "I enter the discussion on madness and psychiatrization through breathing the air and walking the halls of 'benevolent' institutions, such as child protection and psychiatry, institutions that produce "mental illness" through the psychiatrization of the people they are meant to support" (p. 108).

Measurement tools used in mental health, such as the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual* (DSM) have also been criticized by Indigenous authors and others, such as, Elias, Mignone, Hall, Hong, Hart and Sareen (2012), who described the inadequacy of the DSM to encompass the experience of Indigenous people as means of assessing individual mental health and pointed out that the DSM, "does not recognize colonization, ongoing colonizing practices, and multigenerational trauma as legitimate traumatic events or effects" (p. 1567). Despite these embedded inadequacies, this manual is still widely and extensively used by social workers within the mental health system to assess individuals and to determine access to resources based on the criteria listed for diagnosis.

Social Work's Response to the Current Context

Not all *white* social workers, nor other *white* human service workers, have been indifferent to complaints by the Indigenous community about the services received and their outcomes within these systems. Initial attempts to correct these problems took the form, primarily, of learning more about Indigenous people through cultural awareness workshops and diversity training.

The outcomes of these types of cultural awareness workshops and diversity training sessions have been varied and inconclusive (Garran & Werkmeister, 2013; Lie, Lee-Rey, Gomez, Bereknyei & Braddock, 2010; Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, Montoya, & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Some would go further and state that they have actually been harmful. Pon (2009) argued that "[c]ultural competency resembles new racism both by 'other-izing' non-whites and by deploying modernist and absolutist views of culture while not using racialist language" (p. 59). These concerns were reiterated by Garran and Werkmeister (2013); Jeffery (2009) and Loya (2011) who stated that these programs

"...reproduced enduring assumptions about the 'Other' that were not far removed from the paternalism, imperialism and racism of early social work" (p. 49).

Baltra-Ulloa (2013); Josewski (2012); Maiter (2009); and Turnbull (2014) all voiced concerns about these programs, affirming that they perpetrate, at best, a simplified view of Indigenous culture and, at worst, a deficit view. Within social work education, Mlcek (2014) warned that programs intended to 'celebrate diversity' are:

> …premised on a universal theme of inclusion and access, …[are] often used unknowingly to promote whiteness behaviours that at best demonstrate indulgent practice and at worst racialization of peoples to maintain their marginalized status. In [this case] practitioners/ social workers cannot practice 'unknowingly' otherwise they perpetuate racist behaviours. (p. 1986)

When we continually study the 'other,' even with so-called 'good intentions,' the result is that we continue to reinforce the idea that there is an 'other.' For this reason, I believe, a critical approach is essential when attempting to address racism and the outcomes of systemic racism.

To believe that one group has a deficit culture requires one to believe that one's own culture is superior. This is called *white supremacy* when applied to *white* culture. Pon (2009) did not mince words when hypothesizing the motivation of social workers to continue with these programs:

> Cultural competency discourses free social workers from having to confront whiteness and Canada's history of white supremacy. In other words, cultural competency constructs knowledge about cultural "others" in a way that does not challenge social workers' sense of innocence and benevolence. (p. 66)

Another critique of these programs is the lack of discourse regarding power (Garran & Werkmeister, 2013; Josewski, 2012; Pon, 2009). Sakamoto (2007) declared that "[w]here analysis of power is lacking or inadequate, culture is seen as neutral, thereby allowing the systems of oppression (such as racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia,

Islamaphobia, able-ism) that initially motivated the call for cultural competence to disappear into the background" (p. 108).

Criticism of the cultural competency programs often points to the tendency of these programs to assume that *white* culture is invisible, normal or superior, in contrast to other cultures. Authors such as Salter (2013); Seawright (2014); Sullivan (2006); and Souto-Manning (2011) spoke about the need for reflexivity in order to combat unconscious racial attitudes and to become aware of systemic racism. Kundougqk and Qwul'sih'yah'maht' (2009), writing about child welfare workers, stated that, "…in order to strive for social justice, we must begin this process by asking ourselves how we know what we know. ...We believe the best helpers are those who know themselves best" (p. 36).

Reflexivity is understood, within social work education, as a critical part of effective social work practice. Its position as a 'best practice' in social work is not new.Gould (2015) notes that the term is rarely given a clear definition and, within social work, there is not always a clear delineation between reflexive practice and critical reflection. Critical reflexivity would include being aware of one's own context including race, ethnicity, culture and acknowledgement of power.

Authors such as Boston (2009); McCoyd and Kerson (2013); and Rosin (2015) all exhorted social workers and counselors to be reflexive in their practice. They speak about the positive results of doing this. Race is definitely an area requiring reflexivity in practice.

Cash, Moffitt, Fraser, Grewal, Holmes, Mahara, et al. (2013) described Browne and Fiske's use of reflexivity in cultural safety training "to uncover discriminatory

practices of nurses caring for Aboriginal women within the Canadian health care system… By raising awareness of how, and in what ways the oppression occurs, nurses can illuminate for themselves how their agencies can shape culturally safe experiences..." (p. 827). The authors stated that reflexivity "involves a form of praxis, deep reflection and dialogue that exemplifies the political nature of the illuminary process" (p. 827).

Lately, many universities have been including critical perspective classes within various departments including social work, education, psychology and theology Miller, Hyde and Ruth (2004) warn that teaching these programs require extensive self-examination and encourage professors to engage in their own learning and be aware of the discomfort and vulnerability that they and their students are likely to experience when attempting to deconstruct their own privilege.

Critical whiteness studies are a part of that curriculum and are, essentially, a challenge to dominant culture to reflect upon their own values and ways of practicing or being which may be oppressive towards 'others.' Johnstone (2015) pointed out the necessity of this education within social work. Mlcek (2014) agreed, stating:

> In order to combat the outcomes of an ethnocentric mono-culturalism, social work education needs to incorporate the naming of behaviours that accentuate 'blindness' and perpetuate the 'invisibility' of oppressive and marginalizing structures within society. The manifestation of making the 'invisible' visible is to note the insidious components of the phenomenon, with its central core of superiority, and to be especially aware of the non-universality of cultural experience. (p. 1987)

Several studies examined the use of alternative pedagogical methods that attempted to externalize the problem and address it in a less direct way in order to make *whiteness* visible. These methods hoped to provoke less reactivity than by confronting *whiteness* directly. The implication being that extreme reactivity may distract individuals

and groups from being able to engage in a reflexive process. Gosselin (2011) described using metaphors as a means of addressing *whiteness* indirectly and argues that "[a]s figurative expressions, metaphors can serve as powerful instigators of doubt. By depicting un-interrogated beliefs in more tangible forms, metaphors engender the potential of exposing hidden beliefs, meanings, and the discourses in which they are constructed" (p. 28). In her mixed methods study, Souto-Manning (2011) described how using Boalian theatre games in the classroom allowed students to play with power and privilege …while at the same time introducing a veil as they read the world in which they lived from conscious locations and positionings" (p. 1003).

Friedman and Hirschfeld (2012) observed and reported reactivity within cultural safety training when individuals of dominant cultures felt threatened by challenges to their dominance and their mythologies of themselves as good, peaceful people. Richardson (2011) "argues for a shift away from a reductionist, essentialist framing of cultural safety toward a relational and narrative identity approach" (p. 46). The authors recommended that applying cultural safety [knowledge] not be held as "the sole responsibility of the individual nurse" (p. 46), but considered a collective and systemic responsibility.

Those who have taught or observed critical theory courses also report intense reactivity on the part of their *white* students. The studies referred repeatedly to McIntosh's (1989) and Helms and Carter's (1990) writings as a basis for their curriculum. Reactivity is expected when confronting issues related to identity and most scholars writing about critical white theory argue that reactivity may be a necessary part of change. Authors who advocated for less direct challenging of *whiteness* described participants/students and sometimes instructors, inability to engage in the process and whose outbursts affected

other students negatively. The influence of various levels of reactivity on changes in racial identity awareness, and increased reflexivity has not been documented.

Quantitative studies conducted on the outcomes of courses that utilized MacIntosh's article in their teaching of racial privilege and diversity reported change, but did not describe which specific changes happened. Others, such as Case (2007), reported an appearance of increased fear of 'others' that resulted in decreased cross-cultural friendship. Case hypothesized that this was the result of students having previously inflated their reports of cross-cultural friendships and then re-evaluated this at the end of the course. These studies were limited in that they did not explain the teaching approaches that led to such results.

The qualitative studies reviewed, focused on the experience of the courses for instructors and students and reported reactivity on the part of both. Crowley & Smith (2015) and Holland (2014) each found that the instructors had difficulty considering race as a structural phenomenon and recommended further training for instructors. Instructors need to understand that our education, health, justice, and social service systems are all created as tools of colonization and are based on Eurocentric models of practice, which inherently marginalize, pathologize and penalize those who are not *white*. This is distinct from the behavior or intentions of individuals working within those systems.

Todd and Abrams (2011) interviewed students at a university. In analyzing the data collected from these interviews, the authors identified characteristic that appeared within the data, which they referred to as 'white dialectics.' "White dialectics are the tensions that White [sic] people inherently experience as dominant group members in the United States. Some examples of 'white dialectics' which are given by the authors include

"(a) Whiteness and self, (b) connection in multiracial relationships, (c) color blindness, (d) minimization of racism, (e) structural inequality, and (f) White privilege" (253). Given this imbalance of power..." the authors described *white* identities as "...complex, fractured, and full of contradiction" (p. 354). For those attempting to teach critical perspectives, it is important to recognize that these characteristics will likely be at play in *white* students and instructors alike.

In Manitoba, the 'critical perspectives' course became mandatory within the Masters' of Social Work program at the University of Manitoba in 2014. My own experience in the inaugural course was that many of my fellow *white* students, in this class of approximately 18 students, were highly reactive to the material presented and challenged much of the course material, sometimes vacillating between expressions of guilt and anger. Students who identified as Indigenous or 'of color' within this class, initially spoke about how the course content was true to their own experience, but became less vocal and sometimes silent when other students challenged the course content. There were times throughout this course that I wondered if students were reacting to the way in which the material was presented and not only to the course content. I felt that it might have been helpful for the teacher to normalize some of their reaction by speaking about how others responded to this content, or given some guidance on processing our own responses between classes, on our own. Instead there was little response to students' comments and, the instructor spoke about feeling unsure of the process, overall. Sometimes, it felt as if the presentation may have been a distraction from the material and threatened to potentially undermine the content.

Several authors spoke about trying a less direct approach to addressing *whiteness* as a result of the intense reactivity reported. Sullivan (2006), for example, warned that "…[a]s unconscious habit, white privilege operates as nonexistent and actively works to disrupt attempts to reveal its existence. Given this modus operandi, habits of white privilege are more likely to be changed by indirect, rather than direct, assaults upon them" (p. 1-2). From our earlier examination, *white* identity and characteristics appear to operate under the same modus and would, therefore, benefit from the same approach.

Sometimes, the reaction of *white* students, upon learning about racial privilege, is one of guilt (Salter, 2013; Ware, 2013). Kowal (2010) described the concept of "white stigma" which she compares to the feelings of German citizens after World War II when the atrocities of the war were revealed. Kowal stated that this sense of stigma can be paralyzing and is not useful in promoting a better anti-racist society, as it is self-centred. Salter (2013) describes 'white guilt' which paralyses individuals and prevents them from constructive action while burdening others, often those who've been oppressed, with their need to be 'forgiven.' She then contrasts the concept of *white* guilt with 'settler grief' which she describes as the recognition of pain caused by colonialism and structural racism without becoming mired in the need for assurance from others, and which, in Salter's opinion, is more productive.

DiAngelo (2011) spoke about the concept of 'white fragility' as an explanation for reactivity in these settings, and described it this way:

> In the dominant position, whites are almost always racially comfortable and thus have developed unchallenged expectations to remain so. Whites have not had to build tolerance for racial discomfort and thus when racial discomfort arises, whites typically respond as if something is "wrong," and blame the person or event that triggered the discomfort (usually a person of color). (p. 60)

When viewing reactivity as 'fragility', DiAngelo (2011) recommended that interventions be focused on "stamina-building" (p. 67), meaning that *whites* need to develop the ability to hear a challenge without reacting strongly.

Mlcek (2014) reported that in her two year New Zealand social work program, which focuses on cultural competency with a critical lens:

> Hardly any students nominate themselves in the 'autonomy' stage of Helm's model; that is, they typically note something like: I understand our systems are not perfect and that I am not perfect. I now feel more empathy than sympathy and actively try to learn the appropriate ways to engage in situations where my skin colour may be a defining factor. One day I hope I can move into the Autonomy status of Helm's model, however I acknowledge that to do so I will have to no longer feel fearful, uncomfortable and intimidated by race. (p. 1994)

Since the formation of the Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) in 2014, mandatory cultural competency training, in the form of workshops or seminars, is required of all social workers who join the college. Social workers can propose training to be approved by the College, but the training which has been approved, to date, has a very limited focus on *whiteness* with only one workshop ("The Box and the Circle") offering a section on Western ways of organizing society and its influence on Indigenous communities.

My own experience in a critical perspectives class led me to wonder how much reactivity was helpful in increasing racial identity awareness and how much, or what kind of reactivity was not. Many studies, including Hardiman and Keehn (2012) and DiAngelo (2011) simply observe and document the reactivity to inquiries about *whiteness* and privilege as a sort of anthropological curiosity of *white* characteristics without attempting to change their study participants' level of racial understanding. Others note varying levels of reactivity in the context of their interventions, such as Sullivan (2006), and work

to circumvent strong reactivity in the hopes of promoting greater racial identity awareness but seem unsure of the effects of higher or lower reactivity. Some showed evidence that programs with a critical lens, such as 'cultural safety training' for nurses, as described by Friedman and Hirschfeld (2012) and Mlcek's (2014) had influenced students in a positive way by shifting their perceptions on things like meritocracy, *white* privilege, and systemic racism. These programs noted that reactivity was not absent from these programs but suggested that it was the long term, in-depth education, that appeared to be the largest positively contributing factors to changes in attitudes.

Quantitative studies, such as Case (2007) and Loya (2011), reported changes in racial attitudes, as a result of the courses, but didn't always specify what those changes were. Other studies, such as Crowley and Smith (2015) and Holland (2014), described the workshops or classes given, in detail, but did not describe what, if any changes took place, as a result. My study seeks to describe both the process undertaken to raise racial identity awareness among social workers and the experience of the participants throughout this intervention.

Todd and Abrams (2011) and Kowal (2010) spoke about reactivity within classes and workshops on critical perspectives and cultural safety training and gave suggestions for responding to this reactivity but rarely described the implementation of these suggestions.

This study is designed to minimize conflict that would distract from the topic and the task by creating a collaborative environment of peers, who are not mandated to participate by any regulatory body, working from a narrative perspective on the topic of racial identity awareness, and whom all identify, racially, as *'white.'* Currently there are

no continuing education workshops on the topic of *'whiteness'* and its impact on practice, provided by professional associations, such as the Manitoba College of Social Work, for practitioner social workers. This study seeks to provide this for currently practicing social workers in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Going forward, if social workers in Manitoba are to address the deplorable outcomes for Indigenous people within the social service systems, and respond effectively to the growing anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric creeping into our society, we need to become better equipped at deconstructing these ideologies and understanding their influence on our systems and on ourselves. A lack of critical perspective and reflexivity among the majority of *white* social workers practicing in any human service system puts *white* social workers at a high risk of perpetrating oppression among those that they set out to serve and potentially repeating the horrors of history that we have not yet learned from. This is what this study seeks to address.

Process evaluation was chosen due to the gap in the literature about programs, classes, and workshops on cultural competency, cultural safety and critical theory. In the literature, studies tended to be either quantitative, measuring changes in racist attitudes or awareness, or qualitative, focusing on the instructor or interviewers' observations of the intervention. None provided insight from the participants' experience. This study seeks to provide this insight.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical Underpinnings

Addressing racism through a critical lens requires an understanding of the theories associated with race. For this reason, critical *whiteness* theory, (Dottolo & Stewart, 2013; McIntosh, 1997) a 'child' of critical race theory, is the primary theory informing this study. Throughout this study, an anti-colonial framework, which centres Indigenous knowledge was also utilized. These frameworks led me to use a Narrative process in order to deconstruct dominant narratives regarding race and *whiteness*, as many Indigenous scholars called for a re-storying of dominant narratives. Narrative processes can be found in narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990). Narrative therapy identifies itself as being post-structural and informed by Foucault, according to Guilfoyle (2012).

Critical Whiteness Theory

The recent advent of critical theory classes as a means of responding to accusations of systemic racism within social services are based on theories situated within critical race theory (Levine-Rasky, 2013). There are varying claims about when this field of study began; most cite W.E.B. duBois, as one of the earliest contemporary critical race theorists, a black man with much to say about the culture and psychology of *white* people, according to Levine-Rasky (2013). A focus on *whiteness* as a problematic racial identity is an area of study that has only recently been taken up by *white* scholars, according to Levine-Rasky (2013), who pointed out that "racialized scholars and observers have studied whiteness for at least a century, barring a few early books in the 1970s, it has been the object of study for white scholars only since the early 1990s" (p. 4). Dottolo and Stewart (2013) attributed the increase in '*whiteness interrogating*' to McIntosh's (1989) widely distributed article on *white privilege.*

Many authors have attempted to define the term '*whiteness'* that is used in this field, but Salter (2013) pointed out the difficulties of attempting this, either definitively or generally, due to the fact that *whiteness* is often characterized by what it is not, or by its negative traits. Aylward (2007); Clarke (2010) and Levine-Rasky (2013) described the way *whiteness* exists against the backdrop of 'others.' Anyone who is not *white* is 'othered' and without 'others' there can be no 'us' to make up the *white* community. Of the authors reviewed who attempted a definition of *whiteness*, Brown, Spatzier and Tobin (2010); James (2014); Jeffery (2009); Salter (2013); and Ware (2009) all referred to the 'normativity' of *whiteness* or of having the power to define normality based on one's own culture. Ambrosio (2014); Jeffery (2009); Levine-Rasky (2013); and Salter (2013) spoke of *whiteness* as performative. Higgins, Madden and Korteweg (2015) James (2014); Jeffery (2009); and Salter (2013) all included the concept of *white privilege* in their definitions of *whiteness* and James (2014); Jeffery (2009) and Ware (2009) included domination as a tenant of *whiteness*. Concepts such as binary thinking which situate *whites* as innocent (Ambrosio, 2014), and invisible to themselves (Higgins, Madden & Korteweg, 2015) were also mentioned as aspects of the definition of *whiteness*. All agreed that *whiteness* is a problematic, socially constructed identity. As *white* social workers, it is clear to see why this identity, if not critically reflected upon, could cause the types of concerns that Indigenous people, and others, have about their experiences and outcomes within our human services.

Clarke (2010) stated that, "[t]he assertion that whiteness denotes an absence of specificity, or is an invisible non-raced identity, is the traditional starting point for discussions of whiteness" (p. 39). Aylward (2007); Helms and Carter (1990); Higgins,

Madden and Korteweg (2015); and Sleeter (2011), described this bizarre phenomenon where everyone except *white* people can see and name *whiteness* and its characteristics. Levine-Rasky (2013) described the imposition of this 'invisibility' on others: "[i]n the present, whiteness goes unnamed; without a name, a thing cannot be known, debated, or apprehended. IT [sic] only can be. Whiteness thus silently imposes itself as the standard by which social difference is to be known" (p. 4). Those that are not 'different' Levine-Rasky, pointed out, are, therefore, normal. Clarke (2010) noted that *whiteness*, while overlooking its own uniqueness and values, imposes those very values on others.

Dyer (2005) described this concept of *whiteness* as 'normal' as a form of *white superiority*:

> White people have power and believe that they think, feel and act like and for all people; white people, unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other peoples; white people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image; white people set standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail. (p.12)

Aside from having the power to define normality and judge all else against it, the publication of McIntosh's (1989), now famous article "Unpacking the Invisible Backpack" brought into peoples' consciousness the many privileges held by *white* people. After that, critical *whiteness* theorists began to explore the concept of *white privilege* starting with the premise set out by McIntosh that they are unearned, and often invisible to, and even vehemently denied by, *whites*. Acknowledging *white privilege* would be, in effect, to deny the concept of meritocracy (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Pease, 2010). Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) spoke about liberalism in America which claims that American society is based on fairness and equality where everyone is rewarded based on their merits and stated that this liberalism refuses to critique things like

capitalism, racism or patriarchy which contribute to inequalities. This reification of the notion of meritocracy results in the belief that all racism is a result of personal prejudice and can only be dealt with at an individual level (Ambrosio, 2014).

If a *white* person were to deny the reality of meritocracy in society and admit to the privilege they experience, due to their race, this admission might create an intense internal conflict over the conception of *white* innocence, which is central to *white* identity. Social workers, in particular, like to see themselves as benevolent and well intentioned. LeFrancois (2013) addressed this desire directly:

> Yet, whiteness is an organizing principle in social work and attending to that fantasy, that desire, that aspiration of whiteness may enable us now to deconstruct the discourse of social work as a 'benevolent' institution and disrupt the reproduction of myself as the 'good' social worker. White identity is self-defined as being 'good', being 'innocent', and being 'virtuous'. It is through these discourses surrounding white identity and 'benevolent' institutions that the 'good' social worker is formed: one who reconstitutes the social relation of dominance and subordination with racialized and colonized others. (p. 116)

Nadan and Ben-Ari (2013) pointed out that this identity of 'goodness' and 'innocence' is based in a binary that is central in Euro-centric philosophy and requires that there be a polar opposite. Therefore, if 'we' are good, then 'they' must be bad. The authors claim that this binary is responsible for much of the racism and divisions found in Euro/American societies.

Whiteness as fragile was a concept introduced by DiAngelo (2011) who used this concept to explain the reactivity noted among scholars who studied critical theory classes. DiAngelo proposed that as a dominant group, *whites* are unaccustomed to being challenged and react strongly when they are. DiAngelo spoke about the need for *white* people to build stamina in order to be able to accept critical feedback about themselves without having strong explosive emotional reactions.

Narrative Process

While narrative therapy is not necessarily considered a critical approach, it does align itself well with critical theory and, as a process, can be very reflexive. In social work, narrative therapy is used in counseling and group work. Narrative therapy is based on social constructivism and looks to Foucault as a primary theorist within this practice (Cobb & Negash, 2010; Freedman, 2014; White & Epston, 1990). Given that race, including *whiteness*, is a socially constructed phenomenon, narrative therapy seemed the appropriate approach with which to deconstruct *whiteness.*

Fook (2012a) provided an in-depth process for critical reflexivity in social work practice, following a narrative process, where dominant narratives can be identified, deconstructed and re-constructed. Parker and Wampler (2006) spoke about the effects of 'storying' as "a tool to reduce negative affect and emotions" (p. 164). Narrative therapists work together with participants to define the problem narratives (Augusta-Scott, 2009; Chow, 2015; White & Epston, 1990). This is in contrast to standard psychiatric diagnostics in which participants have no input into defining their problems.

White and Epston (1990) stated that, "externalizing is an approach to therapy that encourages persons to objectify and, at times, to personify the problems that they experience as oppressive" (p. 38). 'Externalization,' in narrative therapy, has been described by Bermudez (2002); Cobb and Negash (2010) and Davis (2000) as happening through verbal processes, through art (including performance art), rituals, through ceremonies, and through writing.

Within critical race theory, metaphors have been used as pedagogical tools for the same externalizing purpose: Gosselin (2011) quoted Kegan who asserted that "[t]hrough

metaphoric expressions, students can unconsciously express their implicit beliefs as well as reveal their tendencies to misinterpret information preened from coursework and experiences at field sites that are intended to confront their assumptions and presuppositions about teaching and learning" (p. 28).

Within individual therapy, externalizing problems has been known to be helpful in mitigating the sense of 'self as problem,' according to (Combs & Freedman, 2012). However, these authors cite Denborough, who notes that, "[t]he person is not the problem, the problem is the problem, and . . . the solution is not only personal" (p. 192). Denborough went on to say that, "I am interested in ensuring that, once the problem is externalized (therefore placed in the social realm), the solution does not simply return to a personal one, and that, instead, opportunities are created for collective contribution... social movement." (p. 192)

Sliep, Weingarten and Gilbert (2004) spoke about the "shame, blame and secrecy" (p. 307) that occur when individuals or families are singled out from the collective and identified as key contributors to the problem, resulting in little collective responsibility taken, or change. Denborough (2008) quoted Panch Arguelles who said, "If it doesn't start personal, it does not start. But if it ends personal then it ends" (p. 191). In Denborough's work, he describes the 'strength based approach' he took when working to end domestic violence in a refugee camp. The trust building, which happened when Deneborough spoke about the problem as something he assumed the whole community was concerned about, demonstrates a therapeutic alliance built between himself and the community.

Therapeutic alliance has been found to be a key factor in promoting behavioral

changes in a wide variety of areas including addiction treatment, eating disorders, and medication adherence, to name a few (Campbell, Guydish, Le, Wells, Mccarty, & Petry, 2015).

Indigenous scholars, and other scholars, have spoken, repeatedly, about the role of storytelling and 're-storying' and its influence on racism. Social workers are not exempt from the influence of colonial imperialistic stories about Indigenous people. de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron (2010) recounted the history of discourse regarding "Indigenous deviance" and described the attitude of white policy and programming for Indigenous people as being "(f)or their own good" (p. 286). Aylward (2007), Neeganagwedgin (2013), and Walker and Bigelow (2011) described the perpetration of colonial myths used to justify interventions in Indigenous communities and claim that these myths are the basis on which racism rests. Sium and Ritskes (2013) challenged 'settlers' to re-story history and to not deny the harm that has been done to Indigenous people. "Settler narratives must speak stories of embodying colonial violence(s) and complicity in the ongoing settler violence(s) against Indigenous peoples" (p. IV).

Hylton (2012) pointed to the use of storytelling in critical race theory. "Critical race theorists recognize that stories or discourses have been the privilege of those historically influential in knowledge generation and research. Counter-stories however, can present views rarely evidenced in social research" (p. 27). Summer (2014) pointed out that "[c]ounter-narratives tell the stories that the mainstream narratives tend to silence" (p. 199). King (2003), an Indigenous scholar, traced the types of myths that have influenced colonialism in Canada, such as the myth of the "vanishing Indian," and the mythological image of what an Indian is, which resulted in challenges to Indigenous identity. King

(2003) asked what North America would be like if white people had listened to Indigenous stories that were non-binary and non-hierarchical instead of the Euro-centric myths which embody binaries and hierarchies and encouraged his listeners to seek out alternate stories.

Anti-Colonial Framework

In their request for the re-storying of the racist ideology that informs the colonial systems we live under, and within, Indigenous scholars such as Gray, Coates, and Yellow Bird (2013) and Dumbrill and Green (2008), asked that Indigenous knowledge be centered within our systems. Lewis (2012) also called for academics and activists to

> incorporate and further develop an anti-colonial analysis to expand our ethical research considerations. This is especially true for those of us who continue to do our academic and activist work on Indigenous lands in centers of power and privilege that benefit from processes of colonization and who seek to stand with Indigenous peoples in solidarity against colonialism and all forms of oppression and domination. (p. 227-228)

Lewis spoke about the need for academics to support other activists in relational and ethical ways by "embracing the concept of affinity—the sharing of common ground for struggle, and solidarity and support for those who resist. (p. 229)" He went on to say that introducing Indigenous perspectives into critical paradigms results in a decolonizing perspective and noted that research must include, and be accountable to, Indigenous perspectives, above and beyond other western ideologies.

Carlson (2016) argued that *white* settler researchers should work from a perspective that centres Indigenous knowledge even when doing research with *white* participants. She stated that,

> (i)t is critical that while those from marginalized space are reclaiming and unlearning what colonization has done, those from dominant space also understand and claim their identities and traditional places in this world in a non-dominating

> manner. Importantly Eurocentric thinkers must learn how they dominate and un-learn oppression in order to modify their institutions so that they do not colonize. (p. 495)

Affinity Group Framework

DiAngelo (2011) states that "White racism is ultimately a white problem and the burden for interrupting it belongs to white people" (p. 66). Carlson (2016) reiterated this perspective and noted that "…a number of Indigenous activists challenge white people and settlers to take responsibility for their own work, not expecting Indigenous peoples to give them answers, educate them, or hold their hands" (p. 77). The literature indicated that addressing *whiteness* from a critical perspective often results in reactivity and may risk re-traumatizing individuals of colour who may be present. Michael and Conger (2009) recommended a racially homogenous group when addressing *whiteness,* in order to avoid negative experiences for people of colour in that context.

Katz's (1999) "Whiteness Papers," identified specific actions *white* people can take to eliminate racism. These included "developing their own identity as *white* people, dealing with internalized privilege, examining both the intent and consequence of their actions, and creating partnerships to help support their development as antiracists" (Blitz & Kohl Jr.,2012, p. 482). Blitz and Kohl (2012) described a process using anti-racist affinity groups, within a social service organization, which was looking to increase the number of racially diverse staff and address racism within itself. They described these groups as race-based caucuses, "[which] are processes where people of the same racial group meet on a regular basis to discuss dynamics of institutional racism, oppression, and privilege within their organization" (p. 481).

In this case, there were both *white* and black groups that met together later in the process. Group members were selected based on those who had already identified an interest in doing this type of reflexive work, and were not mandated to attend the group. The authors described the start of a long-term process within the organization and reported significant changes within staff that attended workshops. For example, participants who had been unaware of their oppressive use of power and privilege in the workplace expressed distress over their discovery and initially were paralyzed with the fear of continuing this oppression. After further discussion and information brought by leaders of the groups of colour, they found themselves able to continue on in their work in a less oppressive way and continued to seek guidance in this which contributed to changes in the culture of the workplace, as a whole.

Michael and Conger (2009) wrote about the uses of an affinity group as a means of

becoming an 'Anti-Racist White Ally.'

> In order to be full participants in interracial dialogues and multiracial communities, white people need to understand how racism privileges us, to recognize how racism injures our colleagues of color, and to consider our responsibility and role in responding to racism in our environment. Much of this work can be done in a white affinity group so that, in time, white people can be productive members of interracial conversations on race, rather than requiring constant and remediated attention. (p. 58)

The authors quoted a member of an affinity group, which met on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

> I acknowledged, instead, its complexity and nuance. I shared my shortcomings, my blind spots, and my resistance to change. I listened as others did the same. I felt the stirrings of transformation. Mistakes became a lot less scary and over time, I became less afraid. And as the fear gradually evaporated, I find myself changed" (p. 58).

This participant's experience fits the recommendation of DiAngelo (2011) that:

> Conversations about Whiteness might best happen within the context of a larger conversation about racism. It is useful to start at the micro level of analysis, and move to the macro, from the individual out to the outward to the ultimate framework for racism – Whiteness – allows for the pacing that is necessary for many white people for approaching the challenging study of race. In this way, a discourse on Whiteness becomes part of a process rather than an event. (p. 66-67)

DiAngelo's advice influenced my decision to speak at both the individual and the collective level of responsibility when examining individual racial identity awareness and systemic *whiteness* within the intervention.

Other Influences

For guidance on developing the intervention process and my role in it, I looked to literature that spoke about working therapeutically, with individuals who may be using abusive behaviors or whose ways of interacting with others was condescending and oppressive, such as Denborough (2008), a narrative therapist. I also sought an academic advisor with experience working with perpetrators of genocide. As a member of the group responsible for genocide in this country, I felt that this would provide me with accountability in my work. I also sought to use collective language within the group, as described by Denborough (2008), in order to highlight the collective responsibility of *white* social workers for systemic oppression, even as we examined our individual responsibility and role in these systems. I also used this language in my data analysis as a way of shifting focus from individuals. We are a hyper-individualized society because of our American influences, originally founded in Euro-centricity and I felt that this was a very small way of shifting the balance towards collective responsibility, for this systemic issue. I did not feel that this would put us at risk of abdicating personal responsibility, as the individuals attending would have already acknowledged that they, personally, needed to increase their own awareness of their *whiteness*, simply by volunteering to participate.

Furthermore, in my own experience working with individuals who have used abusive behaviors or seek to change their own behavior, individualized shame which tries to carry the blame individually for collective wrongs, results in despair and sometimes regresses into denial. I feel that it is most effective to place responsibility for wrongs done in their appropriate spheres in order for individuals and groups to take hold of each of their parts to make change.

Conclusion from personal experience and theoretical framework

I decided to do my research in the form of an intervention, during which I applied what I learned in my own experience within an affinity group and from the above frameworks & theories.

The participants of this study were a group of social workers who self identified as *white.* The rationale for a homogenous *white* group was based on literature regarding affinity groups, such as Blitz and Kohl Jr's (2012), along with my own experience within an affinity group during my BSW degree.

At that time, I joined a diverse group interested in promoting anti-oppressive human service practice. The article by Michael and Conger (2009) was circulated and, as a result, a group of us *white* human service workers began to meet separately. Our group functioned very much like a support group where we each came acknowledging our *whiteness* and sharing our insights, experiences and information with each other. We were informed by critical *whiteness* theory and its descriptions of the characteristics of *whiteness*. We referred to our group as a 'support group.'

We also looked at our roles and responsibilities in colonization and sought Indigenous-centred knowledge about ways to decolonize ourselves. Eventually, this group

participated in organizing workshops and actions about *whiteness* and decolonization. As a result of this group, I have grown in my understanding of my own privilege and the Euro-centric values I hold, and have developed a much richer analysis of systemic racism within the mental health system where I work. I have also increased my own racial stamina, as described by DiAngelo (2011) and have continued to invite critique of my process from those who may be affected by my practice and ways of relating and being.

My experience of this group was that I was supported in my process of understanding and examining my racial identity, both intellectually and emotionally, even while being challenged by other group members. Reactivity, when it occurred, did not result in interpersonal conflict but often in debate, or internal conflict and eventually in reflexivity. I believe that this positive experience was influenced by the fact that we had come together voluntarily, as a small group committed to self-exploration. This build trust between us and reduced feelings of defensiveness between us. This experience contrasted sharply with my experience in a critical perspectives course where the attributes of *whiteness,* described in critical *whiteness* theory, were sharply in focus and strongly defended. There was intense reactivity in this setting. This class was a much larger group than my affinity group, it was a diverse group of individuals who were required to be there, as part of the program requirements and participants appeared to be differing levels of commitment to self-exploration. These two experiences led me to my own journey of examining *whiteness* and reactivity further, and resulted in my desire to do this study with an intervention that more closely resembled the affinity group I was a part of. I started by considering the structure, a working group, run collaboratively, not as a class or

workshop, made up of individuals who were there voluntarily and prepared to look at their own *whiteness.*

My decision to include a narrative perspective within the intervention was based on recommendations by Indigenous scholars such as de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Cameron (2010) and Neeganagwedgin (2013). I requested the help of an Indigenous elder and social worker to act as a consultant for the intervention in order to ensure that we, as a group of *white* social workers, stayed on track with our goals to increase our racial identity awareness. The elder, Don Robinson, MSW, was also asked to provide supervision to me in my facilitation of the group. Apart from this consultation, I also sought to include the writings of Indigenous scholars in our group readings to ensure there were Indigenous voices in the room with us during the intervention.

Research Questions

Throughout the course of this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Do participants experience a change in their racial identity awareness, as a result of the intervention?
    a. How does the participant enact their racial identity within the interviews?
    b. What do participants see as influencing change?
2. How do participants experience the intervention?
    a. What do participants find 'triggering' or define as a 'critical incident' within the intervention?

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Study Design

This study was designed as a process evaluation and was analyzed qualitatively. Patton (1990) differentiated process evaluations from other kinds of studies by stating that, "[a] focus on process is a focus on how something happens rather than on the outcomes or results obtained" (p. 94).

The process being evaluated, in this study, was the intervention. The intervention consisted of eight, two-hour sessions. The group met weekly to discuss *white* identity and how it influenced social work practice. The intervention design was based on White and Epston's (1990) Narrative Therapy methods. The key features of Narrative Therapy include: defining the problem, externalizing the problem, reviewing dominant narratives about the problem, deconstructing dominant narratives, and reconstructing preferred narratives. These features were incorporated as a guide to our eight weekly session agendas. A proposed session agenda was distributed to participants at the first session. This agenda was intended to be flexible, allowing for participants to guide the discussion from week to week, and to distribute articles between sessions for discussion at future meetings. Participants were not required to read articles between sessions but those who did summarized for others and noted points of interest to discuss.

I felt that Narrative Therapy's birthplace and history, within social work practice, made it an appropriate format for use with social workers. Narrative processes are about deconstructing dominant discourse (Cobb & Negash, 2010), which is an essential part of critical race theory, and therefore, makes it an appropriate process for this topic. The

number of weeks was based on the narrative process, with sessions for each aspect of the process, with some aspects being given more than one session.

The intervention focused on the characteristics of *whiteness* (Jeffery, 2009, Salter, 2013; Ware, 2009). The study aimed to recruit *white* social workers practicing in various capacities in the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The recruitment process followed Singleton and Straits (2005) recommendation to attempt to recruit as diverse and representative a sample as possible. By diversity, I meant, various levels of education, experience, and areas of practice, along with diverse age groups and genders. This was meant to enrich the data collected and provide insight into a variety of participants' experience of the intervention. Singleton and Straits (2005) spoke about the benefits of a representative sample but advised that, in qualitative research, particularly student research, this may not always be feasible.

I hoped to have one participant from each major area of social services, including the education system, the healthcare system, the justice system, the child welfare system, the mental health system, and private practice. I wanted to recruit representatives from at least one management position, and the rest from front line positions. I was also looking for at least one male social worker, one representative from community work, one from a non-profit organization, two or more representatives from social workers who had graduated at least ten years ago, three participants with an MSW, the remaining with a BSW, and an age range between 20-60.

The result of this recruitment was a group of 10 *white* social workers, including myself, who were currently practicing in the city of Winnipeg. We met for two hours a week, for eight weeks.

Participants varied in age, gender, education, sexual identity and in their ethnic identities. There were individuals working both on the front lines of practice, and in management positions. Education levels spanned from grade 12 to Master's degrees.

Sample Characteristics

AGES	20 – 50+
GENDERS	8 females, 2 males
EDUCATION	Grade 12, BSW, BEd, BA, MSW
ROLES IN PRACTICE	Outreach worker, counselor, community development worker, manager, business owner.
YEARS IN PRACTICE	3 – 30
AREAS OF PRACTICE EXPERIENCE	Corrections, mental health, private practice, healthcare, community development, child protection, education.
ETHNICITIES IDENTIFIED	Jewish, Icelandic, Ukrainian, Indigenous, Mennonite, Dutch, English, Francophone.
MEMBERS OF LGBTQ2S	Yes.
POPULATIONS SERVED	Incarcerated individuals, military families, Indigenous youth, individuals with mental health crisis, newcomers, Northern Indigenous communities.

Critical reflexivity, as a part of critical awareness, was encouraged throughout the intervention process as we explored racial identity together, as *white* social workers. Fook (2012b) suggested an orientation for enabling critical reflection based on the notion of "co-researching" (p. 218), which I interpret to mean having non-judgmental curiosity about our positions, perspectives and reactions within our reflexive processing. Based on this advice, I spoke to the group about their role as 'working group members' to find and share information to bring to the group as part of our process together. The group

responded to this invitation and each week, various articles were circulated between group members. Fook (2012) also recommends the use of a critical reflexivity journal as a way to process 'critical incidents' and increase insight. Fook (2012b) defined critical incidents as "a description of an event that people regard as somehow significant to their learning, or an event which they would like to learn from" (p. 225). She provides a journaling guide and an aid in responding to critical incidents. This guide was distributed to participants at the beginning of the intervention, along with journals, for participants' use. (See Appendix F, for Fook's journaling guide). Participants took their journals home and were asked to return them at the end of the study so that I could transcribe them.

I kept my own journal to document my own 'critical incidents', but expanded my journaling topics beyond the intervention, to include the recruitment process, the pre- and post- intervention interviews, and the intervention and data analysis, as a way of increasing my own reflexivity throughout each stage of the study, as a participant/observer. This data was included with the participant interviews and session notes for analysis.

I also utilized supervision, as is strongly recommended by many scholars and practitioners, including Boston (2009), McCoyd and Kerson (2013), Moffett (2009), and Rosin, (2015) for social workers doing therapy, or running groups. I obtained supervision by hiring an Indigenous elder/consultant, Don Robinson, MSW. My purpose in retaining an Indigenous elder for supervision was to respond to the call by many authors, including Carlson (2016), Dumbril and Green (2008) and Lewis (2012) for researchers and academia to centre Indigenous knowledge. I met Don between each session, for one hour, in order to receive feedback on my group facilitation and the direction of the group

discussions. Details of my recruitment of this elder/consultant are described in the 'Recruitment Process' section below.

In order to evaluate the process of the intervention, Patton (1990) recommended collecting multiple data sources in order to provide a rich description of participants' experience of the intervention. Riessman (2008) agreed with Patton noting, "it is preferable to have repeated conversations rather than the typical one-shot interview, especially when studying biographical experience" (p. 26). For this reason, multiple data sources were collected throughout this study. These included audio recordings of pre- and post-intervention qualitative interviews, in which I used an "interview guide approach" (Patton, 2002) with each participant (See Appendix C for interview guides). Data was also collected via journals kept by participants (See Appendix F for journal instructions), from audio recordings of eight weekly group 'check-in' times, during the intervention, and from work created by the participants during the intervention (eg. artistic work and documents), as part of externalization in narrative process.

Data was analyzed using both narrative dialogical performance analysis and narrative thematic analysis, as described by Riessman (2008) and Patton (1990). These analysis methods were chosen in keeping with the narrative methods used in the intervention and to highlight the ways in which we, participants, performed *whiteness* throughout the study.

Study Setting and Participant Recruitment

Winnipeg is the optimal place for a study like this, due to its high population of Indigenous people and its recently gained notoriety as being one of the most racist cities in Canada, according to Macleans magazine. Having been a resident of Winnipeg for 20

years of my life, I am familiar with the social issues and the types of social services operating within the city and was able to easily connect with social workers who were interested in participating in the study.

Before commencing with recruitment, I applied to, and received approval for this study, for one year, from the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board as required by the University of Manitoba (2017) for all academic research involving humans. I renewed my application one year later and was again approved, (See Appendix G for Ethics approval certificates).

The recruitment process was done in two stages. In the first stage, I advertised the study within the University of Manitoba via poster and e-mail. I also advertised to community agencies via poster and e-mail. I advertised to various social service agencies via e-mail and word of mouth (See Appendix A for recruitment poster).

Individuals who did not identify as *white* and individuals who were not currently practicing social work were excluded. I based my selection of participants on their own self-identification as social workers, and not on credentials.

I was contacted by 17 people who were interested in participating in this study in total. Two were excluded, as they did not identify themselves as social workers. One chose not to participate after clarifying the time commitment involved, another withdrew prior to the pre-intervention interviews due to health problems.

At this point, I had planned to run two groups with six and seven participants, plus myself as facilitator, as I felt that 13 participants plus myself would be too many people for a working group. After attempting to meet with one group of six and having two participants not attend, that group decided that we should not meet again until there were

more members as four participants plus myself, felt like too few for a working group. This group proposed putting the two groups together as it was possible that not everyone would attend every time and sometimes people drop out of studies. I agreed to do this. I then contacted the rest of the people who had completed the pre-intervention interviews to see if we could find a common time for everyone to meet. After contacting the others, three of the other could not participate due to scheduling interferences, and one did not respond to any correspondence after the pre-intervention interview.

This resulted in a group of nine, plus myself. The group was a closed group. Individuals committed to the entire eight weeks with allowances for illness or emergencies. The data I collected from the first meeting with the four participants was labeled, Pre-Session.

Consultation

In order to facilitate the group in ways that consider settler Canadians' decolonization practices, I sought consultation of an Indigenous elder, as recommended by Boston (2009); McCoyd and Kerson (2013); Moffett (2009); Rosin (2015). This elder, Don Robinson, has a Master's of Social Work degree and does both individual counseling and group facilitation. He works within both Manitoba's urban and rural Indigenous communities. I requested that he meet with me between group sessions to provide feedback on my facilitation of the intervention, in the same way a social worker in private practice would consult with another therapist when needing feedback on particular situations with clients being counseled or groups being facilitated. We agreed to meet between sessions whenever our schedules allowed, at his office where he does counseling. We met seven times, in total. I offered tobacco to him in our initial meeting to

request his services. I also offered payment to compensate him for his time knowing that this was a simple token given the support he provided and the personal interest he took in the project.

Intervention

This was a process evaluation study. The intervention aimed to raise awareness about *white* racial identity and included nine sessions in total, due to the Pre-Session meeting which was described earlier. The intervention consisted of discussion on topics such as "*white* fragility," "*whiteness* as good/innocent," "*white* superiority," "*whiteness* as blind," "systemic racism" and "becoming an ally." The group met for approximately two hours a week, from 7pm – 9pm, at an accessible, centrally located, social services agency. The intervention was voluntary, and not a part of a pre-existing education or professional development program mandated by those in charge. Much of the data collected was related to the intervention. For this reason, I will summarize the main components of the intervention. In the usual narrative process, White and Epston (1990) suggest co-creating the agenda of the intervention. However, given the sensitivity of the topic, and at the suggestion of the REB, I created a flexible outline of the key themes and sent it to the participants for review and feedback, which we discussed during session 1.

The session agendas were designed to cover all aspects of narrative process. The following is a summary of the outline provided to all participants at our first group meeting:

Session 1- 'Defining the problem.' The main problem for the group is that, as *white* social workers, we are unaware of our racial identity and its influence on our relationships and our practice.

Session 2 - ‘Externalizing the problem’ as discussed by White and Epston (1990). Narrative practice often uses symbols or art to ‘externalize’ the problem by creating or describing it in other mediums or in personified terms. For example, we might draw a picture of ourselves looking at a mirror that gives a distorted reflection to represent our difficulty in seeing ourselves in a clear and accurate way.

Session 3- ‘Mapping the influence of the problem.’ This means examining the ways in which lack of racial identity, as *white* social workers, affects every aspect of our lives and our practices.

Session 4- ‘Deconstructing the dominant narratives.’ This means identifying the way we understand racial identity and its attributes based on what we’ve been told or have understood throughout our lifetimes.

Session 5- ‘Re-storying the problem.’ This involves examining how participants and social workers, in general, have influenced, and could influence, the problem.

Session 6 - Continue to ‘Re-story the problem.’

Session 7 – Continue to ‘Re-story the problem.’

Session 8- ‘Thickening the Narrative’ or ‘Identifying the New Narrative’ where we discuss a potential new narrative about the problem, in this case *whiteness,* particularly in social worker practice.

The content and approach of the sessions drew from the work of narrative process scholars including Cobb and Negash (2010); Combs and Freedman (1990); Davis (2000); and White and Epston(1990) as discussed by Cooper (1998); Fook (2012a); Freedman (2014); Meehan and Farquharson (2012); and White and Epston (1990). (See Appendix E for the complete session outline, which was provided to participants at the first meeting.)

For each meeting, I provided participants with snacks (generally cheese, crackers, fruit and/or baking and juice). At our last session, each participant brought a dish to contribute to a potluck, and we met a ½ hour early to eat supper together.

Data collection

A multi-method approach was adopted to collect data in this study. I used audio recordings of pre- and post-intervention individual interviews and audio recordings of the weekly group 'check-ins.' I collected the critical incident journals, including my own journal, I collected documents created by participants during the intervention and took photos of art created by the participants during the intervention.

Pre- and post-intervention interviews. I interviewed each participant, individually, before and after the intervention, using the qualitative interview guide approach which Patton (2002) recommends. The interview guide was intended as a general guide for topics to be covered, but with questions worded by the interviewer during the interview. This format was in keeping with a more dialogical approach to inquiry that I felt fit with the intervention, in general. The purpose of these interviews was to talk about each participant's awareness of their own racial identity before and after the intervention. In addition, the post-intervention interview was also used to gather feedback and information about participants' experience of the intervention and highlight any aspect of the intervention that contributed to any change in racial identity awareness that the participant experienced. In total, 13 pre-interviews were conducted prior to the intervention and nine post interviews were conducted after the intervention, as several individuals did not continue on with the study after the pre-intervention interviews, as explained earlier.

Weekly check-in during intervention sessions. Each session of the intervention ended with a recorded 'check-in' time. Participants often used this time to either continue discussions begun earlier in the session or to talk about situations related to the topic, which had occurred between sessions. This was intended to provide group feedback on the intervention process and to be used as one source of data contributing to the process evaluation.

Journals. At the start of the intervention, I had introduced the reflexive journals, providing each participant with a notebook for this purpose and a handout describing the process (Fook 2012a) (See Appendix F for journal handout). Fook (2012a) describes the journal entries as having three parts. The first part is the "description of the critical incident" (p. 114), which includes: noting why the incident is deemed critical; what individuals are wanting to learn from the incident; and a brief description, not analysis, of the incident from their own perspective. The second part is the "analysis of the incident" (p. 114). This part examines: themes or patterns within the description; labels or binary opposites; who is involved, and the individuals' relationship to those involved; the perspectives that are represented or missing; the assumptions individual participants are making and where they come from; and any gaps or biases in the descriptive part of the process. The third and final part of the critical incident journal is called "creating practice theory" (Fook, 2012 a, p. 115). Fook advised asking oneself how "what happened in the incident compared with what I intended to do, or what I assumed I was doing?" (p. 115) and to investigate how the event compares with other similar instances. She also asked individuals to question what they might need to change about their "assumptions, theory, actions, interpretations, skills because of these reflections" (p. 115).

The journals' purpose was to enhance self-critical reflexivity of the social workers throughout the intervention. The produced journals were collected for analysis after the completion of the intervention. This data, along with the post-intervention interviews, contributed to answering the research question regarding the way the intervention was experienced by the participants.

I kept my own journal, which had a slightly broader scope than the participants' journals. In it, I logged my own 'critical incidents' along with thoughts and observations I had made during the recruitment process, the pre-intervention interviews, the intervention, the post- intervention interviews, and the data analysis process. This was intended to provide a place for my own reflexive process. I spent time writing in it after each interview, group session, and after each meeting with Don Robinson. I also shared things I had journaled about with him in our meetings together.

Created artistic works from the intervention. The narrative process invites creative ways of examining the problem by externalizing the problem, by deconstructing dominant narratives, and by creating new narratives, according to White and Espton (1990) and Combs and Freedman (1990). Photos of creative work and documents constructed within the intervention were collected as a further addition to the data, to aid in the process evaluation of the intervention.

Data Analysis

For this study I utilized Narrative Dialogical/Performance Analysis to analyze the data. Riessman (2008) describes Narrative Dialogical/ Performance Analysis by stating that, "[s]imply put, if thematic and structural approaches interrogate "what" is spoken and "how," the dialogic/performative approach asks "who" an utterance may be directed to,

"when," and "why," that is, for what purposes" (p. 105)? Narrative analysis is not simply thematic analysis, Riessman (2008) notes. It asks about the speaker's intentions and who their audience might be. Frank (2010) described dialogical analysis as a type of reflexive work, asking critical questions such as, "What multiple voices can be heard in any single speaker's voice...why is someone choosing to tell a story, among other expressive possibilities? ...what stakes does the storyteller have riding on this story, at the time, to these listeners" (p. 33)?

Dialogical analysis makes room for the narration to interact with a broader context than itself. Examining the performance of identity is a large part of dialogic analysis. Vitanova (2013) quotes Rosenwald and Ochberg, who imply that, "(h)ow individuals recount their histories—what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience—all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives." (p. 244). The authors propose that these 'tellings' actually shape the identity of the tellers.

The analysis is intended, according to Frank (2010), "…not to pronounce on the story or the storytelling scene, but rather to engage the story in ongoing dialogue" (p. 88). Frank refers to Foucault's "practice of criticism" (p. 73), as a means by which to engage the data collected in a narrative inquiry, defining 'criticism' as "a refusal to accept immediate, commonsense [sic] understanding, while at the same time having the most profound respect for and curiosity about commonsense [sic] understandings" (p. 73).

Patton (1990) strongly recommends collecting multiple sources of data in order to ensure a nuanced perspective of a process evaluation. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) note that triangulation of data sources increases validity within

qualitative studies and helps to "develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (p. 545). In this study, I achieved triangulation by analyzing multiple data sets with a consideration of the various theories that influenced the study. Throughout my analysis of the various data sets, I looked for ways to merge similar themes and distinguish differences within them, in order to produce a set of consolidated themes. I began by listening to the audio recordings of each pre-intervention interview, session check-in, and post intervention interview, in chronological order, as closely to the time they were collected as I could manage. During the first listening of the recordings, I wanted to get a sense of what each recording contained.

The second time I listened, in order to transcribe, I paid attention to tone and context, to ensure that the written transcription reflected what I was hearing in the audio version of the data. I was keenly aware, during this process, of the transformation that occurs when oral becomes written and sought to keep the context and tone of the recording intact by adding details about cues given by participants, such as laughter, or change in tone, to indicate the meaning intended by the speaker. Bird (2005) emphasizes that "voice is more than verbal sound and authentic dialect; it includes the social context embedded and meaning...and the transcriber becomes that voice" (p. 228). She notes that transcription is an "interpretive act", a "political act" (p. 228), with decisions being made about what to leave in and what to take out. These decisions are influenced by the transcriber's own social context and methodological stance.

I did not transcribe the participant journals as they were already in written form but read through them twice, once for understanding of the content, and secondly to compare them with the data collected from other sources, for the same period of time. For

example, I compared journal entries made after session 2, with the data collected from the second session's 'check in time' to understand what else was happening for participants within that session.

I then read through the transcriptions, in their entirety, both to get a sense of the content of the intervention as a whole, and, to ensure that the written transcripts reflected the audio recordings in tone and context. I also read to ensure that the transcriptions did not contain errors. While listening and transcribing the data, I had begun to identify some potential themes. I continued my analysis by following Boyatzis (1998) stages of conducting thematic analysis.

I reduced four out of the nine pre- and post-intervention interviews, and all nine of the session check-in's, removing redundancies and editing for clarity, for example, removing repetitive verbal styles such as "like", "right?", "you know", or verbal stuttering within sentences. As I reduced the various data sets, my first themes were either confirmed, became consolidated within other like themes, or were re-named, as the context of these early thematic ideas became clearer. Specific quotes or data from other sets contributed to the discovery and clarification of themes.

Once reduced, I re-read each section making notes in the margins about key themes in each reduced narrative. While I did not reduce the journal entries, I also reviewed them and made notes about key themes within. I did this in the order that they occurred. For example, I re-read and noted themes in a journal entry written after session 2, after I had done this for the data collected from the 'check in' section of session 2.

I did this twice to ensure that I had not missed any themes. Then I reviewed all reduced data two more times, to combine like themes. Once the themes were combined, I then re-read each theme removing any further redundancies within the themes.

I then sent the data, in its reduced form, to the other participants to review. I invited them to respond via e-mail or to get together to talk about them as a group. Two individuals joined me for an evening to talk about the study and reconnect. They had very little feedback to give regarding the data other than to say that it was accurate. No others provided feedback.

Reporting the Findings

I laid out the findings in a chronological narrative. I have attempted to answer the research questions posed, by highlighting themes as they emerged, and by linking the changes in participants' understanding of their *white* identity with the parts of the intervention that they identified as having influenced that change. As a dialogical process, I've included my own responses that considered the social context within which the intervention took place, historically, currently, and politically. I've noted the ways in which we enacted our *white* identities, drawing from the perspective of those who have written about their observations of the performance of *whiteness.* I wrote in a narrative style, in keeping with the format of this study, and as a way to invite the reader into the experience of this study.

Participants were initially invited to share their journals with the group but were not required to do so. The excerpts I have quoted from the participants' journals were not shared within the group sessions. For this reason, when quoting participant journals, I have referred to the authors as "one participant" or used the pronoun 'they' as a way of

maintaining some confidentiality between participants who might read this final paper. I do this because these participants chose not to share their journal writing with their fellow participants and I want to respect that decision.

In order to maintain coherency within participant quotes, I've used a reduced ellipses of two dots ".." to indicate a sentence fragment and a full ellipses "…" to indicate that I've removed words. I removed repetitive words or phrases such as "like" and "you know" or "right?" regularly for easier reading.

Chapter 5 – Findings

Characteristics of Participants

Nine participants ranging in age from 20-60 years participated in the intervention as part of this study. The study included two individuals who identified as male, seven individuals who identified as female and one individual who identified as a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirited (LGBTQ2S) community.

Participants' education ranged widely, with one person having a grade 12 education, six individuals with a BSW, and three individuals with a MSW. Of those with a BSW, five were currently enrolled as students in the MSW program. One participant had previously been in a Bachelor of Education program. One participant had previously studied anthropology. Social work experience ranged between three and thirty years of practice.

Two individuals were working currently in management positions, one being an owner of a private agency, and one individual had previous management experience. The populations participants were currently serving included: families of members of the military; individuals incarcerated in the prison system; individuals living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), who have justice system involvement and require supports within the community; newcomers; men who have used violence in domestic relationships; Northern Indigenous communities; urban Indigenous youth; individuals living with the effects of trauma; a low income housing community; families who are supporting individuals with mental health needs; and individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. The participants' positions included outreach workers, clinician, counselors, consultant, workshop facilitator, supervisors, community development worker, and group therapists. Organizations that participants worked in included non-profit, private,

government organizations, and government supported community organizations. Several participants had previous experience working in parole services, Child and Family Services (CFS) and education.

Several individuals identified specific racial/ethnic identities along with their *white* identities. The ethnic identities identified were Francophone, Icelandic, Ukrainian, Indigenous, Jewish, English, Mennonite, and Dutch.

Themes

From the pre- and post-intervention interviews, and the intervention itself, I gathered four main themes about the ways we enacted *whiteness*. The first was 'Our Bi-polar Relationship with Innocence and Guilt.' We wanted to be innocent, to be seen as 'good *white* people.' Some of us acknowledged our guilt but in doing so, seemed to become immobilized by it. The second theme I called 'Denying our Power.' We did this even while acknowledging *white* privilege as a concept we agreed with. Connected to this was our inability to acknowledge that we were complicit in systemic oppression and saw systems as disconnected from ourselves. In the third theme, which I've called 'Avoiding the Mirror,' we would identify racism from a distance, but struggled to turn the lens on ourselves. I called the fourth theme 'Tiptoeing into Action.' This theme emerged as we became aware that our insight into our own *white* identity still had a long way to go. We acknowledged that we were still at high risk of harming others due to our own lack of awareness, even as we looked for ways to act on what we had learned within the intervention.

Bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt. Our Bi-Polar Relationship with innocence and guilt was the first theme to appear. We all wanted to believe that we were

innocent and not like 'other' *white* people, but then, when confronted with evidence to the contrary, swung to embrace an identity of guilt and shame. We tried, through a variety of ways, to see ourselves as victims, to attempt to maintain our innocence, thinking that if we were silent, our racism would not show. We also worried about 'offending' other *white* people. Some of us started by seeing ourselves as primarily bad, and unredeemable, and found ourselves stuck in our guilt.

I could see the same struggle in myself, especially when I was first advised to seek consultation from an Indigenous elder. At that time, I wrote in my journal:

> *I'm nervous that I won't bring the right [traditional] gifts and that I have already waited until too far into this project to involve someone and that they will tell me to change all kinds of things, and everything will be delayed, or I will ignore them, and turn out just like every other white person. (Joy's Journal- May 25, 2016, p.7)*

This theme of innocence and guilt polarities was prevalent throughout the pre-intervention interviews.

I met with Sheila at her workplace. Sheila spoke about a course on Indigenous Perspectives that she had taken in her BSW and said,

> *I had moments of wishful thinking, both in terms of like, I remember taking one class… and thinking…I wish I was Indigenous… to be part of having that bigger broader culture, and one that is… somewhat matriarchal… that's lovely, right? But also, like, when I was not working and I couldn't apply for scholarship(s)…don't we have Metis in me somewhere?! [laughter]*
>
> *Joy - keep digging, keep digging (Sheila – Pre-Int, p. 6)*

I was teasing her, and warning her, about digging herself into a hole with this train of thought. Her 'secret desire,' which negated the history of trauma, genocide, and current experience of terrible outcomes within social services along with the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in prisons, mental health, and CFS. But Sheila

voiced a desire, often expressed by *white* people, particularly when they are not connected to their own ethnic identity. She indicated that she understood this, and then went on to talk about the hopeful possibility that she did have Indigenous blood: *"...and I know why, I mean I don't need… I wouldn't want to take advantage, but it was just like … I wouldn't be surprised if we do, but we haven't found it yet…my dad's all into genealogy right?" (Sheila – Pre Int, p. 7).*

After all the discussion about *whiteness* as bad, if one's only racial or ethnic identity is *white*, then it is not surprising that the longing to be Indigenous would be so strong. That would absolve us of everything. It would be the ultimate declaration of innocence.

Sheila echoed my fear of offending others and losing status as a 'nice/innocent *white* person.' Sheila spoke about what happens when she returns home to visit her conservative family:

> *I have a really hard time with um, finding my spot, so, like, when I'm at home, right, and then things come up in conversation with finding my place in that between... 'Okay, you're, you're wrong!' [laughter] right? Like, and, and you know…'I'm only here for a little while and I don't want to make, make…' how do you educate without, you know, also imploding your family visit [laughter!] right, so those sorts of things, yeah. (Sheila – Pre Int. p. 2)*

Sheila then lowered her voice and proceeded to tell me about a *white* co-worker who had taken a native studies class and was offended that the other Indigenous students challenged her opinions about colonization.

> *Sheila - ... it's sort of hard to find that line of, of how to, how to like help educate but also not make people feel bad…(Sheila - Pre Int. p.3)*

I knew that this was part of my own problematic *white* identity, in that, when I am 'nice,' and choose not to speak out against others' racism, by my silence, I become party to the damage caused by this racism.

Sheila went back to the issues of challenging others.

> *Yeah, it's challenging, it's very challenging, because…if you go into aggressive, then it just shuts it down entirely, right? But if you let it slide… so it's really picking and choosing, how to address that? …Sometimes you just.. like you can't change everybody, you know, and you can make yourself crazy trying to …you just got a like, develop a little bit of a duck's back. (Sheila – Pre Int, p.4)*

I thought about DiAngelo's (2011) article on *white* fragility and his admonition to develop resilience. I also thought that it is difficult to know when to speak up, and, for those of us benefitting from '*white* privilege,' it can be easy to decide that it's not worthwhile to speak up. We are quick to come up with a variety of rationalizations against speaking up.

Before even meeting with the group I journaled about my fear that I would become reactionary to other participants' process, and wrote:

> *I'm nervous about just jumping on whatever people say and correcting it as that is what I believe has felt really awful in other settings where this stuff is discussed….[P]eople become afraid of opening their mouths for fear of, 'getting it wrong.' How do I foster an environment of risk taking and support for risk taking? Accepting feedback and challenges are something that happens when people feel accepted and safe. I'm not sure how to approach this either, as many of these individuals have years and years of practice beyond me, and do counseling. I don't want to come across as patronizing… (Joy's Journal - August 14, 2016, p. 14)*

I wrote that I didn't want to come across as patronizing, but I wonder if this was just another way of avoiding having someone see me as 'not nice', disrupting my 'good *white* person' identity.

In Diane's pre-interview, which took place at the office I was working in at the time, I asked Diane about any positive and negative interactions with Indigenous people that might have stood out to her.

> *Well, things that… bump up against my own identity issues.. So I am… Jewish and lesbian, and often there are some beliefs that have been very negative about Jews*

and lesbians from people who are Indigenous and it's hard not to fall into sometimes what I called. 'the general misery sweepstakes' ..like, 'my oppression is worse than your oppression, and um…you know there's been some of that… (Diane – Pre-Int, p. 4)

I asked Diane when she had first thought about *whiteness*. She spoke about her experiences working in the United States:

[A]s a white a social worker, I was primarily working both with client populations that was African-American, or would define themselves as black, either black Hispanic, or black African-American, and so our awareness and need to work with issues related to the history of slavery presents itself, as a white social worker. 'What does that mean to be a white social worker? Even a white social worker who doesn't mean to be a white social worker? And ownership of the self as a white social worker, working with…populations who are not white… that's always on the tip of everyone's tongue, the big part of their awareness.. (Diane – Pre Int. p.1)

I noted the desire for a distinction between a *white* social worker and someone who does not mean to be a *white* social worker. In other words, Diane wanted to be a *white* social worker who was not guilty of racism and oppression, an innocent social worker. I too hoped that I was the latter.

Diane spoke about barriers to service and lack of access in Northern communities,

"…we've got a long line and you can't even get in it... and even if you do we don't know what to do then either. So we're just all kind of screwed, and I think it leaves us as providers feeling…very anxious and incompetent and frustrated and powerless." (Diane – Pre Int, p. 5-6)

While the scarcity of resources is a real issue in most areas of social work practice, I feel like this can become a convenient way of maintaining our 'innocent' identity through the lens of social workers as 'victims of the system.'

On the other side of the binary, some participants had very few notions of themselves as good *white* people, and instead, saw themselves as guilty, bad (even unredeemable), and needing to be rescued.

When I first met with Linda, I asked if her ideas about social work had changed since she first started practicing. She spoke about

questioning if she was doing more harm than good:

> *…I go through waves of feeling like I'm this ameliorative factor out there and if I wasn't helping in these 'piddly' little ways, people would be more disgruntled and real change would come. So every once in a while I kind of wonder…if I should go into small motor repair, you know, so, yeah that's an interesting question. I don't know. (Linda – Pre Int. p. 1)*

Linda was challenging the idea that we can somehow circumvent systems of oppression by sheer force of our good intentions.

I asked if she had thoughts about ways to reduce racism. Linda mentioned a training seminar on Aboriginal issues that she received at her workplace. Although she found it helpful, she still found herself wanting to be educated by her First Nations colleagues. She said, *"I imagine they would tap me on the shoulder and tell me what I just did… but it shouldn't be somebody else's responsibility..."* (Linda- Pre Int. p. 1)

I asked Linda what being *white* meant to her. She noted her *white* privilege and the fear of what harm she could do with it.

> *Being white means being part of the dominant culture, having probably more privilege and opportunity. At times, it feels like I have responsibility because of that, to be watchful for where I could use it to help even things out a bit, and also an awareness that I probably won't notice when I'm stepping on somebody's toes, because I have privilege. [Hoping that if] I do step on…toes, it's not squishing them entirely. … Will I hear their 'yelp'?... but I'm not aware of all the privilege that it brings so.. The blessing is that I'm female, so I know something about oppression. I don't know if that keeps me… but… (Linda – Pre Int, p. 4)*

Linda spoke about hoping that she would gain more insight through her participation in the study because she wanted to move past the guilty identity that is very palpable in discussions involving *whiteness*.

While meeting with Sheila, she spoke about an experience she'd had in a policy class where the message from the instructor was:

> *...white people are the ones who are racist and they are the ones who are perpetuating oppression and imbalances of power. You know, like all of these things that, that are happening ...when whiteness comes up in social work, it's generally about being abusive. (Sheila – Pre Int, p.5)*

She went on to describe her reaction:

> *I mean, certainly frustrated because I see it and I agree with it and I understand it, but it's also…then how do I, how do I fix that, right? But also, that you can't, right? (Sheila – Pre Int, p. 5)*

I felt her dilemma. *Whiteness* is big. It is our systems, and we, as individuals, enact it when we hear about the harm of *whiteness* and then we immediately want to fix it, to help us to feel better. But this only perpetuates the cycle of dominance and oppression when we continue to be the active ones, in control. Because of this, we vacillated between the binaries of innocence with denial, and guilt with shame, neither resulting in any constructive change.

Denying our power. When looking at racism and oppression, within our society and within social services, we see ourselves as innocent. When we deny our power within the systems we sometimes move beyond the identity of innocence to one of seeing ourselves as the victims of these systems. We become paralyzed by the idea that the system is too big to change and begin to reify it with comments like, "it's just the way things are." As long as we claimed that we were powerless victims of the system, we remained unable to really connect to the ways that we are complicit within the system. It also provides us an excuse not to engage in change. We deny our power when we acknowledge *whiteness* as means of obtaining privilege, but deny that we have any power to make changes.

Cam spoke about his own feeling of powerlessness within his own workplace:

> *I think that like a lot of the, yeah, especially the stuff to do with whiteness at my workplace, I just kind of feel like, a little bit, well, you know, I have very little power in my workplace. I don't know how many times that you have to sort of joke about how white the place is before they just stop hiring white people [laughter] but whatever, I mean, maybe other people have like dealt with that before… (Cam – Pre-Int, p.11)*

Cam noted that on an individual level, with clients, he didn't know how they identified Cam as being connected to the larger system. I tried to clarify if Cam thought his individual relationship with clients was irrelevant to the larger context.

> *Cam - Well, I.. that's not really what I meant, no, what I meant was that I think that, like, white social work is a bad thing, overwhelmingly, that it's part of like, uh, insincere response to… colonization and poverty… that cuts across race, like white social work towards white people bad….it's like a sort of state apparatus, fuckin' thing… and it's not that whiteness doesn't affect… the day to day, personal thing. That day-to-day thing is not something that is like, immediately felt as oppressive by the people who I work with.*
>
> *Joy- Right, so they're not really identifying this piece as oppressive, it's the broader thing that is being felt of oppressive or maybe not even, maybe they're identifying it as oppressive.*
>
> *Cam- Well, um, it gets complicated, because you're like, I mean, they definitely feel like the justice system is oppressive and they might not really associate me with the justice system. (Cam –Pre Int, p. 11)*

Sheila also spoke about the perception that others have of her, but felt that they did connect her with the larger oppressive social service system:

> *Sheila - … but it's… that understanding, or that expectation on 'their' part, that I'm working for the system… I'm not working for her, which isn't necessarily what I was trying to do, but that's sort of like, you know…at the end of the day, that woman that I'm thinking of, she… was actually evicted from our program, but she, she sought services elsewhere where she could get, services that were more Indigenous based. (Sheila – Pre Int, p. 22)*

This was a familiar tune in my head, the song about my intention versus what I'm actually doing. I thought of Blackstock's (2005) article admonishing social workers to stop

focusing on intention and take note of the effects of our actions and of the power we actually hold. This is so difficult, as it challenges our ideas of ourselves as innocent and benevolent. When we look at our own role within social systems, we cannot hold on to these identities any longer. However, when we do look at our responsibility, we easily move into shame and guilt. We become immobilized and somehow a victim of our own identities.

Our first meeting took place at the University of Winnipeg, in a library meeting room. One person had texted to say they couldn't make it and another didn't show up. So, there were five of us, including myself. I was nervous and stressed. After reviewing confidentiality agreements, introducing ourselves, discussing the proposed agenda, and introducing and handing out journals, we talked about what had brought us to this group. I then introduced the 'check in' portion of the meeting.

During this time, group members brought up various topics currently in the media, such as the story about Rachel Dolezal and the social construction of race, as well as the Paris attacks, which were being broadcast on a screen as we were walking into our meeting. I had spoken about our group being a place where we could take risks by voicing our questions or ideas about *whiteness.* In this way, we would rely on each other and on the material we brought into the group to help us to grow and learn and change. I was encouraging us to be vulnerable with each other. Sophia's response took me off guard:

> *Sophia- Donald Trump*
>
> *Diane- UGGhhh!!*
>
> *Sophia- That's what, what you [speaking to Joy] just said, made me think of Donald Trump because he's giving voice to so many people who feel as though they have had no voice and who have been quiet, right? (Pre-Session, p. 15)*

I was a bit shocked at this comparison, and confused. I tried to clarify what Sophia meant by this, but was never completely clear, and the conversation moved on to other things. It seemed that she was comparing my invitation for open discussion about *whiteness* to the way Donald Trump was inviting his supporters to express their own racism. I felt that this was not a fair comparison, as Trump appeared to be promoting racism, and we were working to combat it. My own nervousness about the process, combined with my desire to be seen as a good/innocent *white* person, was triggered by Sophia's comparison. This feeling that I had was familiar to me and had come up in the past when I felt that I had offended someone with an ignorant or racist comment. My identity was challenged, fairly, or unfairly. I suspected I would not be alone with this feeling throughout the course of the intervention.

Avoiding the mirror. During the initial sessions, we jumped easily into the game of pointing out racism in others. It was easier to see it from afar, and of course, less threatening. Demonstrating our ability to identify racism in others, seemed like it served to bolster our 'innocent' identities, but I also believe that it was a valid first step to eventually identifying racism within ourselves, as long as we got around to looking in the mirror. During our pre-session, Ronny spoke about her frustration with her American friends who she felt were "buying into Trump's rhetoric." We discussed the 'myth of meritocracy,' which we felt was behind all of this, and the victim blaming that was happening in the US. Sophia pointed out that maybe Canada is not so different from US, just 'nicer.' I noted that we had been attempting to distance ourselves from 'those kind of racists.' Diane felt that there was a difference, at least regarding *white* and black relationships. She felt that the 'depth of hatred' in the US was much stronger than in

Canada. Ronny pointed out that in Minneapolis there were black bars and *white* bars. We went on to share more stories of racism in the US. I felt like this was part of getting to know where each other stood and finding our shared ideas about racism, but I also felt that it might not be easy to get the lens back onto ourselves, as it was so easy to look elsewhere and ignore the glaring similarities in our own country.

It would be several sessions before we were able to look in the mirror and identify racism within ourselves.

We spent this first session, as a whole group, introducing ourselves to each other. I updated the group about our previous, 'false start' and what had happened at the first meeting. We went through the same agenda as we had previously, reviewing confidentiality, the proposed session outlines, and journal information. The group communicated their curiosity and interest in the narrative process with individuals speaking about their varying degrees of familiarity with narrative methods.

During this session, and in the Pre-Session, participants expressed excitement and anxiety about the upcoming process. Sophia expressed scepticism that this intervention would bring any real change, but hoped that it might. There was a lot of nervous laughter and a sense of anticipation. There was also discussion about group process and etiquette. Cam was concerned about how other group members would feel about his use of profanity. There was some teasing about this and generally the mood was good-natured. Some expressed fear that we would *"skirt around the issues" (Diane - Session 1, p. 9).*

I provided blank reflexive journals to the rest of the participants who had not been at the pre-session meeting, and we discussed the concept of reflexivity and the ways that participants might utilize their journals. Participants were informed that I would be

collecting the journals at the end of the project, for transcription, and then returning them to the participants.

The stories about other people's racism continued in this second session but moved slightly closer to home. Lily talked about segregation within Manitoba, on the train to Churchill the previous summer:

Lily- Have you ever ridden the train to Churchill?

Joy- When I was about four.

Lily- It's segregated. …The Via employees segregate you. So I travel to communities off the rail line… and I'll walk on the train and he'll say, 'left' or 'right' and then I'll look in the car and… all my clients are in the car that he's… he's sent me in the opposite direction with the white tourists…(Session 1, p. 20)

Other group members, including myself, had a hard time believing this could be true. It was too close to home, too blatant. We weren't ready to look in the mirror yet. But we heard Lily, and it gave us pause as it meant that it was possible that we, as a country, were not necessary better, or more innocent than other countries, in terms of racism.

We moved into discussions about the changes needed to reduce racism in our own society.

Sophia spoke:

> *..and that's fine and well, however, we still work and live and are limited to, within systems that have racist policies and parameters in which we can only elicit so much change…I mean we can change individual practice. (Session 1 – Sophia, p. 11)*

We were quick to slide back into the theme of 'denying our power.' I responded by talking about how we can each individually try and do the 'right thing' within our

practice, but ultimately, the outcome may still be bad because the system is oppressive. I finally challenged the group by saying:

> *...If we have decided that this system…is bigger than all of us and there's nothing we can do to change it, we can only do these little things [and] then we're kind of screwed [chuckle]. And so, how do we engage that? Here we are, as a group of us, at the table, there's an element of power, whether we feel it or not, to make a change in our society and in our organizations and collectively, so how does it start?*

Sophia reacted to my statement in what seemed to be a joke, but embedded a message of her own experience of powerlessness when she'd attempted to challenge the system:

> *Is this the process? ..a protest group that your…? [laughter]…I agree there are possibilities, but I think, thus far, what I've seen is tokenism. I've seen it happen to the detriment of children and families… it's almost politics of it. …Being inclusive … was more important than the outcome for the family and a child, in that instance…Needless to say, my term position was not extended because [laughter] because I challenged the system…it did go well for me because…I don't want to work in that kind of system. [pause] Now I'm working at a worse system! [laughter] So it's all good! [laughter]*
>
> *Linda- it's everywhere*
>
> *Diane - I think that raises another interesting issue. …How do social workers operate as agents of change when our own positions are insecure? Like, when you're in a term position, right, then you then can't really have the same kind of voice.*
>
> *Sam- …or your funding comes from the government. (Session 1, p. 12-13)*

I felt myself reacting, internally, to this notion of threat. I understood that *white* social workers might vary, to some degree, in their economic status and power within systems, but when I think of the actual threat to those being harmed by the system, it seems minimal. Lives are being lost. If we lose face or lose our job, it will be rough, but are we really at any serious risk by challenging the system? We have education, our resumes, and our *whiteness*. I felt our fear was misplaced. I also reacted to Sophia's comments and wondered why, as soon as an issue moves beyond individuals and 'a few

bad apples' do you get labeled radical for even naming it? And how come activist is a bad word among social workers?

During this session, we began a conversation about professionalism, which carried on throughout the entire intervention. Diane spoke about the system she'd worked in, in the US, and the benefits she saw in registration and licensure,

> *One of the advantages [is] that social work is a much more respected profession and comes with much higher salary structure…I'm kind of appalled, arriving back in Winnipeg, and finding what salaries are and what the limitations of social work is in this province and that other disciplines like occupational therapy and nursing are doing what would traditionally have been social work jobs and getting paid twice as much money to do it! So there is a potential positive role for having licensure and accountability, um, so we might disagree on this one, I uh…*
>
> *Sophia - "We will. We're sitting on the side [of the table]." [laughter]*
>
> *Diana- in [US city] you cannot call yourself social worker without a master's degree…I know that is not true for most people in this room, and I'm not saying that that's right, but it has led to a different expectation of professionalism and a different expectation of how people are paid. …When you walk into a meeting and you say, 'I am a social worker,' you're seen as a professional…I don't experience that here in Manitoba…and I think that has to do with not being licensed and not having to write exams and not having any sort of accountability.*
>
> *Sophia- … I think it more has to do with a history of social work in the province…*
>
> *Diane- I get that.*
>
> *Sophia- …then it does to do with licensing.*
>
> *Diane- Well, I get that, except that, where do you go from…?*
>
> *Sophia- …and I think social workers here have far too much responsibility and authority to do things that they should not be doing. (Session 1, p. 16)*

Sophia spoke about her experience practicing in England and how little authority social workers had there, compared to Manitoba, and that she feels that social workers have too much power here. This statement was in contrast to the earlier theme of 'denying our power.' I wondered if Sophia felt that power was in the hands of the 'wrong' social

workers. Diane spoke about having a negative experience with CFS, as a kinship foster parent, and noted the lack of professionalism and the lack of skill. Sophia went on:

> *There's no leadership, there's no monitoring, there's no accountability, management is absent from much of the decision-making. So, when I talk about some of the things that I've seen happened in the field. I'm not blaming the social worker, necessarily, I think the system just needs to be revamped…It needs an overhaul and I think a lot of the education that is within the social work program is not far-reaching enough in terms of …relationship building and…what life really looks like on the front lines.*
>
> *Diane – Well, that we agree on…none of the interns that I have had have a single clinical skill, uh, coming in. (Session 1, p. 17)*

I felt that this discussion was one step closer to 'looking in the mirror' by examining social work as a structure. Once again, we disconnected ourselves from this structure, as if it was not us, but was something outside of ourselves which had done us wrong, was bad, and needed revamping. On one hand, this could be a form of narrative therapy, where we externalize the problem; on the other hand, it was a convenient way to avoid responsibility for the problem and maintain our 'innocent identity.'

One participant journaled about 'their' experience of this first session:

> *-busy mind and noticed body sensations during first session signaling concern- concern that there might be an atmosphere of fear toward hope & noticing my own reaction of feeling constricted in sharing my hope- feelings of concern that white privilege was not identified in a discussion of registered social work being helpful in accountability & professionalism- is not professionalism a white privileged concept- accountable to who? is professionalism more pay/status what will make our work more helpful? does it contribute to more us & them experiences? does it limit access to positions of power & exclude voices (education & privilege so closely connected!) - during the discussion in the group I felt uncomfortable and wanted to speak up but was not sure I could articulate my disquiet to others who sounded very certain & clear about their beliefs - I felt shame/disappointment…this brought to my awareness how my own fear keeps me quiet- how I need to find ways to calm myself & courage to risk speaking up & trusting that others will be patient with me. (Participant Journal 2 - Sept. 8, 2016, p. 1)*

The next day I met with Don Robinson. His response to my concerns about directing or setting the tone for the group by putting 'too much' of my own opinion out there, inspired the following entry into my journal.

> *He suggested asking questions about various issues and waiting until others have spoken to add my own ideas. He also suggested that I ask if group members had talked to co-workers about the group and if so what kind of response they gave. This might give interesting input, but also might show people where their allies are in this. He spoke about us being a mirror for each other and being like fish trying to explain water to each other. (Joy's Journal -September 8, 2016, p. 17)*

Later, I journaled about an idea to have the group break into smaller groups and set up stations to work at 'externalizing the problem' as per the narrative process. Each station would have a different artistic medium to use.

By the second session, I had not received any feedback from group members about our session outlines or materials. I decided to go ahead and break up the group into smaller groups of three. We moved from station to station, attempting to express our ideas about *whiteness* and racism by using clay, drama, and collage as metaphors.

Many participants expressed discomfort with the activities we did in this session stating that they were not artistically inclined and so felt nervous about engaging in creative projects. Some stated that it was fun. One small group laughed through much of the process and seemed to bond as a result. I felt that the discussions we had afterwards, during the check in, highlighted some of the topics that we had already been examining. It allowed us to examine them in new contexts, as each person shared what they had done at the various stations. In hindsight, I wish I had found ways to elicit more participation from the group in planning our activities. This might have provided a better sense of ownership over the process.

Once all the groups had completed the various stations, we met as a large group to talk about what we had created. Linda described her thoughts as she created a fish out of clay, repeating the theme of the 'binary of innocent/guilty identity.'

> *I often have that view of, 'I don't know the water I swim in,' 'I can't see it,' so it turned into a fish. But…I wonder if I'm perpetuating this sense that I'm not even aware of all this stuff, of the yucky things that I do as a slimy person so, this fish, right? [laughter] And slippery character too." (Session 2 – Linda, p. 3)*

Cam, referring to the matches he'd created out of clay, stated that his creation was kind of a joke, but said, *"you need a lot of people to set a fire to white supremacy… but it's hard because white supremacy being the fish, [indicating fish created by Linda] is always wet and slippery [chuckles] and also has an umbrella for added protection [indicating the umbrella created by Sean]…." (Session 2 – Cam, p. 3*)

Sheila, Sam and Diane spoke about their conversation throughout the process of making the collage, which led them to imagine the perspective of some of the early colonizers. Sam shared some of their thoughts about the "original settler,"

> *Sam- … maybe they're really young, maybe they didn't really know what they were doing and following their parents, the king, who knows?*
>
> *Diane - I felt a lot of empathy coming up for the individual settler who got on.. I guess, a boat, and probably had no knowledge of what was going to happen… I found myself wanting to let them off the hook…also looking at the layers of power that was working on them… like a parent, a King, God. We talked about how some people had… different motivations for why they were doing it. We did talk a bit about making the separation between the power structure that was driving them, and the folks that said, 'Hey let's do this and let's manipulate people into…' It probably wasn't clear for them either, right? 'Let's manipulate people into… take vulnerable people and manipulate them into our vision of how to make money..' which I suspect was what a lot of it was about.*
>
> *Sheila- And that those people, if they got here, …the initial settler, who was some poor somebody [with the promise of wealth] if they got here, if they didn't like it, they didn't really have any options. They couldn't necessarily turn around and go back because they had spent everything they had to get here, or there was people relying on them or whatever…*

Diane- Kind of like going to social worker school and then you'd find yourself in a system that you may disagree with, yet have worked very hard to get into.

I felt myself reacting internally all throughout this discussion, but wanted to let the group say everything that they were thinking without shutting it down with my own concerns before seeing where it led. Diane noted that she was trying to stay curious about their groups' attraction to finding ways of defining settlers as innocent, and felt that this perspective was not going to end there. I felt like we were watching ourselves play the 'race to innocence' game, but were beginning to be aware that we were actually playing a game, and were starting to wonder why we were so drawn to it. Obviously, we wanted to be considered innocent and wanted to see our ancestors as innocent, so we could maintain our comfortable identity as 'good *white* people.' We were drawing comparisons between innocent settlers and social workers with 'good intentions' finding themselves victimized inside the 'big bad system.'

Figure 1

Ronnie (who is American) spoke about the pictures of American coins that she had added to the group collage (see *Figure 1*, above) and described them as representing broken promises. "*Native Americans… don't have much access to the monetary resources available, like, healthcare education …it's kind of like a farce, where it's like, 'yes, you're part of us, but really, you don't have access…" (Session 2- Ronnie, p. 8)*

Again, we were looking at the racism from a distance, 'avoiding the mirror,' and we struggled to focus on our own connection to it. We could see injustice, at macro and mezzo levels, but where were we in this?

Ronnie, Sophia and Lily spoke about their clay project. They described the brown ball as the head of a social worker, isolated, on an island, in a glass, which represented the confines of the system. (See *Figure 2*).

Figure 2

> *His red hair represented his frustration with trying to make changes but being overwhelmed by the system and the pain around him. The pills, cigarette and alcohol represented numbing 'himself' out, aka "self care methods" to make it easier to just go along with the system. (Session 2 – Sophia, p. 1)*

Lily spoke about the little islands and feeling like, *"I'm fighting this fight by myself, and there's loneliness with that, to fight within the system and being the only person wanting to fight the system… (Session 2 – Lily, p. 2)"*

Participants seem eager to demonstrate the risks of attempting to challenge the system and the vulnerabilities associated with such actions. Sean spoke of the umbrella he'd made from clay, as a metaphor for *"the human need to protect ourselves. (Session 2 – Sean, p.2)"* He spoke about compromising values, *"…the kind of person we'd like to be. Sometimes…when we feel like we're being threatened …we need to do what we need to do*

to survive. (Session 2 – Sean, p. 2)" Sean joked that he'd thought of making a condom to represent protection, instead of the umbrella.

Again, I questioned that challenging the system would put our survival at risk. We were not vulnerable people and seemed to be continuing to 'deny our power.'

One participant journaled about the activities within the session:

> *[I] felt unsettled during the study grp [sic]- the activities were not my mode to express so I found a generalized discomfort from that- in the discussion it felt as though the issues were becoming overly simplified & in the reaction that possibilities might be missed, opportunities might be missed - it felt as though my efforts to contribute did not resonate with others- I felt very disconnected & lost - I also felt as though I had no focus for the purpose of our meeting & that somehow did not see what others saw- I felt that I should be in a more similar place to the others or they needed to be more similar to me- lots of thoughts about that. (Journal 2 - September 15, 2016, p. 1)*

During our post-intervention interviews, '*Having a variety of activities' was* noted as being helpful to several participants. Diane suggested, in her post-intervention interview, that a more experiential process, like the activities we did in this session, might have been helpful, despite her personal discomfort with them.

The next day I wrote in my own journal about having mixed feelings about this session.

> *I started out feeling unsure about this as I felt inclined to make a case for why racial identity awareness was the problem to focus on but decided instead to kind of assume that and ask people to try and represent the various aspects of the problem using talking, collage, clay and drama. Some people seemed unsure of the goal of this process I spoke about exploring the issues using various parts of our brain and to give each other a change to engage in a variety of ways with the topic. I'm unsure if this process brought us any further along in the process. At the end people spoke about being polite, unsure what to say, avoiding conflict… I'm unsure if people went any deeper into the topic. I ended by asking people to send me links to videos or articles to share next time, but I feel people need more information and need to apply it personally. I guess the process yesterday made the topic too removed. This process was also about examining without having to deal with major personal guilt right off the top but I think this group is here to face it and were not wanting to avoid anything but unsure how to go deeper, as of yet.*

(Joy's Journal - September 15, 2016, p. 19)

I met with Don Robinson and spoke about our conversation in my journal.

> *He spoke about the group being 'in one circle and needing to risk a lot to move out into another circle.' We talked about it feeling like thin ice to move out. He suggested that I pay attention to the feelings I was having and acknowledge that it is ok to be uncomfortable. He spoke about the group showing only the tip of the iceberg of what was going on for them…We spoke about the fact that in the last session, I asked a group of relative strangers to share things that are uncomfortable with each other, using art which has a whole bunch of other fears attached to it. This may be why I sensed the 'shut down." (Joy's Journal - September 20, 2016, p. 20)*

On one hand, I had forced the group into risk taking, possibly before they were ready to risk in this way. On the other hand, I felt the resulting conversation highlighted our fear of risk, particularly when it came to addressing *whiteness* in our practice and in our social systems.

Between sessions two and three, the following articles were circulated to all group members: Adair (2015); Crosley-Corcoran (2014); DiAngelo (2011); Indian and Northern Affairs (2011); King (1963); Macintosh (1989); and a video called "What is Privilege?" (Buzzfeed, 2015). These articles were identified by several other participants, in addition to the ones I had suggested.

The proposed task of the third session was to map the influence of the problem, as described by White and Epston (1990). In this session, we were to examine the participants' understanding of the influence of the identified problem(s) on: their own lives, both personally and professionally; on the social work profession, as a whole; and on society, which includes those within, or those utilizing, the social service systems and their families and communities.

At this session, three participants were away, so there were only seven of us We spoke at length, about *white* fragility, based on the article by DiAngelo (2011) and watched a satirical video called "How to Protect White People's Feelings In The Workplace" (Newsbroke, 2016).

Tiptoeing into action. I invited people to share any thoughts or concerns they had about today's session. There was a very long pause and then Cam began tentatively,

> *K, I'm going to go out on a funny little but I feel like the, uh, a thing that like I sometimes find frustrating about like…like discussions about privilege is that uh, they sort of seem to like stop at like acknowledging it and I think like that things should be, to fight racism and colonialism and capitalism and destroy the world as we know it, basically (chuckles). But, so like sometimes, I find like like, um, that that's like a thing that's like lacking in discussions about privilege and it's like, a sort of like, it's about making you a better person or something… and it doesn't like leave you a way out because I don't want to like spend my life like acknowledging privilege I want to spend it destroying systems of privilege. (Session 3 – Cam, p. 1)*

Lily spoke up,

> *I think for a lot of people that's the first step and that's like, "Whoa white privilege is real!" It's like a light bulb goes off for people when they do those exercises and all of a sudden I think that's what can trigger the next step. But we're all at a different, going at a different pace, and sometimes I want people to like, catch up with me, "Come on folks! …Let's make a change!" But unless you… I feel like if you, ...[if] people aren't acknowledging that they have privilege they're not able to acknowledge that change is required right?*
>
> *Sam - or they go about it in a way that's maybe completely inappropriate, right? (Session 3, p. 1)*

Lily spoke about waiting to be invited by Indigenous people before acting on anything that might influence them, but also trying to balance the desire to fight for justice without overstepping boundaries. I spoke about looking for places where I have integrity to act and gave the example of water security issues. Cam was suggesting that we respond to our awareness of racism, and the *white* systems, with action. The response

of the group was that we needed to be careful and discerning. Essentially, we needed to 'tiptoe into action.'

We spoke about confronting people in positions of power in the workplace, the perspective of these people, and determining when acting on situations we perceive as unjust would be appropriate or seen as over-bearing. There was also an extensive discussion about the need for action versus advocating for the system, as well as our role as individuals versus our role as social workers.

Diane spoke about an early lesson she received about her relationship with the social services system, from a social work professor

> *…One of the first lessons that has always kind of stuck with me, was… because I was an anarchist, at that time… And I was going to be an anarchist, I was like you [referring to Cam], I was going to tear down the system and that's how I saw myself. It probably doesn't fit well with how I present right now…and the person, the professor said, 'social workers are kind of agents of the system, like if you're here to… be an anarchist you're going to really struggle.' I don't know how she knew that's what I was thinking [chuckle]. I had not said that. 'And so, like, your only option, if that's where you're at, is to be comfortable and OK with effecting change from within a system that you're going to have to work within. And if that's not OK with you then maybe this isn't the place for you. Like maybe this is not where you should be. …Do something else or you're gonna be in a state of angst, like all the time," …and you know, the discussion here tonight kind of brings that up for me. (Session 3 – Diane, p. 4)*

Diane went on to note the various ways she felt we had power and didn't have power, as social workers:

> *In our professional lives we both have power and are disempowered simultaneously because we play roles that involve gains and losses, depending on how we use ourselves. …In your personal life, I feel like we have more agency… so I get to control my personal life and like who, … if I want to, at a family gathering, be the agitator…that is entirely my decision, right? I'm at the family gathering when somebody says something really obnoxious, I have complete freedom to do that or not do that. In my professional life, and that isn't so true in my professional life right now, because I'm not in such a position of power, but it gets more complicated, like, and I think that I'm a bit uh… I have some feelings about not taking that seriously, um, that I'm not going to be able to articulate.. but*

> *I wonder if sometimes, …this is gonna sound not at all how I mean it but …one needs to in a way have a bit of compassion for the people in positions of power… that's the best, that's the closest I can come to what's in my head. Not to like, 'oh poor them,' like in that video .. but I don't know, I guess just like, I don't know. Just being only critical of people in positions of power doesn't lead anywhere… in …yeah. I'm going to struggle with this for a bit. (Session 3 – Diane, p. 4)*

As I listened to Diane, I felt tension rising in me. I did not agree with this perspective on social work practice and felt that this was exactly why systems continued to be oppressive, because those with power did not challenge them. I quickly reacted with my own story from a conversation with a professor in my BSW who'd spoken about change happening in a bunch of ways, both inside and outside of the system. I spoke about my own decision to return to school in order to work at change in both directions. I then talked [at length] about my understanding of social work affecting micro, mezzo, and macro levels of society and feeling like I needed to understand the macro level and how to shift it before trying to work with individuals in order to better understand the context they were living in. I stated that, in this way, I could avoid blaming the individual. I ended by stating that I didn't feel you needed to make change only within the system.

Diane replied, *"Did you hear that as being what I said?" (Session 3 – Diane, p. 5)* I'm pretty sure I turned red at that moment, embarrassed that I had 'gone off' on a tangent only to discover that I had not understood her, in the first place. I tried to salvage the moment, *"that's partly what I was hearing and maybe that's what you weren't trying to say?"* Diane replied, *"No."* I tried again, *"You were saying.. what I was picking up from your professor telling you, like, if you're trying to change the system, this isn't the place for you because you need to work inside the system."* Diane responded, *"Yeah, we might have to bring this back next time I don't know if I can articulate it any more effectively."* I wasn't quite ready to give up just yet, so I asked, *"did other people hear something else?*

'Cause I maybe I wasn't hearing… (Session 3, p. 5-6)" Lily spoke up:

> *I think what I heard was, I mean, as a social worker, I advocate for people, but I also have to advocate for the systems that we have, that exist today. …Like, I talk to a lot of kids about the police system, but at the same time, well, that's our safety system so sometimes we have to use this police system even if we want to say, 'fuck the police,' …That [is] still a system that will keep us safe, hopefully, right? So I see it as.. that's kind of what I heard. (Session 3, p. 6)*

I remained uncomfortable with my 'reactionary response' for the rest of the session and felt like there was a lot of tension during that meeting. I wondered if the tone of the satirical video, which mocked *white* fragility, had set people on edge from the start or whether we really were farther apart in understanding and beliefs about *whiteness* and the need for systemic change, than I had felt during the first sessions. I also felt that it was quite possible that this was a part of a typical group process where conflict begins arising within the group and that it was normal to have tension at this time.

Near the end of the meeting, participants expressed confusion about the direction of the group and indicated the need for more focus and for stronger direction. One participant journaled about having difficulty finding space to share what they had hoped to share with the group. Another participant journaled about feeling like they were in a different place from the rest of the group on the issues we were discussing and were troubled by this.

Questions about confidentiality came up, and group members challenged the goals of the group as being unrealistic. I left feeling disheartened and wondered whether this process was going to be helpful to anyone after all. I journaled: *"I feel like the biggest problem in the group is that none of us are doing very well identifying the problem and we are kind of spinning in circles" (Joy's Journal, September 22, 2016, p. 22)*. I questioned what aspects of my facilitation style might be contributing to this:

> *I am going to read a group process book to see if I'm missing something. About a year ago I was talking to a friend of mine who has worked with groups for 50+ years, primarily using art in activism and community development. He spoke about the need to really get the group to 'gel' and focus a lot on that, in the beginning, or we would get stuck. This is something that I felt we had at the first meeting when everyone was so talkative and vulnerable and then I thought the small group work in the second session would help solidify this but it feels less and less so. (Joy's Journal - September 22, 2016, p. 23)*

During our post-intervention interviews, participants did note that there was *not a clear process,* but that some confusion over the direction of the group gave them a feeling of being needed and potentially contributed to the lack of attrition during the intervention. Lily indicated that maybe the lack of direction was okay:

> *I mean I thought a lot about how like it progressed and sometimes it felt like, ,ah, where we going?' and then I thought maybe we needed more structure or direction, but at the same time, I think the group went where it needed to go. I like that process too. [laughter] (Lily - Post Int, p. 1)*

Lily was not the only one to question the influence of the structure of the intervention on our experiences within it. Several others, myself included, wondered how the group would have felt and what we might have discovered if we had used a more formal structure.

When asked what was missing in our group sessions, Ronnie responded by talking about the flexibility within the process:

> *...[pause] I don't know if I felt anything was missing because I felt like you [indicating Joy] were very respectful of where people wanted to go and kind of like, just of the whole process itself so…at no time did I ever feel like, 'OK like I have to do this and like it has to be done a certain way,', and I don't feel like anything was missing because exactly. You were very flexible in where I needed to go, as well as to what we needed as a group (Ronnie - Pre Int, p. 1)*

Sam spoke about feeling, overall, that the disagreements were not a negative factor in our process:

> *I thought that everybody was really.. um, like, people were challenging, but I think everybody was really coming from a good place and that felt really nice to, like kind of have that mutual support. Like, I never felt fearful or uncomfortable in the group.. I think everybody was just really genuine and I really appreciated that. (Sam - Post Int, p. 1)*

I later wrote about my meeting with Don Robinson after this session,

> *He spoke about the positives of participants feeling defensive because it points out a theme and really, I am to be looking for themes. He spoke about me facilitating dialogue, not managing emotions or confronting things. He suggested re-visiting ground rules and adding on to each other's spoken experience, not challenging it. He suggested handing out markers and stickies for people to add ideas as they came to them to the discussion if some people aren't speaking up. He suggested asking people to answer the questions: "Have I been challenged, here or elsewhere? In what way have I been challenged? Did it shift my thinking?" He cautioned against rejecting people I might disagree with or feel the need to challenge. He suggested asking people how they fit in the group/ as a social worker. (Joy's Journal - September 30, 2016, p. 24)*

I continued journaling,

> *After having some time to think and then talking to Don, I'm feeling better about the next meeting. There is no wrong way… I just need to facilitate a story, facilitate individual stories and collect them. (Joy's Journal - September 30, 2016, p. 24)*

I then turned to the narrative therapy process for direction and decided to try another angle to externalize the problem. I decided to put up posters asking the questions: "How does society see *white* social workers?" "How do *white* social workers see themselves?" and "How do we see ourselves?"

Looking back, I noticed that I had disregarded Don's suggestions about asking where people fit as social workers and providing stickies for people to add to the discussion. I think I avoided the question about 'fit' because I was worried about digging too far into social work identity. I worried it would become a focus and take us away from our *white* identity focus.

I included stickies in the next session, but did not use them after that. I think I underestimated the fear that participants might be carrying about saying 'the wrong thing', assuming that they had joined the study in order to talk and process this topic. This fear, I believed, was still tied to the bipolar identity of innocence and guilt, which risked disruption in this setting. This, I believe, was a mistake on my part.

After our third session, the group had agreed not to meet for two weeks, as one participant was going to be away and had requested that we wait to meet until she returned.

Two weeks later, my own journal entry, after Session 4, described my experience of that session:

> *Group met last night and it was the best meeting yet. People came in and were laughing and joking with each other. I had to corral them to get them on task. It felt like they had missed each other, as we didn't meet last week, and the week before three people were away… A couple people shared that they were looking forward to the group as they had things they wanted to share. People also talked about bringing things from the group into their workplace…This feels good, like it's a safe place. (Joy's journal - October 6, 2016, p. 24)*

I started the session by talking about how we had previously focused on *white* identity, which felt broad and a little abstract, but pulled out things like privilege, superiority, and guilt. Everyone agreed with these descriptors and said that we should focus more on social work identity, dominant narratives, and move into counter narratives and preferred narratives in the next couple of weeks. I noted in my journal afterwards that, *"People seemed to really jump on this and be clear about this" (Joy's Journal - October 6, 2016, p. 25*).

The proposed plan was that we would begin deconstructing the narratives of the problem(s) and the ways in which they affect our practice. One other article that was

distributed, prior to the group session was Dumbril and Green's (2008) article "Indigenous knowledge in the social work academy." I read the story at the beginning of the article about a raven who intervened when he noticed a *white* social work professor trying to find ways to include Indigenous knowledge in the social work academy. The raven told the professor about the Qalunaat who had strange customs but who needed a space for these customs within the academy. The professor travels to the far North only to discover that Qalunaat is an Inuit term for "*white* people." The lesson was that *white* people need to confine their ways of knowing to one part of the academy instead of owning the whole thing and deciding whether or not to make a small space for 'others.'

This reading did not receive much response and we moved on to the next articles. I wondered if, as a facilitator, I had taken up too much space by deciding to read this story instead of letting others direct the discussion, if the topic did not seem relevant to the group at that moment, or if it was just good to ponder without discussing at that point.

We then moved on to the other articles which provoked a lot of discussion. Sachs (2015) spoke about the idea that being a 'nice liberal' could potentially still be harmful. This article, I believe, was critical in helping the group begin to move past their 'bi-polar identities of innocence and guilt,' by pointing out the ways in which our good intentions can still result in harm to others.

The Green's and Burton's (2013) article provided a 12-step program for decolonization. This article illustrated potentially new narratives of decolonization that most of us had never considered, such as land repatriation. This led us to question some of the ideas we had about what decolonization means. For a couple of participants, the article sparked 'tiptoeing into action' ideas regarding land decolonization. One participant

challenged the use of a 12-step program as a medium for the message, as it was based on colonial values, due to its Christian origin.

I then put up posters with the following questions: "How I See Myself as a *White* Social Worker" (See *Figure 3* below); "How *White* Social Workers See Themselves" (See *Figure 4* below); and "How Society Sees *White* Social Workers" (See *Figure 5* below). 'Sticky notes' were then provided for participants' responses. We spent some time, in pairs, talking about these questions. My hope was that this exercise would assist us in 'looking into the mirror' by showing us the discrepancies between the ways we saw ourselves and the way others saw us.

In the answers posted, it was clear that we still saw ourselves as having good intentions, which seemed connected to our bipolar innocent identity, and lacking power, at least compared to the 'other' *white* social workers.

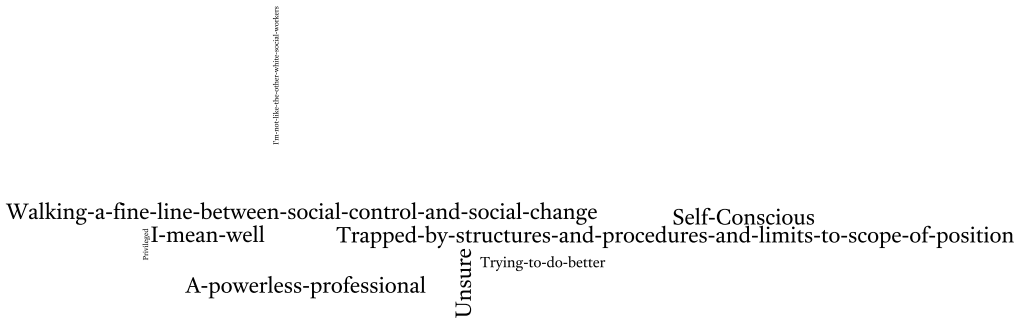

Figure 3

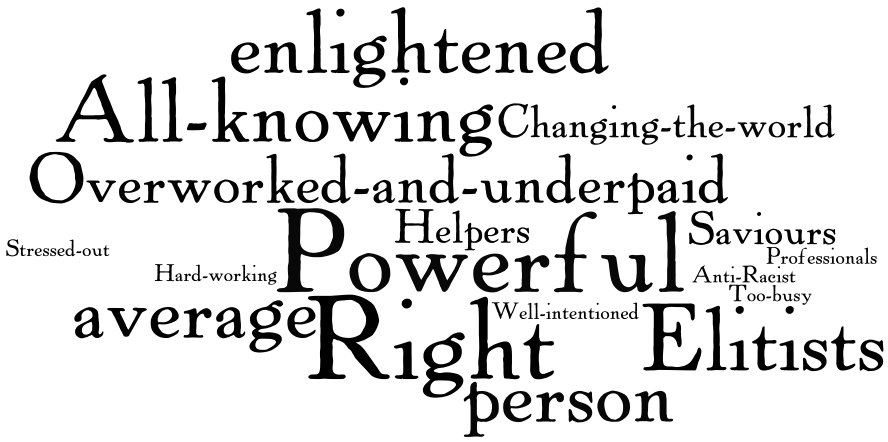

Figure 4

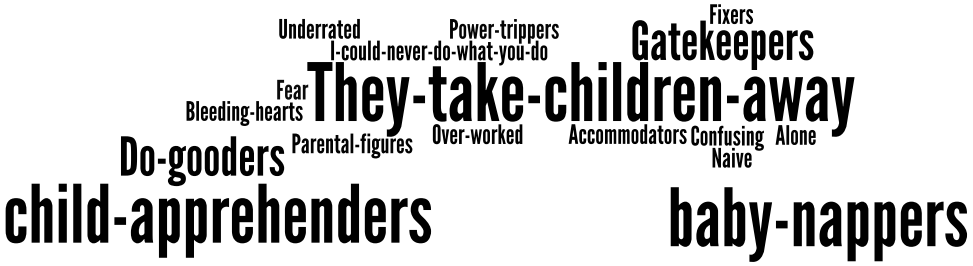

Figure 5

During the 'check-in', Lily spoke about deciding to give her second year social work practicum students the option of doing a written assignment on privilege. She was inspired to do so after our previous sessions and discovering that that issue had never come up in class for them before. Lily was shocked and disappointed with the faculty, but glad that at least she was bringing it up.

Ronnie responded to Lily:

> *Challenging racism is huge, and it's a whole… you would have to restructure everything, it would be hard… it's just trying to try to take those successes, like small successes, and building on them…like challenging your students to…examine their privilege and look at that… allying yourself … with people who are fighting … I mean that's been going on for a long time but … you do see*

> *changes happening, but it's just slow and I think it's there is a self-awareness piece that really has to be done in order to be able to challenge those things that w*e see that are not right. (Session 4 – Ronnie, p. 1)

This was the first time someone spoke about actually taking action, in response to this intervention. Overall, the conversation felt hopeful to me.

We spoke about privilege and where we had seen it around us. Several people shared examples of the media presentations of stories about tragedies, commonly experienced in Indigenous communities, but highlighted and given media space when they happened to *white* people. Sean shared about his reaction to a special on cable TV, about the mental health system. On the show, people were talking about losing family members to suicide. Sean wondered:

> *Why is this white woman's pain and suffering more valued than the countless numbers of Aboriginal mothers and daughters and sisters and, you know, people who we see who have lost their love[d] ones to suicide? And I'm not trying to take away or to minimize what's going on for her but you know… and I thought about this group and thought about, 'Is this why?' and I expressed this to my friend to who, who almost accused me of being heartless like, "how could you think about that? Like here's this woman who's saying…her son died and you're thinking, 'It's no big deal, people kill themselves all the time…up North.' But, you know… they devoted an hour to this to this family …I've met…hundreds of people through my work…who are Indigenous and who come from… these Northern communities…Suicide is so rampant and it's such a such an issue …you hear about the statistics, …I don't feel you hear about it from the same.. as … these other stories……is privilege allowing this… and then the fact that they lost their children and had this horrible experience, is there almost like a value number put on it because they're white?… and it almost like, [the] four ladies, and again…I don't know them, I don't know their stories… it's but it's almost like they've fallen and we're here to catch them… to support them, and nurture them. But then you have these Aboriginal communities who are dying and they're drowning and no one's picking them up and getting their heads above water…and that's…what makes you think about privilege…. (Session 4 – Sean, p. 3)*

Diane shared a connection she had to one of the people featured on the show and spoke about her mother's confusion that 'someone from our community' could experience

suicide, as if their community were made up of 'good people' and therefore exempt from such things.

In speaking about these media stories, we were beginning to examine how something that does not appear overtly racist, which could be done with good intentions, could actually be racist. Systems could perpetrate racism. We could imagine the people who created these shows, who decided what stories to air, as potentially 'good people.' They were still 'not us', but they brought us closer to 'looking in the mirror' by showing us that people who were like us, with good intentions, who may share our bipolar innocent identity, can also do harm.

We then returned to the discussion about social work and professionalism. Sheila brought up the Manitoba College of Social Worker's (MCSW) Annual General Meeting and the recently added requirements for specific training, which included Indigenous perspectives training and ethics training. Sheila felt that the requirements were "token-ish" and not supported in any meaningful way by the college.

Ronnie spoke about hearing that MCSW didn't allow input from the Aboriginal Social Worker's Society when they were developing the College. I spoke about my understanding that there was some consultation, in the view of the MCSW, but that they refused to receive feedback from the Aboriginal Social Workers group and had actually just stopped responding to them altogether. I told about my own role in presenting at the legislature when they were making decisions about licensing, and my concerns about MCSW's inability to work things out with the Aboriginal Social Worker's Society. The participants were angry.

> *Sophia - And there's another white system legitimizing what is appropriate Aboriginal training.*

Joy – At.. some of the meetings [I attended, between MCSW and representative from Aboriginal Social Workers Association] what came up [was]… "they [the Aboriginal Social Workers' group] are a very radical small group, to the side. They don't speak for anybody else and they don't understand what the big ramifications are here and so that's why we don't engage."

Lily- [whispered] My God!

Joy - That was the argument presented from some social workers that I actually looked up to, and would've considered… looking to for mentorship in some areas. …I was… like, "what's happening here?!"

Sheila- I attended, like the Fall before the merge, I attended the AGM….the slate for the board, I think.. needed to be approved and the number of social workers who were standing up in an angry snit about the fact that there are people on that list that weren't social workers or who were social workers but weren't registered with the MIRSW, right, like, 'How dare they! That's worse…' They were so angry about the fact that someone from outside their little legislative group would want to have input or anything. (Session 4, p. 6-7)

Again, we had moved away from looking at ourselves, ('avoiding the mirror') and towards judging an outside entity which we perceived as perpetuating racism and disconnected from ourselves. I wondered how much of our focus on the college was about looking at a system that we felt we had some power to make change, and some responsibility for, and how much it was a distraction from looking at the various systems we were working in on a day to day basis, and our own complicity in them.

During this session, I noticed that we had returned to telling stories. This contrasted with Session 3, where we'd spent most of the time trying to discuss our various perspectives and opinions regarding our role in social change. The story telling felt natural and like we were connecting again.

In our post intervention interviews, almost all participants mentioned the articles, in general, as being either helpful, overwhelming, or both. Diane wondered if they were a bit of a distraction, at times, to the group process:

> *...I don't know that I could put it in helpful or unhelpful but, towards the end we got more and more related to academic articles and I think that took us further and further away from the group process, and in.. further, further away from relating to each other…(Diane - Post Int, p. 1-2)*

But, in the same interview, Diane noted the Green's and Burton's (2013) article as being providing new insight to her :

> *...I think um…the article that we read that actually stands out the most for me was the 12 steps article. Like to me, that was [a] really interesting cognitive experiment so I think I was mulling that over, a lot. And I think it put me in a different headspace, like what would that look like? I think that article more than any of the others and sort of taking that information and applying it to the world around me.. so what would this look like if we really wound it back… (Diane- Post Int, p. 3)*

Later, I journaled about my meeting with Don Robinson. I had spoken about the polarities that sometimes surfaced in our group around various issues like professionalism and about our own 'bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt.'

> *He spoke about noting the positives and negatives in things and not only focusing on black and white. We were talking about challenges against psychiatry and the DSM and how it pathologizes people and takes their lives out of context, but sometimes a good diagnosis can really help give direction for treatment. He also talked about noticing your triggers, both good and bad. He talked about helping people in private practice and feeling really good about this. I immediately started mentally formulating a reason why this was bad, but this was not where he was going. He was saying it is good to feel good. (Joy's Journal - October 6, 2016, p. 26)*

I recognized my own tendency to see things in binaries and how this tendency impaired growth. I sought to be more conscious of this going forward.

The proposed plan for the fifth session was to begin examining the ways in which participants and social workers, in general, have influenced the problem(s). This is usually the beginning of the 're-authoring,' 're-storying,' or 'developing counter-stories' within narrative therapy, as described by Combs and Freedman (1990) and White and Epston (1990). At this point, we, as a group, were vacillating between deconstructing common

narratives and looking for alternative, preferred narratives. Several articles that were distributed prior to this session were: Ishtar (2005); Le-Francois (2013); Neeganagwedgin (2013); Turnbull (2014); and Wexler (2011).

We discussed the LeFrancois' (2013) article about binaries. I mentioned that the elder had said that he sees diagnosis as just one tool, which is sometimes helpful and sometimes isn't, and feels cautious about throwing all of it away. He spoke about 'putting things on the shelf' when he doesn't currently see how they could be useful.

After reviewing LeFrancois (2013), there was a lot of discussion about mental health and critiques of the current system, the use of the DSM, and the need to make space for Indigenous knowledge. Examples were given of individuals utilizing traditional medicines and ceremonies for treatment and the varying responses of agencies and staff who questioned the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and actively undermined it.

We also discussed Ishtar (2005) and the idea that we needed to stop expecting Indigenous people to come to us, to our centres, to our offices, at the appointments we set, and instead, to go to them, when they ask us to.

A couple of the articles we discussed spoke about potential new narratives about colonization and decolonization in Canada (Green & Burton, 2013; Tuck &Yang, 2012). Participants seemed to respond most strongly and positively to these new visions of what could be.

We also briefly discussed the need to examine our own histories of immigration, the reasons our ancestors immigrated, and how the dominant narratives around immigration, by our various ethnic groups, may need to be deconstructed.

I felt like we reached a turning point during this session when we were actually looking at our own ethnic stories, our own agencies, and social workers we saw as "good people" making mistakes. We had finally begun to look in the mirror. The group was also beginning to talk about 'tip-toeing into action' in contrast to our narratives, which denied our power and disconnection from the systems we worked in.

> *Sam- Well, they're calling the whole foster system the pipeline to prison. Like, we make criminals by putting kids in multiple placements and traumatizing them at a very early age.*

I noticed the shift from 'them' to 'we' in Sam's comment. She was acknowledging our participation in these systems.

> *Cam - and both those systems are called 'the new residential schools' and, though the residential schools were on purpose and then they talk about the system as if like, you know, like it's not on purpose. That people are put in foster care and then in jails as if it's like a personal responsibility thing, and then they juggle that with like, 'oh and then there's the effects of residential school and colonization,' and it's just like this big mess. But, as far as I can tell… it seems funny to me that you can call these systems, 'the new residential school system,' while being like, 'the residential school system was the worst thing,' and then like, you know like not doing anything about it just watching it get worse every year…*

Cam did not connect himself to these systems, possibly because, without a social work degree, he felt less a part of these systems and felt that he had less power than others in the room, who had social work degrees.

> *Lily- I think there's… I think naming it has some impact. Like, if someone said that five years ago… like I think we're progressing to a point where we're like, we're naming that the systems are screwed up and I think that's a start whereas five years ago, maybe no one would've said that because it was too, too scary to even say it but now it's in the Free Press it's on the media it's eye-opening for some people, I think. (Session 5, p. 1)*

While I agreed that naming is powerful and important in the grand scheme of things, it felt like we were talking about issues that continually repeated throughout history. The pace of change that we feel we need as individuals, to 'sort out what to do

with the system' and our own selves, is not nearly fast enough for those currently caught in the systems.

We continued to speak about frustrations with the lack of systemic change, the need for action, and the role of naming wrongs as a starting place.

Diane shared about a situation at her work that week where she was asked to support/advocate for someone who happened to be Indigenous and in authority over her. Diane spoke about her internal conflict with the varying power dynamics at play in that situation. I was encouraged by her willingness to include the group in her reflexive process about the dynamics of power and privilege at play and not to deny her own power in that situation.

Sean asked Diane if she felt that she had insight in a way that many other social workers might not, in a situation that seemed obviously oppressive or racist to us in the group:

"*Do you feel like you're in a minority in terms of social workers that truly see that, or do you feel that social workers, in general, have an awareness of that?" (Session 5- p. 4)* Diane turned the question back to Sean: "*I don't even know… I don't know… what do you think?*

Instead of responding directly, Sean told a story about a young girl in an in-patient unit where he'd worked previously, who had exceptionally long hair, and who also had lice, and the staff's response to the situation:

> *So the way that they handled the problem is that they took an entire room and they laid plastic on the ground, and the two nurses wore these kind of, vacuumed kind of suits… …They said to the mom and the two daughters, 'if you're wanting to come visit we need to treat you for lice first and you're going to this room and… people are going through these Indigenous women's hair and looking for lice. It was almost like, you want to take a picture of it and say, 'this is happening in…*

> *2010!' …But what got me was that, it was an issue which was brought forward to the greater body, I guess, of how we work with youth and their families and for the two nurses, like generally they had no idea how offensive that was, you know, and they were they were shocked almost that this would be something that that was such an offensive thing. …As time went on and we talked about it, [they became] more aware of it and therefore felt a lot of shame around it for themselves… But it made me realize that there really are people out there who just…do not identify that. (Session 5 – p. 4)*

Sean spoke about people criticizing social workers for, *"being all talk and no action," "able to bring up a problem but don't have any solutions."* He concluded: *"I think there really are people out there who are in the helping profession who don't see a problem."* Sean noted that the nurses in his story just didn't seem to know that what they were doing was oppressive and racist. Diane stated: *"I think they think that for a lot of people that's not what would come to their mind." Sophia added: "I think they think they know. I think they think they do, but I don't think they do. (Session 5, p. 5)*

On one hand, I felt like this was another discussion about 'good intentions' and our bipolar relationship with innocence and guilt. But on the other hand, I think it spoke to the nature of *whiteness* as avoiding looking in the mirror. Diane and Sophia questioned how unaware we really are, implying that perhaps we are just in denial. I wondered how necessary it was to sort out our bipolar relationship with innocence and guilt, in order to make change. I felt that seeing oneself as essentially 'good' or 'bad' feels relevant to the individual being challenged, but I felt like the point was that, if we could stop worrying about our own 'innocent identity', or how guilty we feel, and focus on changing what is not working, we'd be much further ahead.

Avoiding conflict with other white people is just one way we try to protect our 'nice *white* person' image. This journal entry made by one participant, after this session, demonstrated a shift in the need to protect oneself:

> *In an individual session with a white woman yesterday where she talked about how afraid she was to be downtown at night was her fear of "Native People." I ask what she was afraid of exactly & she was not able to articulate and was quick to say she wasn't racist." I have known her quite awhile & said [that to] be afraid of a group of people is racist & asked if we could talk about this fear. She did not want to engage. I am thinking that I am becoming more comfortable? or confident? to start these conversations now & not feel I have to have answers or "the proper "way to conduct the conversation. I feel more able to start a conversation without feeling pressure that I have to convince someone else, which has never worked & has always caused harm I think & was out of my own fear that things won't change. (Participant Journal 2 – October 5, 2017)*

This felt like 'moving past the shame of our bipolar relationship with innocence and guilt and 'tiptoeing into action.'

After this session, I journaled,

> *People have definitely started bringing things to share with the group and talk about wanting to come and process. This feels good, like it's a safe place…I am curious how the individuals will report on their experience of the group after we're done the sessions, if any of the info was new to them or challenging. I'm going on the fact that everyone is getting along and we seem to be digging into the issues. (Joy's Journal - October 13, 2016, p. 27)*

The proposed plans for the sixth and seventh sessions were to continue looking at individual and collective influences on the problem(s), as it pertained to each one's own individual social work practice. These sessions were also to include looking at ways to affect the problem(s), with examples provided by Baines (2007); Fook (2012a); Fook (2012b) and Kundougqk and Qwul'sih'yah'maht (2009), such as 'critical case management' and advocacy, if they are relevant to participants' identified process, and challenges in attempting to influence the problem(s).

During Session 5, we had talked about wanting to find ways that other social workers had approached reconciliation work. We were in 'action preparation mode,' wanting to know 'what to do' about the problems we were identifying. We were no longer debating radicalism and whether systemic change was needed. Participants circulated the

CASW response to the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission's) calls to action (Caissie, 2015), as well as a report published by the Australian Association of Social Workers (2015), called the "Reconciliation Action Plan." We spoke about how 'token' the CASW response seemed and wondered if Manitoba needed an 'action plan' or 'toolkit' in order to find ways to decolonize social work practice. We also examined the BC Association of Social Workers - Indigenous Working Group's (2016) reconciliation toolkit, an article called "Allying with the Medicine Wheel" (Verniest, 2006), and an article about the murder of Pamela George, by Razack (2000).

We discussed the various responses, by social work associations, to the TRC, and the example of the article published by Australia regarding their own reconciliation process with Indigenous peoples. We also spoke about what we should be doing with our *whiteness* and the fact that it is *white* people who are primarily in power in social work. We discussed ways in which we might be complicit in the structures and questioned who we were accountable to, particularly in mental health systems. The group spoke about the role of the college in supporting advocacy within social work practice and about ways to give input to the college. We talked about the history of the college and the path to the current licensing process.

It seemed that these articles helped participants to conceptualize where they did have power, and enabled them to stop denying their power and gave examples of ways to tiptoe into action.

Ronnie started off our 'check in' time, by talking about something she had learned in policy class that week. She stated that most government-funded organizations were only allotted 10% of their time for advocacy. Cam responded, *"that means that when*

you're not doing advocacy you're actively not doing it, advocacy [laughter] right? Like you're like intentionally not addressing [chuckles] what needs to be addressed, you know. (Session 6 – Cam, p. 1)"

Ronnie wondered how 'they' could even tell what you did with your time. Sophia spoke about being asked by her manager to keep track of everything she does during her workday, in her past position. Linda stated that she also has to submit reports on everything she does, *"how much time I'm spending on the phone, how much time I spend with clients, collaterals, letters, emails (Session 6 – Linda, p. 2)"* I asked Linda how she felt about that.

> *Linda- uh… so this is being recorded? [laughter] I have creative ways of doing, you know ...it's what they need, so I give them something…and they don't tend to come back on me. I give them enough, and I don't spend a lot of time on it ...probably they look pretty similar every month, I would predict.*
>
> *Cam - [laughter] Yeah, consistent.*
>
> *Linda - I have a range of possibilities …but then, you know, they get about the no-shows and all that kind of thing, which, then, if they want to come and talk to me, I talk about the people in unsafe housing and, 'If you're not sleeping the night before, why would you be coming to a talking session the next day?' And, you know, 'When I can't give bus tickets, and when I can't help them with this stuff, yeah they're not probably not gonna be here a bit more regularly.' But do we have a budget for bus tickets? No. Do we provide them anyways? Yes. And, you know, stuff like that.*
>
> *Lilly- (chuckle)*
>
> *Linda - So, yeah, they don't want to talk to me too much so they leave me alone. [chuckle] …Most of them kind of get that, you know, they're not from a social work background, but they kind of get it when they ask questions and I can come up with a pretty good answers, they're onboard. They'll talk to the bigger guys, if they need to, so, you know, sometimes there's more wiggle room than others. (Session 6, p. 2-3)*

This was the first time being subversive came up as a means of challenging systemic oppression. This seemed to tickle some of the other participants, the potential of

'putting one over on the system.' I felt like it was a turning point in the group where we were starting to see ways that we could push back against the system even if it was passive aggressive. This was a change from our previous narratives of denying our power and being disconnected from 'the system.' It was not systemic change, but it was a way of tiptoeing into action that most participants could imagine themselves doing.

I asked if there was any way to engage with the MCSW on issues of social justice. Linda replied:

> *That's what I'd like to pay my bucks towards, as a group, doing more stuff, or at least connecting the people that do, or something like that. It's our social work values we're supposed to be committed to… but I don't know why our governing body doesn't seem to be… the welcome mat doesn't feel like it's out for me, other than, 'You have to do this this, and this, within this timeframe, and keep your records for five years, and blah blah blah blah…' and I'm going, 'What the hell? What's that about?' I think, I kind of think we're trying to be a profession and I don't see myself as a professional!' I'm not a professional I don't want to be a professional. That puts me different from somebody else and I'm not. I've needed help, I'm going to need help.*
>
> *Diane - Does that mean you have nothing to offer?*
>
> *Linda- No not at all!! What's, what..?*
>
> *Diane- Because, I find that hard to hear that you don't see your self as a professional.*
>
> *Linda – Yeah… no, I don't.*
>
> *Diane- Because I think that, um, we need to see ourselves as professional, as [having] something professional to offer, and of value, in order to move forward. So I find that hard to hear.*
>
> *Linda - Oh, I have lots of things that are valuable to offer, but I'm not different from the person in front of me, and I'm not different from them, that they don't have a degree or they don't see themselves as a professional. I just have some skills, they have others, and this time in my life I can do it, and another time I'm gonna need them to do something for me. I more…I don't like things that separate me from other people, and I think a professional designation, a college, bunch of stuff, is such is a system, kind of a European system.. to 'other' people. And I don't want to be 'othered' and I don't want to 'other' the people that I work with.*

(Session 6, p. 3-4)

It didn't seem that we were going to come to any agreement on the issue of professionalism, but I wondered if we were moving closer to the heart of the issue, the power issue. For some, registration and promotion of social work, as a professional group, felt like the quickest way to increase our power and agency to make change. On one side of the discussion, it seemed that we were still denying that we had enough power to make any change. On the other side of the discussion, there was an acknowledgement of power and a feeling that increasing power through professionalization was not going to bring about justice but risked further disempowering those receiving social work services by increasing the power imbalance between social workers and clients. I did note, in this instance, that participants seemed to be feeling more confident in confronting one another and in disagreeing with each other.

The different perspectives did seem to ignite more constructive discussions on how we could actually make changes within our workplaces, and within the social work college. I felt that these discussions were moving people past denying power and into figuring out what to do with the power they had.

We continued discussing the college of social workers and related it, this time, to the privileges that social workers are not willing to give up, but continued to fail to connect 'the college' to us. Sophia compared the current members of the college to "the top 2% of the wealthiest people in the world:"

> *...you've got that top 2% of white social workers who are within all the structures, who are very much aligned with each other… I don't want to use the word 'collude' but perhaps one could, so I don't know if they would be willing to risk*

their position to support their members as opposed to maintain those relationships… I'm a bit, perhaps, skeptical. (Session 6 – Sophia, p. 10)

Cam took it further, and compared social workers to prison guards in the case of an inmate who was killed while in police custody. He added:

> *…and that's sort of like, somewhat of a parallel I mean it's pretty different, but a parallel in between the way that um, social workers are like, viewed from their victims, basically, in terms of like all of these people with faces, but then sort of a faceless whole that is absolutely complacent and complicit in structural violence. And… there doesn't seem to be like anyone, or like a structure…to…push back against. Even that image… never mind the violence itself… that's like a huge problem for like, everyone in the field, whether we're like registered or not, whether we have degrees or not, because that reflects on us and our work and it means a certain type of engagement… I think that people are completely right to not engage with us, most of the time, because of like this complacency in this complicity… (Session 6 – Cam, p. 11)*

This was the first time I had heard Cam include himself in the circle of social workers. He was noting that social workers, regardless of our 'good intentions,' end up in positions of complicity and complacency when we fail to engage with and address social injustices.

Sophia spoke about her feeling of powerlessness, as a federal employee but then made a suggestion about taking power from the college and putting it into our hands.

> *I do like the idea of a union, a social work union and, and that might be… if we looked at, you know… and I'm sceptical to say 'a structure separate from the college' because I don't want to replicate yet another white structure, right? But another structure separate from the college to maybe, challenge, do some of the challenging that, that you had mentioned, so it's more of a collective voice, as opposed to one person, 'cause one person is not going to be heard. (Session 6, p. 11)*

Now we were in Cam's territory:

> *I have like two thoughts about that: one is that if it's a white, overwhelmingly white, profession, it's going to be a white structure…if it's a collective structure, right? …But what it does with that whiteness, I think, is the real question… the more important one, I think. (Session 6, p. 11)*

While we examined ways to obtain more power, by creating another system, it felt like an important exercise in reflexivity to acknowledge the significance of our *white* identity on any potential action we would take. We had started this idea of a union with the assumption that because we were 'good *white* people' any system we created would be better than the currently existing one. Cam could challenge this by reminding us that we were still *white*. I sensed from the group that this truth was not, at this point, going to keep us incapacitated, or shut down the discussion because we were beginning to move past our 'bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt.' Instead, we were beginning to recognize that we needed to **'**Tiptoe into Action' with continued self-examination and feedback. It felt like a safe place to practice this process.

Prior to Session 7, the following articles and poster were circulated: Carlson (2016); Saul (2015); Tuck and Yang (2012); and the poster for the event Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future — A national forum on reconciliation (Nov 2-4, 2016).

Throughout Sessions 6-8, people continued to connect, bring examples from their week, express their anticipation for the next group meeting, and find ways to engage in the topics we were discussing.

During session 7, Cam spoke about a local, annual event organized by an inner-city agency, which serves street involved women. During this event, participants march around an inner-city neighbourhood, known to be a 'high crime' area, at night, to symbolize 'taking ownership' of the area and of the night time, from those who would instil fear in the residents of the area, such as gangs, or others with criminal intent. Cam mentioned that after the event, some participants asked 'who was taking back what?' Cam noted that there were a lot *white* faces present in a neighbourhood with a high population

of Indigenous people, and some of the participants felt like people who did not live in the area were taking over the event…Sheila spoke up:

> *…But I think it's interesting, right because …the location is chosen to be a place where people might not feel safe, is sort of the premise of it, right? So then all these people parachute in there for this one thing, …They go that one day where there's lots and lots of people and there's cops, …but they're not going there next Tuesday… it's like a book on your coffee table, going to, [name of event] 'I'm such an activist.' (Session 7 – Sheila, p. 2-3)*

Another participant, who had also been a part of the event, noted that her organization, which is not situated within the hosting neighbourhood, was aware that the organizers were uncomfortable with how many people from other places had attended. She noted that in discussion with her co-workers they recognized that they may have, in their exuberance to participate, come across as 'taking over' the event and had planned to reconsider their form of participation in the event next year, because of this discussion.

It felt as if we were finally looking in the mirror without turning away. We were examining ourselves, aware of our tendency towards a bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt, and acknowledging that we could actually be oppressive in our actions despite our 'good intentions.'

We discussed the articles by Tuck and Yang (2012) and Carlson (2016) and how we could respond when asked to participate in the changes being asked for by Indigenous communities, groups, and individuals.

Later, I noted in my journal, *"One person who read it [Tuck & Yang article] … said, 'I felt like I've been doing everything wrong!'" (Joy's Journal – October 23, 2016, p. 30)*

We discussed the fact that sometimes our 'help' is not always seen as helpful by those we believe we are helping. Cam spoke about his experience as an organizer of a demonstration outside of a prison and how his intention had been to advocate for the prisoners. He discovered that some did not find his actions helpful and told him so.

> *…But like at the demo today, there was definitely like a couple people who were … somewhat upset that we were there because, … when there's a demo that's at the [prison], they go on 'lock down' inside and so certain people were like, 'you know what, my friends in there, they don't exactly love being on lockdown.' And like, that definitely affects… my experience of … being one of the organizers, and… holding the fucking megaphone and just being like fucking, "Yeah! I'm gonna fuck it up!" or whatever. But it's funny, because if that would've not happened, I wouldn't have had that experience…*

The group responded to Cam's story by talking about how we need to be open to feedback but not be paralyzed by negative feedback.

> *Sam- I think we just need to listen to people, right? We can't always be offended we like say, "Yeah you're right, your experience is valid, what, what do you think I should do?" …Sometimes I think I get scared of being offended or offending somebody and I can't just sit and not do not do anything.*
>
> *Joy-…It goes all the way back to the, "I'm not all bad and not all good. I'm just like a person. I'm just trying stuff… Somebody told me one time, "you actually don't have to respond immediately to people… You can just sit back and think about it and decide like, …I don't have to react….you can actually sit with it for a while and say, "Thanks for your input.'"*
>
> *Sheila - …and I think that there's also like some things that are clearly not good and some things that are clearly good but I think that there's also other things that.. so some people.. you know, I'm not sure I know what you were doing [to Cam] but like [laughter]… it's dangerous for us also to like say, 'Well, one person, one Indigenous person, was offended by this. Therefore, I didn't want to offend them… therefore, every Indigenous person, everywhere…' because it's not a homogeneous, like [not] every Indigenous person feels exactly the same, right? (Session 7, p. 5)*

We returned to our discussion from Session 4, about early settlers. I wondered how much of this discussion had to do with individuals looking at their own history and ancestors and trying to find something redeemable amidst all the talk of colonialism and

genocide - trying to maintain their innocent identity. I wrote about the discussion in my journal.

> *Another participant spoke about her feeling that those who came here because they had no other choice and were fleeing for their lives should not be held to the same debt of reparation as those who came strictly for capital gain. There was some discussion about this and how in the US there is a distinction between Indigenous, Settler and Slave and that people of each of these descendants carry different levels of responsibility.*
>
> *I asked about how you could decide what an ancestor's intentions were, as many stories were not as clear-cut as they may appear. For example, there are stories of groups being oppressed and being forced to leave and then when you dig a bit, you discover, they had been living on land stolen from others and then hired those others to come and work this land for them until people got mad, government favour turned away from them, and they had to move. So who is the victim? I also talked about the fact that each person has both unearned privilege and unearned oppression in their lives and that the fact was that a group of people have been displaced and are dying and that something needs to be done about it. (Joy's Journal - October 27, 2016, p. 30-31)*

I think we all knew, at some level that we weren't innocent, and we also knew we weren't done 'looking in the mirror.''

During our last session, the group had planned to have a potluck dinner. We ended up with more food than we could ever eat. We met a ½ hour early that week, to give time to relax and socialize.

The article that had been circulated prior to this session,\ was Lambert (2016), a *Winnipeg Free Press* article about the hockey teams, The Jets and The Oilers, whom the article praised for "leading the way in Indigenous tributes" (para 1). We discussed this briefly.

I had proposed, in our session outline, that we might want to look at a way of sharing the new narrative we had constructed, as a group. But by the 8th session, we did not necessarily have a clear new narrative to share. We did, however, look at ways in

which we could 'tiptoe into action,' collectively and individually, and spoke about what had changed for each of us and what was next for each of us.

Sheila noted that she'd begun to look for opportunities to engage with her co-workers on issues of *whiteness* and about her interest in engaging with the social work college on these issues.

I remembered our pre-session interview with the door closed and voices lowered. This seemed like a shift for Sheila where she was ready to talk about these things out loud because of this process. Sheila spoke about wanting to make thoughtful decisions about change and then committing to that change with time and resources, and her 'whole self' and not just with 'knee jerk' reactions. She spoke about owning land and wondering what to do about that. She explained:

> *… it was last week we talked about land and sort of that space of being able to make right, or make a step towards making right um, without having to throw everything into the wind, right like where do you find that spot? (Session 8 – Sheila, p. 4)*

I was impressed by Sheila's willingness to consider this aspect of decolonization which came up when we discussed the 12 steps to Decolonization and the Tuck and Yang (2012) article. This was not only 'close to home' but it was 'home' that she was talking about when considering ways to act in response to our learning together. She had clearly looked in the mirror and acknowledged her power.

Lily shared about a staff trip where she'd noticed that her and the driver (both *white*) were at the front and everyone else was behind …

> *…and then someone said something about how like the white people sit at the front. And I almost cried because, I was like, 'this is not what I want!' But having that happen and having this group happen at the same time, I think happened for a reason. I want to notice that stuff before someone else calls me out on it. (Session 8 – Lily, p.5)*

I empathized with Lily's desire to return to a state of believing oneself as innocent by 'getting it right' every time, and not getting caught 'making a mistake.' This, of course, was a part of our bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt. I didn't feel like there was anything wrong with the desire to be innocent, if we could acknowledge that we were never going to be fully innocent and know that we will survive and not become paralyzed if someone points out our guilt.

Linda shared about her shift from shame to healthy guilt, as a result of being a part of this group, and the hope and clarity she feels, as a result of this shift.

> *If I am in shame I can do more damage… … I was realizing the last couple weeks… I worked with …men, who have crossed the line and been oppressive… let's call it… or abusive, in lots of different contexts, in a forensic.. and other capacities, and I started noticing when I was reading the power dynamics, they're sooo similar. [I realized that] what I have coached others to be very careful of… I was doing with myself without actually recognizing clearly what the process needed to be. And I thought…"Hokie smoky! [chuckles] I know how to do this!" So it gave me kind of more clarity when I got over the shame that erupted from that.. it gave me more… that this is doable, I've seen it done, I've walked with people.. you know, it's possible… so it gave me hope… hope for me that I could be helpful…And a bit more about …not reconciliation with a capital 'R' but reconciliation with a small 'r' capacities, where my responsibilities are to look after this part of that… so I could be present with somebody else… to really offer… without expecting it back… to be forgiven or reassured or whatever …I can sit with whatever comes my way… I think, I think I could do that… I want to do that …that's part of my goal. That became clear as a result of this group. Um, and recognizing this… I can't not look away anymore.. and I have to I have to...[chuckle] live with that and that should be a very good thing and that is part of my shame [becoming tearful] is that somehow I've managed to look the other way for so bloody long… so I'm working on that next. And to find out that my workplace has a place where I might be able to do some of that, that was very hopeful… so, those calls to action are calling… and I got to find my way… so thank you guys for helping me do that. Appreciate it. (Session 8 - Linda, p. 5-6)*

I loved that Linda was able, not only to compare herself to someone who uses violence in the home, but that she found hope in that analogy. I felt like she was doing

good ‘social work’ with herself, which enabled her to move beyond shame while still acknowledging her responsibility.

Cam spoke about the change in his perception of himself as having no power to make change in his own workplace, because of this group process. He said: *“You guys gave me a bit more confidence with, like, my ‘imposter syndrome’ or whatever, and like, just in my own, like at my job …I feel more comfortable with the idea of stepping in and advocating…”(Session 8, p. 6)*

Diane had spoken earlier about her dilemma regarding being a supervisor of an Indigenous student who was leading a support group intended for Indigenous families. Diane said that it has suddenly occurred to her that her own presence, as a *white* authority figure, might be problematic within that group. But she was unsure how to supervise in a different way. When it was her turn to share, she said:

> *I don't forsee… like huge… I'm not gonna start a movement, at this stage of the game, I might, you know, I might show up but um…not if I have to walk anywhere [chuckles]. [I’m] just sort of real about of who I am. But I will ask that question like, ‘Should I maybe be supervising outside of the room and just be here as a staff person to deal with the door if the door rings and it's quarter to 9 and somebody needs to be in charge of that?’… I don't know I don't know… I think it remains to be seen. (Session 8 – Diane, p. 9)*

I was amazed, not only by the level of insight into her own power that Diane had in this situation, but also, by her ability to consider alternatives in order to ‘take up less space’ in that context.

I spoke to the group, during our 8th Session, about some feedback I had received from Don Robinson:

> *He spoke about needing to look at where we are standing in the circle, specifically within our practice in order to know where to start. He also spoke about the gap between settler and Indigenous and the need for reconciliation but spoke about starting by reaching across gaps in our relationships, for example, just saying*

> *'hello' to a homeless person or walking over to another department and getting to know people there are acts of reconciliation. He spoke about connecting with each other in order to work on bigger changes. (Joy's Journal – October 27, p. 31)*

In their post-intervention interviews, participants indicated that they found this feedback helpful in determining where to start in terms of making changes in their workplaces and lives.I provided a list of potential ways to connect with issues in our community, particularly related to settler/Indigenous relationships, and included organizations or events suggested by other participants (See Appendix H for complete list). Most people expressed pleasure at the list and several spoke specifically about what they hoped to connect with.

Almost all participants expressed an interest in meeting together again to check-in and to continue to support each other and to make further plans for action. During our last meeting, participants expressed a wish to stay in touch and exchanged contact information with each other. Several asked me to inform them if I planned any future groups with a similar focus. I found that, while I was relieved to have completed my data collection, I soon missed our discussion and camaraderie.

I met with all participants individually after completing our group sessions. We continued to discuss the changes participants had experienced because of the intervention and about action they had taken, or planned to take, as a result. We also spoke about participants' experience of the intervention and changes they thought might be helpful in future interventions on the topic of *whiteness*.

Sheila returned to our previous discussion about the 12 Steps to Decolonization article and the Tuck and Yang (2011) article:

> *I think a couple weeks ago we talked about the land, and so, we own a house, here in the city, and then, I also.. my parents, own a section of land out in southwest*

part of [the province] that will someday, presumably, be mine, or at least part of it will be mine and so looking at where did that land come from, right? And will finding that out… and then learning about that and what, if anything, is there that I can do about that? And then, also learning about, like my house here at [name of neighbourhood] …where that land came from? And that, that might be a really interesting opportunity for us to do with the children around. 'Whose land this was originally?' like, 'Who lived here?' …like, yeah, 'What did they do?' and, 'Where did they go?' and 'Why did they go there?' and, 'How do we..?' um, 'What can we do?' What should we do if we are living on stolen land?' And I'm not sure if I would say that necessarily, but yeah, maybe it would depend…It would depend on maybe, on the first conversation.

Joy – Well, and it depends on.. like, part of the process I find, like, as you're digging into that stuff, it becomes clearer, in your mind, how you would describe it, depending on how the story goes..

Sheila- And I would say it to myself.. probably. It is stolen land, but I'm not sure I would tell my seven-year-old that, right? Particularly.. makes it extra complicated because like, they're not.. they're my partners' children, they're are not my children, right?

Joy- So that gets complicated.

Sheila- That's very complicated. So, but I think looking at that and learning about that is really important. And that's not a big giant.. you know, movement that's going to like change everything, but I think sometimes you start little and.. ripples, right??

Joy- Yeah, yeah, it's where you're standing, right? (Sheila - Post int., p. 9-10)

I was impressed with Sheila's willingness to consider the issue of land. Giving up land is a topic that, in my own experience, many settlers are very uncomfortable with, however progressive they profess to be. Sheila recognizes that if she were to discuss this with her partner's children, and they were to report it to their own mother, she could cause major conflict in the family. Avoiding conflict is another way that we often preserve the white fragility of people around us.

Sheila spoke about being cautious in her next steps, *"…how do you help without… without taking over? How do you help by taking direction as opposed to giving direction? (Sheila- Post Int, p. 11)"*

I heard in Sheila's response, the tension between being a 'doer', a 'fixer', 'someone who acts upon problems', which has always been part of *white* culture and where many of our current problems have come from. I felt that she was wanting to 'tiptoe into action' because of the discussions in our group session about the potential damage of unreflexive action by 'well intentioned' *white* people.

Ronnie spoke about our turn towards 'tiptoeing into action', particularly, in our final session, as being therapeutic.

> *…I think that I was kind a looking for some answers, I guess, a place …to debrief about … what it is to be white, what it means. And to do it in a way that didn't seem to be necessarily shaming or, you know, full of guilt. And again, I think some participants expressed guilt.. that they felt guilty, and I think I do too.. but it felt like a nonthreatening place to do it and so I think I did get what I was looking for because I was looking for is kind of kind of a way to feel a little bit better about being white and like, but still not …like…a pat on the back. And so I think it did that … it was very proactive… in kind of lining us up for what's next and not to be idle in it... so I think that that was a very therapeutic part of the whole process too. (Ronnie - Post Int. p. 1)*

I met Cam back at my office, where we'd met the first time. Cam said that he felt cautious about the next steps, and in his reply to my question about what would come next, I sensed that he was wanting to warn the group,

> *"Okay, now you know some shit like what you gonna do with it? …I think, there's also like a lot of … I don't know if it's like false solutions…but … I just think it's good …to be able to discuss…different avenues for practical solidarity, in this instance, and like look at what those different things accomplish and how that, that relates to whiteness…and … privilege …but also, not to end the discussion at like, now you got to do something… because a lot of 'doing something' is really stupid, a lot of the time…*

Cam noted that he'd be cautious about plans that used 'the narrative around reconciliation,' as he feels that is "pretty slanted towards *white* guilt." He went on to state:

> *I think that like reconciliation circles…don't sound like awful things, at all, but that's not how you change systems…I think that like, that's the sort of like thing that I'm talking about in terms of like, 'yo, like, maybe if like to you it's revolutionary to sit down with Indigenous people because you never fucking have before, that's probably not what's gonna like, change shit 'cause probably you're rich.'… to me, if I put myself in a position of the ruling class, and of …industrial interests that want to have access to Canadian land, …[pause] if discussions about colonization and land theft go the direction of middle class people trying to get access to Indigenous people and take up their fucking time with like talking about their feelings, I'm like 'great!'*
>
> *Joy- Right. "Focus over there."*
>
> *Cam - yeah, like, you know, "turn your mind… take like hours out of your days to go talk to middle-class people white people because those like are the same people who benefit from this anyways… [laughter]…I'm just like learning this shit too, but I feel like we just need to like train people in effective, and like, nourishing ways of fighting the system but like, that can happen alongside things that are about just personal and growth… (Cam – Post Int, p. 5-6)*

Cam had hit on one of the key concerns that a study like this raises, that we would leave here, patting ourselves on the back for having 'enlightened' ourselves after performing the equivalent of yet another *white,* middle-class, self-awareness workshop and nothing would change. Cam's suggestion that we needed to learn effective ways to make systemic changes highlighted a major gap in social work education. I wondered if we had looked at more practical ways to make system changes, whether we might have better addressed concerns, like those raised by Sheila about land ownership.

Diane wondered if the focus on the academic articles resulted in the group moving further away from the group process and away from relating to each other. She suggested a more experiential process, throughout, might have been helpful.

> *Diane - …I think that's what people do, like to make it safer, right? …is to relate to a piece of information or to stay in in our heads you know, much as…I hate*

> *activities, at the same time, like it would be interesting to see what would come out of doing a… like I've got some experience with socio-drama and will be really interesting… you did a little bit of that it will be interesting really interesting to see what would come out of you know using that one kind of modality that really pulls people out of their heads and sticking with that. (Diane- Post Int, p. 1-2)*

I felt like Diane was on to something. I recognized my own desire to move into a more sensory space to better experience what it was we were trying to get our minds around, but none of us really knew how to access that and the small attempt in the second session just felt contrived, partly because it was contrived. I wondered if this might have been an easier way of looking in the mirror as Sullivan (2006) recommended.

Diane spoke about her own initial desire to be innocent and what had changed for her after participating in this study:

> *…Well I think I'm becoming a little more comfortable with even addressing like, I've had a lot of discomfort about… it's the same issue, it's my discomfort with addressing colonialism and not having that 'out'… 'I'm just a visitor here and therefore I am less responsible' because I also think that, that being said, you know, we as white [social work] providers still have something to offer… like it can't... we can't be so stuck in our shame and our guilt that we don't do anything, because that's a 'copout' too. …So you have to kind of show up with your whole self and do the work anyway. And I guess that's what intimacy really is… like that's what it is… you show up with your whole self and you invite the other person to show up with their whole selves and then you just go from there. …I think I've had a lot of anxiety when it comes to …dealing with Aboriginal people because I have had difficulty sitting with my own feelings about that. … I wouldn't say that that's all… that's not gonna go away but I guess I feel a little more able to tolerate it…tolerate my own discomfort, than prior to doing the group so… and I think that was one of the stated purposes of the group, so that happened that happened and I hope that's helpful. (Diane – Post Int, p. 5)*

I appreciated the concept of "tolerating my own discomfort," and felt that perhaps we had, at some level, increased our resilience, in the way that Di-Angelo (2011) had recommended as an antidote to '*white* fragility,' by providing a process by which she could move past her bi-polar relationship with innocence and guilt.

Linda felt she'd become better able to address racism when it comes up with *white* clients at her workplace. She also felt that her definition of racism had changed since participating in this study and noted:

> *… in terms of including as racist …more clearly [regarding] some of the policies… that I see that perpetuate injustice… I might not [have] called [them] racist before and maybe I should've…? …. Racist, genocide… like all those labels… so maybe some of that some of that is clearer. I might've called it bad policy or something before.. I might use that term more than I did before… (Linda-Post Int, p. 5)*

One participant addressed the group, after the intervention was over, through a letter in their journal. In this letter, they thanked the group for providing the space to listen and share, and challenged the group to consider the ways we had enacted *white* identity during our discussions about professionalism. They spoke about taking ownership of our responsibility in perpetuating colonialism and genocide through the social service structures and the need to also hold government accountable for their decisions. In essence, she urged the group to stop denying our power and start moving into action.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

This study was intended to answer the research questions regarding changes in participants' awareness of their racial identity and how racial identity was enacted within the intervention. It also looked at what participants saw as influencing these changes, and their experiences of the intervention. I'll begin by discussing participants' experiences of the intervention as participants described the changes they noted in their racial identity as part of their experience of the intervention.

Participants Experiences of the Intervention

All participants noted that something had changed for them, in regards to their *white* identity awareness, as a result of the intervention. The flexibility of the process, including collaboration within the process, was a highlight to many participants.

Several group members commented on the lack of reactivity within the group. I, myself, felt some tension, at various points within group sessions, but at no point did anyone ever seem to become uncontrollably angry within the group. One participant wondered if this was due to everyone being a social worker and having similar educational backgrounds. Another participant hypothesized that it was due to the flexible process facilitated by myself, and that the low reactivity prevented attrition. Another participant described feeling irritation and discomfort during some sessions, within their journal, but this was not evident during the group sessions.

I had attempted to design the process to minimize any reactivity that might be present due to issues unrelated to *whiteness,* in order to keep the focus of our concerns on the topic of racial identity. I did this by ensuring participation was voluntary and by attempting to utilize a collaborative and flexible process. This was also designed as a

homogenous group, in terms of *white* social work identity, due to the issues discussed in the theoretical underpinnings. Accoring to critical *whiteness* theorists, such as DiAngelo (2011) an McIntosh's (1989), reactivity is a common part of the process of building racial identity awareness among *white* people and some would say is necessary for change.

The low level of reactivity among participants in this study is a finding that could have a variety of meanings. It could mean that we simply skirted the issues, avoided challenging each other, and managed to run yet another *white* group where participants left feeling smug about their own self-discovery. While there were definitely times when we avoided issues, there were changes experienced in individuals' racial identity, and we were not free of all conflict. Therefore, I believe that the structure of the intervention did play a role in the positive experience of the participants within the study.

Participants spoke about the flexibility of the process. Some indicated a desire for more direction from myself, the facilitator, but also spoke about my flexibility as a factor that kept them engaged, because it gave the group space to go in the direction that the group wanted to go. Comacho (2001) advised that a facilitator needs to maintain a balance between being a co-participant and being a consultant to the group.

As the facilitator, I had similarly mixed feelings. I wondered if I needed to give more direction to the group, but also felt like there were times when I was being too directive. This was a working group, with the expressed understanding that we were all contributors to the process. None of us were identified experts in *whiteness*.

Although referring specifically to therapy groups, Yalom (1995) attributes hostility towards the leader regarding their unrealistic expectations about what the leader

can actually do. Yalom states group members may advocate for a democratic and independent group but may "on a deeper level, crave dependency and attempt first to create and then to destroy an authority figure," (p. 305). When a group leader does not fill a traditional role and provide 'all the answers,' group members become frustrated. This is often a subconscious process and describes the frustration that I observed within the group, early on in the intervention, and actually felt myself, at times, in our desire for a real leader to tell us what to do.

In the third session, discussion about defining the problem we had gathered to solve resulted in individuals acknowledging that they were very unclear about what the problem was. Toseland and Rivas (2009) advocated for a problem definition to help give the group direction.

> When they are first identified, problems are often unclear and muddled … Several steps can be taken to help a group define a problem to promote problem solving. These include (1) clarify the boundaries of the problem, (2) seek out members' perceptions of the problem and their expectations about how it will be solved, (3) develop a problem-solving orientation, (4) define a solvable problem, and (5) specify the problem as clearly as possible. (p. 333)

I struggled to address this, as I didn't want to advocate for a 'fake' process of problem identification. I felt that participants had already confirmed their identification of the problem by volunteering to participate in a group with a title that implied that the lack of 'racial identity awareness among *white* social workers' was the problem to be addressed. I felt that we did follow Toseland and Rivas' (2009) process to some degree, throughout the intervention, as we "clarified the boundaries of the problem," by looking at history, systems, other people, other social workers, and ourselves.

There was never a point at which any of us were able to identify one clear solution to the problem. We did, however, identify aspects of the problem that might be approachable, when we spoke about making changes to the college of social workers.

Wright (2000), when talking about participation in groups, notes that:

> One unique feature of group therapy … is that, in addition to the therapist, group members can also function as co-participants and can help each other construct new and healthier versions of their interpersonal and intrapersonal worlds. The life narratives constructed in this fashion also have the potential to be deeper and richer when many people take part in the "meaning-making" process. (p. 182-183)

I felt frustrated, at times, that participants did not participate more in setting the agenda for the sessions, and that very few of them used the journals. I knew that attending sessions and participating in the pre-and post-interviews were a big commitment, and that all participants had jobs, most had school, and several also had families to care for. Even so, I felt an urgent need for them to embrace the whole process, for their sake, as well as the sake of their clients, co-workers and families. Later, I recognized myself in Straubhaar's (2015) writing,

> Unfortunately, at this point in my personal development, my fieldnote entries show that what I most desired from participants was not 'committed involvement', together with the voice and participation that that entails, but rather 'pseudo-participation', or buy-in to my previously established agenda. (p. 392)

I think that my initial hope was that participants would take ownership of the process, from the start but when they hesitated, I became anxious about the lack of leadership and stepped in. This happened more often at the beginning of the intervention. At these times, it felt as if we were unable to 'get below the surface' of the issues. When I did not step in, the tension grew, but at those times, we seemed to be able to dig deeper into the issues.

In the post interviews, participants noted that they did feel ownership of the process and that this is what kept them coming. I suspect that this ownership came, in part, from

individuals choosing their level of involvement and not having it dictated to them. In this case, participants did just that. This was unique from other workshops on cultural competency and classes on critical theory, in that there was no mandated level of participation and none of us claimed to be the expert, the teacher, or even the leader.

Toseland and Rivas (2009) warned that, "[a]lthough groups are better than the average individual, they are not better than the best individual. Therefore, a group of novices may perform worse than one expert." (p. 326) For this reason, and in response to the vast amount of literature pointing to lack of self-awareness about racial identity in *white* people, I utilized supervision through an elder/consultant, Don Robinson, MSW. It was through our discussions that I became aware of my own tendency to jump to binaries when evaluating what happened in the intervention. Specifically, his comment about anger being good and needing to be honoured was helpful. Another time, he responded to my concerns about defensiveness by noting that sometimes people have things that are worth defending. At these times I was very aware of my own whiteness and my own potential to 'shut down' the group process because of these tendencies. Also, we circulated, read, and discussed articles by Indigenous people and people of colour regarding *whiteness,* within the intervention.

My facilitation style was influenced by the supervision I received. The elder/consultant, Don Robinson, MSW encouraged me not to rush into confrontation, but to leave space for others' words and stories. He strongly encouraged me to avoid binaries and not to label anything as 'bad' or 'good,' but to sit with the discomfort of things I might disagree with, and to facilitate the story. In the second session, I tried to do this during the discussion about the first settlers and their own vulnerabilities, despite my

desire to jump in and argue against this perspective. By the end of the session, the participants noted that this was not likely the end of the discussion, or of their understanding of the topic, but wanted to maintain curiosity about their own tendency to want to 'let the settler off the hook.' I was glad that I had not interrupted to express my concerns about the discussion and was able to just sit with my discomfort and allow the process to play out. I did hope, at times, that others would speak up more directly, when we were discussing things like professionalism and our own innocence. In their post intervention interviews, many participants alluded to the informal nature of the process and I had the sense that they found this somewhat uncomfortable.

For myself, I trusted that the elder, would have indicated if stronger action on my part, in response to other participants' behaviours or words, was warranted. In hindsight, the consulting process may have been enhanced by a more experiential mentorship process. For example, I could have observed him facilitating other groups as a part of my learning (Maddon, 2015). This would be something to consider in future groups of this type, where supervision is sought.

Several participants noted that Don Robinson's advice about 'starting where you stand,' which I had passed on to them, had helped them to move past their feeling of powerlessness.

Participants pointed to the articles that described the concrete changes needed for decolonization in Canada, as having the most influence on them. To this point, the discussion about racial identity awareness, for most participants, had been focused on being aware of privilege and identifying overt examples of discrimination as opposed to systemic decolonization.

Near the end of the intervention, discussion about action became more hopeful as individuals began to acknowledge their own power and move away from identities tied to innocence and guilt and were able to look more closely at themselves and their own complicity in systemic racism. However, because of our increased racial identity awareness, we also possessed a strong instinct to be very cautious in any action we took. We understood that action by 'good intentioned' *white* social workers has been highly destructive in the past, and continues to be destructive in the present. Inaction, by fearful or ignorant *white* social workers, has also been highly destructive in both the past and present. This is a conundrum.

During the course of this study, participants spoke about the need to act, and not merely stop at discussions about the issues, or at our own sense of pride in having changed our attitudes. We acknowledged that we cannot wait to act until we're fully educated on all of the issues and are certain of our own expert level of self-awareness, but noted that continued reflexivity and accountability were required going forward, alongside any action we planned to take in response to this study.

Straubhaar (2015) notes in the field journal he kept while working in international development that he continues to prioritize his own knowledge as superior and as a sort of benevolent saviour of "those that need my help." Straubhaar suggests that this self-perception is couched in speech about "good, solid principles' of development work" (p. 385). I see this as the same as seeing 'whiteness as normal' or the concept of 'common sense' where we fail to acknowledge our bias and perspective and present our ideas or actions as being objective and superior to anything else.

Challenging our self-perception of 'innocent' and 'good' is only one part of this

work. Knowing where we are invited to act, and have integrity to act, is also critical, as Lily noted during the intervention. We spoke, in our last two sessions, about how to support Indigenous-led initiatives in areas such as water security. Our fear of 'doing it wrong' was evident and well founded. We do risk harming others and being reprimanded, or even asked to step back. This primarily risks our pride and our identity as 'good people.' We need to let go of the binaries that keep us in an unhealthy polarity within ourselves, and get us stuck in defensiveness and shame.

We have been invited to do the work of self-examination, as part of this process of combating racism and colonialism. We've been invited to challenge and educate other *white* people. How we do this is up to *white* people to work out and work on.

Ways We Enacted Whiteness

As mentioned earlier, our ways of enacting *whiteness,* as demonstrated within the themes, which emerged within the data, were not unique. These tendencies to vacillate between innocence and guilt, to point out racism in others before looking at ourselves, to deny our own power or connection to the systems which oppress others, and to be hesitant to act, were all common in literature about *whiteness.*

Innocent/guilty binaries. '*Whiteness* as good/innocent' is often discussed in the literature (Friedman & Hirschfeld, 2012; LeFrancois, 2013; Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2013; Pon, 2009). While reviewing the transcriptions, I wondered how much of our fear of acting or speaking out was not as much about our belief that, 'underneath it all,' we were innocent, despite our declarations of 'goodness' or 'badness,' as it was about the need to ensure that others see us as good and innocent, despite our fears that we might not be.

If we engaged in any kind of action towards change, there was a risk that our action might result in correction or anger from others, and that this response might confirm our fears that we are inherently 'bad' and destroy the inward hope of an 'innocent' identity. According to Naden and Ben-Ari (2013), the idea of being 'good' or 'bad' is a *white*/Eurocentric ideology based on binaries. The authors note that in Indigenous cultures, people are not labeled 'good' or 'bad' and do not see themselves in this way. Instead, Indigenous cultures recognize that everyone has potential to do things that may disrupt balance within a community.

In her 1998 Master's thesis, Janet Mawhinney analyzed the ways in which *white* people maintained and (re)produced *white* privilege in self-defined anti-racist settings and organizations. She examined the role of storytelling and self-confession - which serves to equate stories of personal exclusion with stories of structural racism and exclusion - and what she terms "moves to innocence," or "strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination" (p. 17). During the interventions, we seemed to dance around all these things. We confessed our faults, expressed situations where we'd been oppressed, distanced ourselves from structural racism, blamed the system, or claimed powerlessness when we felt closer to the very issue of addressing whiteness.

In our self-confession, we spoke of our own failures and spoke objectively about our *whiteness* as being unredeemable, but in ways that removed this 'badness' from ourselves.

In our poster exercise, we were aware of how others saw '*white* social workers', but distanced ourselves by differentiating between "other white social workers' and ourselves as 'white social workers.' We were not like the 'other white social workers.'

We came closest to examining our ability to oppress others when we spoke about the event that several people from the group attended in the inner city neighbourhood. In this discussion we acknowledged that coming into a primarily Indigenous neighbourhood, once a year, and taking leadership in the event, could be seen as 'taking over.' We could see how this was problematic, given the history of Indigenous/*white* relationships in our country and our city. Our self-reflection was limited, however. We did not consider what kind of response people would have if a group from the Inner city, made up, primarily, of Indigenous people and newcomers, organized an event called 'Taking Back the Neighbourhood' and marched around one of the suburbs? How would people feel about this? What kind of press would such an event get and what kind of support from agencies, police, or the city? Clearly, we still had work to do on our critical reflexivity skills.

During the initial sessions, we jumped easily into the game of pointing out racism in others. It was easier to see it from afar, and, of course, less threatening. On one hand, this could be a form of narrative therapy, where we externalize the problem; on the other hand, it was a convenient way to avoid responsibility for the problem and maintain our 'innocent identity.' If others are seen as 'bad' then we can see ourselves as 'good.' And, if we point out racism that seems extreme to us, in those far away from us, we can insinuate, that everyone else in the room is 'better than that.' In this way, we avoid offending others because we have shown that we are 'all on the same page' by agreeing about who is bad and who is good.

hooks' (1999) description of the way she saw *white* people, as a child, demonstrates the gap between our self-perception and the way 'others' see us …

> Their presence terrified me. Whatever their mission they looked too much like the unofficial white men who came to enact rituals of terror and torture. As a child, I

> did not know to tell them apart, how to ask the 'real *white* people to please stand up.' The terror that I felt is one that black people have shared. (p. 171)

If a person of colour does not see a *white* person as good or innocent, how does that affect the life of the *white* person? Usually, at most, the *white* persons' feelings are hurt. This has come to be known as '*white* fragility' (DiAngelo, 2011). If a *white* social worker sees an Indigenous person, or a person of colour, as being 'bad' or 'guilty,' this could result in the individual being barred from services, being incarcerated, having freedom restricted, or having their children taken from their care. There is definitely an imbalance in the effects of these judgments.

hooks (1999) goes on to say that,

> Some white people may even imagine there is no representation of whiteness in the black imagination, especially one that is based on concrete observation or mythic conjecture; they think they are seen by black folks only as they want to appear….socialized to believe the fantasy, that whiteness represents goodness and all that is benign and nonthreatening, many white people assume this is the way black people conceptualize whiteness. They do not imagine that the way whiteness makes its presence felt in black life, most often as terrorizing imposition, a power that wounds, hurts, tortures, is a reality that disrupts the fantasy of whiteness as representing goodness. (p. 169)

During the intervention, we individually wrestled with our own bipolar binaries of innocence and guilt and the way others see us. We moved from claims of innocence and being victims of the system, to being incapacitated by shame and guilt. In the midst of this struggle with our binaries, it was easy to forget our roles and complicity in the systems that commit structural violence on individuals, families and communities. "Structural violence" actually does result in death. We social workers are the face of these systems. We are not often seen as benign, or even as well intentioned. While we are looking at intention as justification, the outcomes are still blatantly brutal, and we are complicit in the damage that is done.

Todd and Abrams (2010) noted these same bipolar relationships within *white* identity among university students. They described the tendency for people to move back and forth between opposing aspects of their *white* identity, and labelled this "*White* Dialectics" (p. 353).

Denying our Power. Naming *whiteness,* as a means to deconstruct and remove its oppressive power, is discussed at length in literature on *whiteness* studies. When conversations became personal, we were able to admit that we held power and privileges, such as the ones listed by MacIntosh (1997). However, a number of participants talked about exercising caution, for example, not telling the truth to our children about living on a stolen land, which implied that we still questioned how much change was really needed. At our core, we had strong reservations and resistance to giving up privilege.

We needed to ask ourselves, are these privileges worth risking? Baldwin (1961) acknowledges that risking privilege risks one's own self and challenges *whites* to "dispense with social attachments and delusions that dehumanize whites and people of colour 'involves such an overhauling of all that gave us our identity'" (Freeburg, 2013, p. 222).

For those who live under the oppression of *white* supremacy and systemic racism, the outcomes of not challenging *whiteness* are literally life and death. W.E.B. Du Bois, in an interview with Tuttle Jr. (1974) diplomatically responds to the fear that *white* people have of divesting of privilege:

> I have tried both here and in other places, to emphasize the fact that I appreciate deeply the difficulty of this problem from the White point of view, but, at the same time, I should be untrue to myself if I said that I thought the White people of the South had arisen to this problem with the moral courage that they ought to. I feel more and more as I live in the South, the lack of true moral courage among White people. (p. 250)

Fear of challenging other white people. This group spoke about the tendency to remain passive and risk complicity by not speaking up and challenging other *white* people and systems.

Ahmed (2015) spoke about seeing other activists (which I will define here as others taking action to make changes to systems or society for the sake of social justice) as 'whole human beings' and encouraged them not to start 'othering' each other. Carlson (2016) asks, "Can I be 'colonial' or 'anti-colonial' in my relationship with other *white* settler occupiers?" (p. 495). She implies that asking this resembles charges of 'reverse racism' and acknowledges that this is ludicrous. Carlson implies that we are capable of reproducing those types of behaviors, and argues that behaving this way towards each other may not result in the growth or insight that we are trying to promote in others. Phoenix (2017) provides examples of appropriate situations for public shaming and 'calling out' or challenging others aggressively with anger. Examples of this include: when one person poses a safety risk to another, when a person is repeating the same offenses despite having been confronted previously, when there are large power differentials between the offender and the person confronting them, and more.

While our group leaned dangerously far away from the aggressive side of confrontation, many participants implied that they feared harming other *white* people if they were to be confrontational. This smells a lot like *white* fragility, as discussed by DiAngelo (2011). We are protecting our own selves from others' anger, not wanting to compromise our innocent identity status, and guarding others' *white* fragility, which may be affected if we were to point out the ways they were enacting *whiteness*. It may have been helpful to discuss the two extremes of silence versus aggressive moralizing. I

suspect that we all had some fear that our own reactivity towards others' racism might result in us enacting abusive behaviours towards others. 'Anger as bad', seems like a commonly held belief among 'nice *white* people.' We need to learn what it means to challenge each other in effective ways that do not risk our own self-respect or values.

Finally, the call by Indigenous people, such as Dumbrill and Green (2008) and Lewis (2012), to move over, take a step back, get out of the way, and give up on our domination, is something that we, as a group, only engaged with at an introductory level. If we were to actually do this, we must first acknowledge that we possess this power, and second, acknowledge that the systems currently in place are not actually superior to the systems founded on the values of Indigenous people.

Lewis (2012) warned that allying with Indigenous people involves a long and complex process of decolonization, which requires concrete changes to systems. This means the "divesting of colonial power" (p. 235) and a creation of new structures that limit the interests and values of the colonizer. Settlers are required to acknowledge privilege and actively unsettle themselves within their own communities

We have a double standard, when it comes to the systems we partake in, perpetuate, and uphold as social workers. We do not hold them to the standards of scientific method that we study and hold so dearly as a measure of their success. System outcomes that result in the death and genocide of the group of people that they are designed to serve have not been decommissioned, despite our declarations that we follow "high standards of excellence" within our practices. Incarceration does not result in lower levels of crime or reformed criminals. Our child welfare system does not result in healthy, well-adjusted citizens. Our mental health system does not result in lower rates of mental

illness among Indigenous people, and neither does our health care system result in healthier Indigenous communities. Our systems have failed. When our positions and livelihood, as *white* social workers, come from these systems, and they are not failing us, it is difficult to denounce them, and even more difficult to imagine dismantling or decommissioning them. This is where we, as *white* social workers, currently sit. Participants of this study did not go very far into this discussion. We considered the need for system change, overall, and challenge and destruction, on occasion. We returned to these ideas a few times, and then we left them unresolved.

Avoiding action. Tuck & Yang (2011) challenged individuals engaged in raising critical consciousness by reminding us that:

> Fanon told us in 1963 that, decolonizing the mind is the first step, not the only step toward overthrowing colonial regimes. Yet we wonder whether another settler move to innocence is to focus on decolonizing the mind, or the cultivation of critical consciousness, as if it were the sole activity of decolonization; to allow conscientization to stand in for the more uncomfortable task of relinquishing stolen land. We agree that curricula, literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology, and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination and exploitation; this is not unimportant work. However, the front-loading of critical consciousness building can waylay decolonization, even though the experience of teaching and learning to be critical of settler colonialism can be so powerful it can feel like it is indeed making change. Until stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism. (p. 19)

This was clear in our avoidance of actions that would actually disrupt the system as it stands at an individual level, as *white* social workers, and more broadly within the social work academy and professional body. When we did consider action we tiptoed into it. This was due, not only to the fear of losing privilege, but also due to our growing awareness of our *white* identity and the potential harm it could do when rushing into

action. At the same time, we recognized that inaction was an unacceptable response to racism.

I recently came across Tuttle Jr.'s (1974) transcription of an interview with Dr. W.E.B. Dubois, in which he discussed social change with Dr. C.B. Wilmar, who was considered a *white* liberal from the Southern, U.S. Wilmar worked with black orphans and was considered a benevolent and progressive reformer. They were discussing education for black children. DuBois was arguing for access to the same standards of education given to *white* children, and Wilmar was arguing that domestic training for black children was a step in the right direction, and essentially, that DuBois should be focusing on the positives of this progress and not pushing for things like integration. Wilmar states:

> At the same time, I find here the same weakness that I find in the other part of Dr. DuBois's programme, - that it over-looks the fact that some things in certain stages of the evolution of human society must be done; it overlooks in particular the fact that there are millions of Negroes for whom domestic training would mean a different thing--promotion. That, I claim, is the point of view through which the matter would be studied. (p. 257)

For those of us who are least harmed by systemic racism within the social services systems, namely *white* social workers, our solutions and our concessions to the system, at large, may appear progressive and 'pragmatic'. When we 'try to look at things from the point of view of the system,' we fail to notice that the system's perspective has become our own default perspective. To view oppression from any other perspective is actually the real challenge. For example, within our study some participants noted that most people felt that the child welfare system was not as bad as residential schools, but others saw it as preparation for prison.

Johnstone (2016) noted that *white* Canadian social workers continue to perpetuate the ideologies which oppress others due to these being engrained within us:

> …the historical legacy of colonialism and British cultural imperialism was ingrained in white settler Canadian thinking, institutions and in social policy. Furthermore, Canadian social work was formed in the early twentieth century when British imperial ideas were still hegemonic. Many of the same institutions continue to be present in contemporary Canada and continue to influence current policy-making and decisions at the national, provincial and local level. As Goldberg succinctly states, 'histories are taken to be over,
> past, evaporated and in denial, yet the conditions of which, as they are buried, misremembered, mis-membered, remain very much alive.' (p. 1725)

Quillian (2008) describes the concept of 'unconscious' or 'implicit' racism as that which is not conscious but present due to "memories from past socialization or experiences that affect current thought and behavior without conscious awareness" (p. 7).

When I read this next section of the discussion between DuBois and Wilmar, where the moderator stepped in to add his 'two cents,' I could hear our conversation about 'destroying systems' and our dismissal of the push for social change with our 'wisdom' and 'warnings:

> Mr. Baker: Of course, progress is expensive. In producing the higher type of Negro, you will necessarily get the lower type too--the criminal. Dr. DuBois: Yes, that is the price we have had to pay. And it is the same among the Whites. Now another thing: A class that is conservative, that is honest, that is accumulating property, can not without the ballot protect itself, not simply against the envious and lawless among the Whites, but even the criminals of their own. (Tuttle Jr., 1974) (p. 253)

I feel that these exercises in what we call, 'pragmatism,' and our attempts to see things from the perspective of those in power, are often just another way for us to avoid taking risks in our own practice and lives. Identifying our own complacency and connection to systems of oppression is an essential part of the change needed. It's a matter of getting out of denial about our own guilt and responsibility in the current state of affairs in our social systems. Frankenberg (1999) suggests that we examine the risks of in-action and silence:

> Among these are, first, a continued failure to displace the 'unmarked marker' status of whiteness, a continued inability to 'color' the seeming transparency of white positionings. Second, to leave whiteness unexamined is to perpetuate a kind of asymmetry that has marred even many critical analyses of racial formation and cultural practice. Here the modes of alterity of everyone-but-white-people are subjects to ever more meticulous scrutiny, celebratory or no, white whiteness remains un-examined- unqualified, essential, homogenous, seemingly self-fashioned and apparently unmarked by history or practice…. Third, …critical attention to whiteness offers a group not only for the examination of white selves (who may indeed be white *others* depending on the position of the speaker) but also for the excavation of the foundations of *all* racial and cultural positionings. (p. 1)

In this case, our avoidance of topics that might lead to action, which could put our privileges as *white* social workers at risk, means that the system continues as it is, and we remain party to the oppression it perpetuates.

Our avoidance of, or failure to address, certain topics, such as systemic change, seemed, at times, an aspect of our racial identity enactments, and at other times, simply a limitation of this study. Sometimes, what is left unsaid reveals something about a process that can't be seen by only examining what is said.

Topics Avoided in the Intervention

Within the intervention, we spoke about *white* fragility, *white* privilege, *white* superiority, and *white* guilt. We also looked at professionalization and debated its role in furthering *whiteness,* versus it being a means of increasing power to change systems. We looked at decolonization and what this means on a practical level, in terms of land ownership and decentering Euro-centric knowledge and power.

Ethnic identities. There were some topics that we did not talk much about, or only just skimmed the surface of. A couple participants described themselves as having a strong ethnic identity, but this was not a group endeavor. Cam suggested that deconstructing ethnic identity and dominant narratives within various ethnic groups

would have been a useful step to increase racial identity awareness among participants. At one point, I mentioned the need to deconstruct our historical ethnic narratives that often centred on experiences of persecution and finding refuge, and how our ancestors 'pulled themselves up by their bootstraps' while ignoring participation in colonialism and genocide. This is something that I could imagine a group spending much more time on, and may have been something that this group would have examined if the intervention had been longer.

I had the sense that not many people had considered their own ethnic identity as contributing to their *white* identity, except for the two participants whose 'other' ethnic identities (Jewish and Indigenous) were considered 'minority identities.' I also don't believe that anyone saw *whiteness* as an ethnic identity but possibly as something else. We saw *whiteness* as a racial identity, which we knew was socially constructed, not based in any biological reality. As a socially constructed identity, we knew it could be deconstructed and, one day, we hoped, would become obsolete.

Activism. Another area we flirted with, but didn't really delve very far into, certainly not by engaging outside experts, was the exploration of activism and the practical means of changing systems through collective challenge. During our first session, Sophia questioned if we were an 'activist' group. In session three, Diane reacted to Cam's comment about "destroying the system" and indicated that this was an unrealistic and undesired objective. While we acknowledged the damage done by the system, destruction of the system was considered extreme and outside the realm of social work. Diane noted that working within the system was what she'd been encouraged to do within the social work academy, however, the articles that were identified as influencing

participants the most, were actually quite radical. I wondered if the participants noticed the contradiction in this.

Social activism was an area that Cam seemed most familiar and educated about, compared to other group members. However, the group did not identify him as a potential expert resource in this area, and even if they had, I'm not sure the rest of the group was wholly convinced that this was the direction we needed to go. There was a broad consensus about activism being needed within the social work college, and discussion about starting a union, but this was primarily in the last two sessions, and it was not clear what kind of activism a union or a college would participate in, on a systemic level.

It seemed that social work education did not prepare us, or even introduce us to the ideas, practicalities, or potential of activism. We were trained to work inside of social systems. In my own social work education, there was an attempt to encourage students to consider a focus on policy and political engagement, as a means of social change, but policy classes were not popular among the student body, and most students were only interested in clinical practice. Resistance to change was present at all levels. Community-development focused classes touched on social activism but seemed disconnected from the reality of the work actually being done within community development organizations. In my own experience as a community development worker in Winnipeg, the work 'on the ground' had little to do with social action, and everything to do with applying for, and reporting on government grants.

I thought about workshops on activism that were offered in environmental programs, and agencies where practical strategies are given for launching campaigns, non-violent protest, and political advocacy. When discussed within the group, there was a

lot of skepticism about the need for this type of action, which seemed removed from each of our social work educations. I found it revealing that the person with the closest ties to social-activism was the person who had not completed a social work degree or any other post-secondary education.

Settler decolonization. Land ownership, which hits at the heart of settler colonialism, is not something that I've heard discussed very often by those settlers interested in 'the reconciliation movement.' In this group, only one person spoke about owning land and the implications of this when considering ways to decolonize, though I believe, at least several other participants did own houses and land. While individuals were affected by the ideas in the article we read, some of the ideas seemed to be very new to almost everyone in the group, particularly land decolonization. I wondered if people just didn't know what to think about these ideas yet and so did not comment, or if it was too uncomfortable to look at.

Similarly, we spoke about decentering Euro-centric knowledge and power, at various times, in various spaces, but did not go so far as to explore how this might be done systemically. In fact, as seen in the themes, we questioned if this was possible or necessary, as many of us had become resigned to the current structures.

I felt that fear of change was underlying our resistance to entertain ideas of radical change. We acknowledged systemic racism and the horrifying effects of this oppression on Indigenous people, but seemed to feel that we were at high risk of some sort of victimization if we challenged the system in any practical way. I suspect that the 'victimization' we feared was the loss of our unearned power and privilege such as our positions, our income, and our homes.

Again, these topics may have been further explored if the intervention had continued over a longer duration, but maybe we would have continued to avoid them for fear of losing privilege, or, for fear of upsetting the other participants.

Limitations

As much as this intervention holds possibility and promise for a more informed and reflexive practice within social work, there are limitations and biases. This is a qualitative study and therefore the results cannot be generalized. Most participants did not utilize their critical incident journals. Only three people handed them in. These journals were designed to provide further feedback on participants' experience of the intervention and to provide another tool for deeper reflexivity. Some individuals noted that they did not enjoy journaling, which may have limited their continued critical self-awareness. Others indicated that they were too busy. Fortunately, the post-intervention interviews and my own journal were able to provide ample feedback on how the participants experienced the intervention.

Participants also found that the discussion allowed them to dig deeper into their own blind spots regarding racial identity. Several spoke about their desire to continue these discussions in future contexts. Two mentioned starting groups within their own workplaces within which to carry on these discussions.

Regarding the participants' experience of the intervention, I felt that the lack of anonymity between myself and the participants (I knew whose journals I was reading and performed the post-intervention interviews myself) most likely inhibited participants from providing me with all the feedback that they could have. A confidential feedback form would have been a better format for feedback, especially considering the sensitivity

within *whiteness* about offending others. Not all feedback was positive, indicating that participants felt safe enough to be somewhat critical. This was recommended by Don Robinson, during the intervention, and was mentioned by several participants in their post-intervention interviews. In this case, I may still have been able to identify participants, but it might have felt like a more confidential and 'safe' process for participants.

As a facilitator/participant, my experience and knowledge of group process was not extensive. While I have some training and experience, it's possible a more skilled facilitator could have been more effective at assisting the group in its process.

Another limitation was my own limited knowledge about critical *whiteness* theory and the history of racial theory development. While I had completed a literature review prior to starting the intervention, I continued to read and learn about the history of social work in Canada, and the history of eugenics and the development of races and race theory during, and after the intervention, and found information that may have been helpful in the initial process. The group discussions about the College of Social Workers in Manitoba, and professionalization of social work, in particular, would likely have benefited from more information about the historical context of this aspect of social work.

My own participation as a *white* social worker meant that I was also evaluating myself in light of the literature reviewed. My own tendencies to avoid conflict and to be seen as a "good *white* person" likely contributed to my decisions about when to speak up in group sessions and when to just listen. Emotionally, I wanted this project to succeed, for participants to experience new insights about their *white* identities, and to leave with the ability to put those insights into action, both in their personal lives and within the

social services system. For this reason, I was sensitive to the dynamics of the group, fearing that lack of progress or connection with the issues was due to my own facilitation skills. As much as I tried to practice reflexivity in my journal, and through consultation with Don Robinson, gaps in my own *white* identity awareness were likely to have played a role in the way I facilitated the intervention and analyzed the data.

This was a homogenous group of *white* social workers. The homogeneity was intentional and resulted in all participants having similar areas of unawareness regarding our own *white* identities, myself included. I feel this was mitigated by our use of outside material and by my choice to find an Indigenous consultant/elder for weekly feedback into the process. My own reflexive journaling was intended to mitigate this, as well. I feel that the benefits of a homogenous group have been outlined, and outweighed the limitations. However, individual participants expressed interest in participating in a heterogeneous group, in the future, as a type of follow up to this study.

The length of the intervention was limiting, particularly given the style of facilitation. It was not a workshop, a group therapy, or a classroom-based training, and the direction of the discussions was based on participant guidance. We did not rush through information, but went according to our own pace. This meant that there were many topics not covered which might have helped deepen our awareness of our own racial identity and equipped us better for our next steps.

Future considerations

Having a prescribed agenda, even a flexible one, affects the sense of 'buy in' by participants. I felt that participants might have been less engaged in providing direction to the group as a result. They may have felt that it was unnecessary as an agenda already

existed, or they may have felt that their ideas would need to match the agenda. Co-creating an agenda, without any sort of pre-written outline, on the other hand, I believe would be more conducive to participant ownership of the process and engagement in the process. This would be helpful in any running of future groups of this kind.

A potential topic for future study would be to look at the ways Canadians connect or do not connect with their ethic identity in relation to *whiteness.* Ethnicity was a topic that was only briefly addressed within the intervention, and only brought up by those who carried identities that were not always considered *white.*

For those Canadians who are not seen as *white*, it would be of interest to run a similar group examining the ways they might look at their own identity and privilege, in relation to Indigenous peoples, and their oppression. Prior to the commencement of the study, I was approached by an individual who is not identified as white, here in Canada, but whom noted that they were considered white in their country of origin and were interested in examining the influences of this racial identity which they originally held on their current practice. This reminded me of the nuances of racial identity construction and the potential for greater awareness by deconstructing it in various contexts.

Several participants mentioned the shortness of the intervention and a desire to continue meeting afterwards. Running a similar group for a much longer period of time would allow group members to become more comfortable with each other and to dig deeper into the topic.

A number of individuals from other professional groups asked about joining this study and had to be refused due to the focus on social workers, in particular. Recreating this study with group members from a different professional group would also be

worthwhile to provide opportunities for others to examine their racial identity and increase their awareness of it.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

In this study, I journeyed with a group of *white* social workers, who shared the hope of increasing our awareness of our own racial identities by holding up a mirror to ourselves and to each other. Fear and discomfort with the topic of *whiteness* is, at present, a cultural norm, even among social workers whose vocation is, presumably, to promote social justice and to be agents of social change. While some of these challenges can be located at the individual level, there is also a history of the Canada Association of Social Work neglecting to engage in any kind of action or promotions of systemic change and failing to support social workers who do engage. Recently, the media (Barrera, 2015) reported that social worker, Cindy Blackstock, was on a Canadian Security and Intelligence Service watch list due to her unrelenting advocacy for equal funding for Indigenous children in the care of Child and Family Services (CFS). As recently as March 2017, she has been in court fighting the Canadian government on this same issue, and it was reported on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (2017) that, despite the Canadian government being found guilty of human rights violations by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the government continues to argue that they cannot be forced to make equal payments. Nowhere in the media, is the Canadian Association of Social Work (CASW) to be found commenting on this case, supporting Blackstock, or challenging the government on this issue, despite her being well known in the social work community as a sought after speaker, an outstanding social worker, researcher, and advocate. Solidarity among social workers on these types of issues is crucial. If social workers were able to acknowledge the power they possess to create, deconstruct, and challenge the systems they work in, I believe there would be great potential for change in our society.

Here in Canada, dialogue about colonialism, residential schools, and about the disparities between Indigenous people and the rest of Canadians in the areas of health, poverty, CFS, and Justice system involvement, are becoming more frequent and more public. However, experiential exposure to honest and genuine discussions on whiteness and related power and privilege remain scarce. We have an opportunity, at this time, as *white* social workers, to challenge ourselves, our college, and the agencies and systems in which we work, to centre Indigenous knowledge, and to move over and divest of our power and Euro-centricity.

On an individual level, becoming more aware of our *white* racial identity will provide a foundation and introduction to reflexive practice. This has potential to reduce the risk of us reenacting oppressive characteristics of *whiteness* as individuals within our relationship with clients, friends, and family, and within our practices. When we are able to acknowledge our privilege and power, and the ways in which we enact *whiteness*, we can be conscious of creating and supporting anti-oppressive policies, programs and actions which promote and support Indigenous-led solidarity action.

We have a long way to go to reduce structural racism, starting with our own individual racism. The barriers are huge. I don't pretend to believe that this intervention resolved these issues; our attempt was to start somewhere. In the tradition of grassroots, small-group, 'ground up' change, I think that groups like the one in this study, have potential to move *white* people from defensiveness and shame, to acceptance of our responsibility. When *white* people look critically at ourselves, and listen to the wisdom of those who have seen us better than we have seen ourselves, there is a chance that we will begin to see our complicity in these oppressive systems. This is what this study attempted

to do and shows what happened when a group of *white* social workers committed to meet together to see if they could increase their racial identity awareness.

Study participants hoped that this process would lead us towards the understanding of who we are as white social workers and the implication of this identity on Indigenous people we serve in the city of Winnipeg. However, the process was neither perfect nor complete. My own hope is that this study could be reproduced formally or informally among other groups of *white* people, be they social workers, or belonging to other groups. *White* people have been challenged to do their own reflexive work and to not rely on Indigenous people to do it for them. I believe it is possible to increase awareness of *white* racial identity in this way. However, experiential exposure to honest and genuine discussions on *whiteness* and related power and privilege remain scarce.

It is through groups like this one that *white* people can work out our guilt, acknowledge the power and privileges we have, and hold each other accountable for the ways that we've ignored the calls to action by the people around us. Once we do this, we can shift from our static positions, to careful, considered and accountable actions, and begin the long journey of restoration, balance, and good relationships.

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Appendix A –Recruitment Poster

Social workers wanted for a research project.

This study will include: 2 individual interviews and 8 group sessions, (approximately 2 hours in length each). Sessions will include discussion and potentially creative processes, as a part of the group process.
Refreshments will be provided at each interview and group session.

The topic of the study is...
:

"Increasing Awareness of Racial Identity Among White Social Workers- A Narrative Approach."

Participants must be social workers who are currently practicing in the city of Winnipeg and who identify, racially, as *'white.'*

Social Workers who are experiencing ambivalence about their interaction with Indigenous individuals, families or communities or about the outcomes they are seeing with Indigenous individuals, families or communities, in practice, are encouraged to apply for participation in this study.

***If interested, please contact Joy Eidse at umeidsej@myumanitoba.ca with "study" in the subject line.**

NOTE: You will be contacted for demographic details once you've indicated your interest in being a participant.

Appendix B- Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Consent Form

Project title: "**Increasing Awareness of Racial Identity Among White Social Workers - A Narrative Approach**"

Principal Investigator: Joy Eidse, MSW Student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba ph: 204-586-6498 e-mail- umeidsej@myumanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Regine King, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work 474-9094, email- Regine.King@umanitoba.ca

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.

About the Study

You are being invited to participate in a study which will include an individual interview at the start of the study and another at the end of the study and participation in 8-10 weekly, two hour group sessions with 5-8 other social workers. At the end of the sessions, you will be interviewed a second time.

The primary goal of the study is to explore the experience of social workers, who identify as 'white,' within the intervention, and to determine if they experience any change in their own racial identity awareness at the completion of the intervention. It is also to examine the ways in which identity is performed within the study.

Interviews

Interviews will be held during the day, or evening, in any location that provides reasonable privacy and is agreeable to both of us. The interviews are not expected to exceed two hours in length and will be audio recorded. In the first interview, you will be asked questions regarding your own definition of race and about your own racial identity. You will also be asked about your experiences working with and relating with Indigenous individuals and communities, and any ambivalence you may have around those interactions and outcomes.

About the Group Sessions

The purpose of the intervention (group sessions) is to explore our own racial identity and the ways in which racial identity awareness may impact our practice, particularly with Indigenous individuals, families and communities. The group sessions will take place at a time that is convenient for all participants at a downtown, private practice office space. This building is wheelchair accessible.

The intervention will be following a Narrative Therapy process. This process includes the group working together to explore how racial identity awareness, or lack of awareness, may be impacting our practice and how we as individuals and as social workers, have been able to impact and address our own racial identity awareness. This process may include the use of artistic medium, such as glue, scissors, markers, tape, paint, clay, magazines or newspapers. Please advise the researcher about any allergies or sensitivities you may have to any of these products, or other types of art products, in order to ensure that they are not included in the intervention. Note that any creations by the group, or group participants, during the intervention sessions, will be documented by photograph or transcribed for the purpose of the study.

During each intervention session, we will end with a 'check-in' time where participants will be asked to share any thoughts, insights, concerns or feedback they have regarding the topic and/or the intervention with the group. Group members will be given a chance to respond to those who share. This portion of the session will be audio recorded and transcribed for the purpose of the study.

Journals

Participants will be asked to keep a journal throughout the intervention, between sessions, in which to document any incidents they deem critical and to analyze these incidents for the purpose of allowing each participant a reflexive process which may provide more insight in to their own intellectual and/or emotional/psychological process.

These journals may be shared with the group if participants wish to share from it, but participants are not required to share their journals with the group. The journals will be collected at the end of the intervention and transcribed for the purpose of the study and then returned to their owners at the completion of the

study. Further instructions regarding the journal will be provided at the first session.

Throughout the intervention, I, the principal investigator (Joy Eidse) will be meeting individually with an Indigenous therapist to consult about my role as facilitator/ participant. In these sessions I will not disclose any identifying information about group participants.

During the group sessions, refreshments will be provided. Please advise the researcher of any allergies, food sensitivities or preferences prior to the first session.

After the intervention, you will interviewed a second time and will be asked again about about your own racial identity and about any changes that may have occurred since the first interview, regarding your understanding of your racial identity. You will also be asked about your experience of the intervention and asked for any feedback on the intervention.

Risks and Benefits

Please note that discussing racial identity, carries with it the risk of experiencing emotional distress. With this possibility in mind, a list of counseling resources in Winnipeg has been attached to this consent form for your assistance. There may also be some direct benefits to you in terms of having the opportunity to describe to a concerned listener, and to group members, your own understanding and any internal conflict regarding racial identity and experiences working with individuals and communities from other racial groups. More long-term, you will be contributing to a more informed understanding of racial identity in white social workers and the ways in which to increase this identity awareness with the hope of improving social services in Winnipeg.

Confidentiality

All information will be kept strictly confidential. Documents related to the interviews will be stored on password-protected computers. Digital recorder and hand-written notes, if any, will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home. All personal identifiers will be removed after transcription and accuracy checking. All anonymous data will be stored in digital and paper form. The digital data will be password protected and the paper data in a locked filing cabinet. This data will be retained for future articles or presentations.

Due to the intervention being a group process, participants will be introducing themselves and their area of employment to other group participants. There is a risk that group members may breach confidentiality and tell others, outside of the group, who was involved in the study with them. In order to avoid this, we will be discussing confidentiality within our group sessions and will ask each participant

to sign a confidentiality agreement. However, please be advised that the researcher cannot guarantee that this will be respected by all group members outside the sessions.

In addition, the information from this study may be used to write articles for submission to academic journals in order to share the findings with other academics, and social workers, interested in this topic. The findings of the study may also be distributed to interested human service agencies who are wanting to learn more about white racial identity awareness in order to improve their own practices. However, in all cases I will do so without revealing identifying characteristics such as names, addresses, and specific employment details, etc. Nonetheless, given the relatively small population of social workers in Winnipeg, there is a risk that some elements of your interviews or comments, may be identifiable to others. The only persons who will have access to any identifying information collected in the project are my research supervisor, myself and one volunteer transcriber.

Please note that if there is a disclosure of a person at risk of being harmed, or harm having been done to a child or vulnerable person, that I will be required, by law to report this disclosure to the appropriate authorities.

Contact after intervention
Following the interviews and intervention, I may need to contact you for further information or clarification, which would only involve brief conversations over email or telephone. This contact will be optional and I will ask separately for your consent to do so. Three months after the end of the project, which will be approximately, May 2017 (depending on the groups availability to meet on a regular basis), you will have the option of receiving a brief summary of the findings either through the mail or via e-mail.

Also, with your consent, I may wish to contact you for future projects on this topic, but you are under no obligation to agree to be contacted for this purpose.

In Conclusion
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. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher from her 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 may look at your research records to see that the

research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122, or by e-mail at humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the corresponding box. If you do not agree, leave the box blank:

I have read or had read to me the details of this consent form. ( )
My questions have been addressed. ( )

I, _____ (print name), agree to participate in this study. ( )
I agree to have the interviews and 'check-in' portion of the intervention sessions audio-recorded. ( )
I agree to be contacted by phone or e-mail if further information is required after the interview. ( )
I agree to have any documents or artistic creations produced during this study transcribed and/or documented for the purpose of this study. ( )
I agree to have the journal I keep throughout this study, transcribed for the purpose of this study. ( )
I agree to have the findings (which may include quotations) from this project published or presented in a manner that does not reveal my identity. ( )
I agree to be contacted by the researcher for future studies on this topic.
( ) Yes ( ) No
Do you wish to receive a summary of the findings? ( ) Yes ( ) No
How do you wish to receive the summary? ( ) E-mail ( ) Surface mail

Address:
_____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

COUNSELLING RESOURCES IN WINNIPEG

If you would like to talk to someone about anything that has come up for you as a result of participating in this study, here are some options for counsellors in the city of Winnipeg.

- Your employer may have an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) that provides free confidential counselling - 204-788-8880
- Check if your private medical insurance plan covers professional counselling
- Or call one of the agencies listed below.

Low - cost or No-Cost Professional Counselling:
Aulneau Renewal Centre - 601 Aulneau Street - 204-987-7090

Aurora Family Therapy Centre - University of Winnipeg - 204-786-9251

EVOLVE (Klinic) - 870 Portage Ave. - 204-784-4208

Ft Garry Women's Resource Centre - 1150A Waverly St. - 204-477-1123

Hope Centre Health Care - 240 Powers St. - 204-589-8393

Jewish Child and Family Services - C200-123 Doncaster St. - 204-477-7430

Klinic Community Health Centre - 870 Portage Ave. - 204-784-4090
Counselling intake (Klinic) 204-784-4059

Ma MaWi Wi Chi Itata Centre - 94 McGregor St. - 204-925-0300

Mt Carmel Clinic - 886 Main Street - 204-582-2311

Nor west Co-op Community Health - 103-61 Tyndall Ave - 204-940-2020

North End Women's Centre - 394 Selkirk Ave. - 204-589-7347

Pluri-Elles - 570 Des Meurons St.- 204-233-1735

Psychological Service Centre - University of Manitoba - 204-474-9222

The Family Centre - 4th Floor Portage Place- 204-947-1401

The Laurel Centre - 104 Roslyn Road - 204-783-5460

Women's Health Clinic - 3rd Floor, 419 Graham - 204-947-1517

You Ville Centre- 33 Marion St. - 204-233- 0262 and also at 6-845 Dakota St. - 204-255-4840

Appendix C – Interview Guides

Pre- Intervention Interview Guide:

Can you tell me what it was about this project that peaked your interest?

When did you first start thinking about these issues?

In what context did you first start thinking about these issues?

What drew you to social work, as a profession?

In what ways have your ideas about social work changed, since you were a student?
What has been your experience working with and interacting with Indigenous people/ families/
communities in Winnipeg?

Describe any positive interactions you've had with Indigenous people/families/ or communities
in the course of your career?

What do you think contributed to these positive interactions?

Describe any negative interactions?

What do you think contributed to these negative interactions?

Describe any ambivalence you have felt about your interactions with Indigenous individuals,
families or communities?

What do you think contributed to your ambivalence?

Describe any ambivalence you have felt about the outcomes for Indigenous individuals, families
or communities within your social work practice?

What do you think contributes to your ambivalence?

Describe how your race, or 'being white' may, or may not, have influenced these interactions.

When is the first time you ever thought about being 'white'?

What does being 'white' mean to you?

Where else have you heard about or talked about ‘whiteness’ as a racial identity?

How did you feel about what was said?

How did you feel about talking about it?
How has being ‘white’ impacted your life?

When are you most aware of your ‘whiteness’?

Have others ever pointed out your ‘whiteness’ to you?

What did that feel like? What did they say?

How much do you think being ‘white’ impacts your practice and interactions with Indigenous
people/ family/ communities in Winnipeg?

In what way does being ‘white’ impact these interactions?

Describe any racism you may have noticed within the social services?

How does this racism express itself?

How would you define racism?

What do you think can be done to reduce this racism?

Describe the ways in which you may have tried to address this racism?

What was the outcome of your attempt(s)?

What are you hoping that participating in this study will do for you?

What are you hoping to get out of participating in this study?

‘Check-in’ Times Interview Guide for Intervention Sessions:

How did you feel about today’s session?

What kind of insights or concerns do you have from today’s sessions?

Does anyone have anything they’ve been thinking about this week that they wanted to share with
the group today?

Does anyone have anything they wanted to share that they've written about in their critical
incident journal?

Let's just go around the circle once, in case there's anything anyone wanted to say who didn't yet have a chance. Feel free to pass.

Post Intervention - Interview Guide:

Were you able to get what you were hoping to get out of participating in the group

sessions?

What did you feel was missing, if anything?

What aspects of the group sessions were helpful?

How were they helpful?

Which aspects of the group sessions were not helpful? What made them unhelpful?

What kind of suggestions do you have for what should have been done differently, within the
group sessions?

Describe any changes you noticed about how you see yourself racially since participating in this
group?

What do you think influenced those changes in your understanding of your 'whiteness'?

What does being 'white' mean to you now, after having participated in the intervention?

With this understanding, what aspects of 'whiteness' do you believe influence you in your practice with Indigenous individuals, families or communities?

What aspects of 'whiteness' do you believe influence you in your day to day interactions with Indigenous individuals, families or communities?

Can you describe any ways in which you intend to change the way you practice or interact with
Indigenous people/families/ communities after attending this intervention?

Is there else you wish to do differently in your life or work as a result of participating in this
study?

Describe any changes to your definition of racism since before the group sessions?

Did participating in this study resolve any previous distress or ambivalence you had about interactions with Indigenous individuals, families or communities within your practice?

If yes, what aspects of this study helped with that?

If yes, how did it help?

Would you say that participating in this study increased any previous distress or ambivalence you had about interactions with Indigenous individuals, families or communities within your
practice?

If yes, what aspects of this study do you think contributed to that?

If yes, how did it contribute to that?

Is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience in this intervention?

APPENDIX D - Confidentiality Agreement

In order to ensure that the group sessions within this study are an emotionally safe place for
participants to share and process, it is asked that all participants respect the confidentiality of
other group members by not sharing any identifying information about other group members
with anyone outside of the group. This includes names, addresses, workplace name or the details
of what others have said within group sessions.
Please indicate your agreement to respect group confidentiality by signing below:

_____ _____
Participant Signature Participant Name (printed)

_____
Researcher's Signature

_____
Date

Appendix E - Proposed Session Agendas with References

SESSION 1- During this session, the group would introduce themselves to each other and I would outline narrative practice and its elements in order to describe the structure for future session work. These elements include: Defining the problem as White & Epston (1990) describe it; Externalizing the problem as discussed by Cobb & Negash, 2010; Combs & Freedman,1990; Davis, 2000; and White & Epston, 1990. We will also talk about the ways in which externalizing can be done (i.e. art, charts, writing, etc.); "Mapping the influence of the problem" as described by White & Epston (1990); Deconstructing the problem narratives using examples by Fook (2012a); Restorying/ developing "counter stories" by examining how we have influenced the problem, individually, collectively, historically and currently as described by Combs & Freedman, 1990 and White & Epston, 1990; "Thickening the narrative" as discussed by Cooper, 1998; Freedman, 2014; Meehan & Farquharson, 2012; and White & Epston, 1990.

I will also introduce the reflexive journals, providing each participant with a notebook for this purpose and the handout describing the process (Fook 2012a).

I will ask if group members would like to receive copies of articles that inform this intervention and may be referred to within the sessions. I will give the option of hard copies and/or digital copies e-mailed to them. These will not be required reading, just for participants interest. (See Reference list after Session 8 for articles list pertaining to session structure). Participants will be encouraged to bring any readings, articles, etc. that they would like to share with the group, as well. I will also have a hard copy of my reference list from my proposal and invite participants to highlight any other articles that are of interest to them and will send those to them as requested.

I will then describe the weekly check-in time and remind the group of the fact that this section of the meeting will be recorded. We will then move into the 'check-in' time for the remainder of this session.

SESSION 2- In the second session, we would begin to explore reflexivity and how our identities and values influence our practice. Participants would be encouraged to share their own understanding of reflexivity and ways in which they may already use reflexivity in their practice. I would also ask how they feel reflexivity might apply when examining white racial identity. This will be discussed in terms of the work of the group within these sessions, the use of the reflexive journals and the means by which reflexivity may help to raise racial identity awareness. Ideas from the following articles may be examined where applicable to the discussion:
Ambrosio, 2014; Boston, 2009; Fook, 2012a; Gosselin, 2011; McCoyd & Kerson, 2013; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; and Rosin, 2015.

Questions about *white* racial identity and its characteristics will be explored in terms of each individuals' perceptions of their own racial identity and what they've heard, seen, experienced, or believed others' perception of *whiteness* to be and what may account for any difference in these perceptions. Articles such as DiAngelo, 2011; McIntosh, 1998; Seawright, 2014; Souto-Manning, 2011; and Sullivan, 2006 may be referred to in order to help inform our definition. These questions would be similar to the ones discussed in the individual interviews. I intend to make note of any metaphors or analogies used by the group to describe problematic identities and then present them to

the group as possible starting points by which to externalize the problem(s), as recommended by Combs & Freedman (1990). White & Epston (1990) stated that, "...externalizing is an approach to therapy that encourages persons to objectify and, at times, to personify the problems that they experience as oppressive" (p. 38). The intent being to remove the proximity of the problem to a distance upon which it can be observed and acted upon. "Externalization," in narrative therapy, has been described by Bermudez (2002); Cobb & Negash (2010) and Davis (2000) as happening through verbal processes, through art (including performance art), rituals, through ceremonies and through writing.

We would then move into an externalizing activity, as decided on by the group. This may be individual or collective projects and participants would be encouraged to utilize various 'tools' such as collage, sculpture, writing, etc. in order to externalize or characterize the 'problem' further.

Brief explanation of stations. Station 1- discussion words/phrases collected from research and pre-interviews (10 minutes) Station 2- collage- poster board with magazines, markers, fabric and string (10 minutes) Station 3- clay- various colours (10 minutes) Station 4 - movement - create a still image using each person at a different level to depict a feeling, concept or problem. (10 minutes) Discuss what you want to present to large group (5 min) Large group discussion (15 minutes)

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

*Show and share next week?

SESSION 3- The task of the third session would be to map the influence of the problem, as described by White & Epston (1990) Joy to bring upside down accurate map. Macintosh's article. Possibly video about white fragility. etc. Invite others to share items.

In this session, we would examine the participants' understanding of the influence of the identified problem(s) on their own lives, both personally and professionally; on the social work profession as a whole; and on society, which includes those within, or those utilizing, the social service systems and their families and communities. Authors such as Blackstock (2005); de Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron (2010); Dumbrill & Green (2008): Yellow Bird, Coates & Gray (2013) may be referred to as describing areas others have spoken of as being influenced by the problem for participant discussion and response.

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

SESSION 4- During the fourth session, we would begin deconstructing the narratives of theproblem(s). I would utilize reflexive questions provided by Fook (2012a) as they pertain to the topics identified by the group as 'problem narratives.' We may discuss the way social work practice might change if these narratives were challenged.

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

SESSION 5- During the fifth session, we would begin examining the ways in which participants and social workers, in general, have influenced the problem(s). This is the beginning of the 're-authoring,' 're-storying,' or 'developing counter-stories' in narrative therapy as described by Combs & Freedman, 1990; and White & Epston, 1990.

Participants will be invited to share individual examples and then we will look at collective influences on the problem, using tools Denborough (2008) referred to, such as "collective timelines" and maps. Denborough (2008) said that timelines can link participants' current efforts to their own significant places, history, community and culture, and provide a visual representation of this. Secondly, these timelines and maps of history link participants' stories and histories to a collective shared theme, a shared purpose. This enables both individual and collective re-authoring. (p. 158)

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

SESSIONS 6 & 7- The sixth and seventh sessions would continue this process of looking at individual and collective influences on the problem(s), as it pertains to each one's own individual social work practice. Examples of ways to impact the problem(s), provided by Baines (2007); Fook (2012a); Fook (2012b) and Kundougqk & Qwul'sih'yah'maht (2009), such as 'critical case management' and advocacy, may be discussed, as they pertain to the individuals' identified process and challenges in attempting to influence the problem(s). Discussion about collective actions, and ways to find support outside of this group context, may also be explored as a means of impacting systemic problems that cannot be greatly influenced by individuals, alone.

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

SESSION 8 - During the eighth session, we would attempt to identify the new narrative, constructed by the group, based on the shared stories of the individual participants, and discuss ways to strengthen, articulate and share this narrative within our workplaces and lives.

The group would then come together for the 'check-in' part of the session.

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Appendix F- Handout for Critical Incident Journal

Handout regarding guidelines for participant Critical Incident Journal keeping:

The 'critical incident journal' described by Jan Fook (2012), is what we will be attempting to do throughout this study. The idea of the journal is to help us to be reflexive about things that may have either "pushed our buttons" so to speak, or given us new insight "aha moments." Incidents may be things that have happened during or between sessions. Feel free to share your entries during 'check-in' times, if you wish. Please do not use other participants actual names within your journals, in fact, you may not wish to put your own name in your journal, maybe just a mark that identifies the journal to you, as yours. Please note: journals will be collected at the end of the study as part of the data for the study and will be returned to you at the end of the study.
Fook describes the journal as having three parts…

I. The description of the critical incident - this includes:
A. Noting why you consider the incident critical;
B. What you are wanting to learn from the incident;
C. A brief description, not analysis, of the incident from your own perspective.

II.The analysis of the incident - which includes:
A. Looking for themes or patterns within the description;
B. Looking for labels or binary opposites (eg. stereotypes, good/bad binary, etc);4
C. Considering who is involved and the individuals' relationship to those involved;
D. Considering the perspectives that are represented or missing, the assumptions individual participants are making and where they come from;
E. Any gaps or biases in the descriptive part of the process. Whose voices/perspectives are missing?

III. Creating practice theory - which include:
A. Asking oneself how "what happened in the incident compared with what I intended to do, or what I assumed I was doing"?
B. How does this incident compares with other similar past incidents.
C. What they might I need to change about my "assumptions, theory, actions, interpretations, skill, as a result of these reflections.

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Publications.

Appendix G – Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Fax +204-269-7173

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

March 28, 2016

TO: **Joy L. Eidse** **(Supervisor: Regine King)**
Principal Investigator [redacted]

FROM: **Kelley Main, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: **Protocol #P2016:042**
"Increasing Awareness of Racial Identity Among White Social Workers- A Narrative Approach"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. **This approval is valid for one year only and will expire on March 28, 2017**.

Any changes to the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Coordinator in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- **If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0)**

- **if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.**

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) **in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
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RENEWAL APPROVAL

Date: March 13, 2017 **New Expiry:** March 28, 2018

TO: **Joy L. Eidse** **(Advisor: Regine King)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kelley Main, Chair**
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) [redacted]

Re: **Protocol #P2016:042 (HS19568)**
"Increasing Awareness of Racial Identity Among White Social Workers- A Narrative Approach"

Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) has reviewed and renewed the above research. PSREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.*

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Any modification to the research must be submitted to PSREB for approval before implementation.
2. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to PSREB as soon as possible.
3. This renewal is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
4. A Study Closure form must be submitted to PSREB when the research is complete or terminated.

Funded Protocols:
- **Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Renewal Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**

Appendix H - Potential Ways to Connect With Issues in Our Community

Resource Page- Session 7

Individual Reflexivity & Practice
Monthly support group for white human service workers around anti-racism, decolonization and anti-oppressive practice and social justice- contact joy.eidse@gmail.com

*Decolonizing practice video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-DT3cogVRM-

Narrative Therapists Group MB (meets monthly) - contact scottmerickson@gmail.com

*Decolonizing the Colonizer video- http://www.realpeoplesmedia.org/news/2016/1/13/sakej-ward-decolonizing-the-colonizer

Decolonizing Conversations- women's circles for Indigenous and Settler Women - See Jonah Community Projects Facebook page or website for details on projects and upcoming circles https://jonahconsulting.ca

Decolonization (Education, Advocacy and Activism)

Strategic Group on Racism in Winnipeg (Facebook Group) - Very active Indigenous led group with lots going on.

Decolonizing network Manitoba (Facebook group) - contact joy.eidse@gmail.com for more info about meeting and activities.

Website- http://groundworkforchange.org/- tons of resources and information on training, etc. regarding decolonization.

*"Stories of Change: Land Dispossession" video- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmPB38DBZYY -

Inter church council on Hydro Development (meets monthly)- djeidse@gmail.com- Very active group which is the only non-governmental group aimed at holding Hydro accountable to the Northern Flood Agreement (which this group developed in the 1970's) and current development issues.

Share the Gifts- Honor the Treaties - based on "Pay the Rent" in Australia (http://treatyrepublic.net/content/pay-rent-rationale) - Regarding tangible (land, money, resources) ways of mending the relationship between Indigenous people and settlers in Manitoba. Community consultation- April 29, details TBA- Contact e.bishop@shaw.ca to get on mailing list for updates. Stay tuned for upcoming Facebook page.

Shoal Lake #50- Shoal Lake #40 First Nation(Facebook group) - water issues

Grassy Narrows First Nation - top public posts (Facebook group)- mercury poisoning

Resource Page- Session 7

Social Work/ Social Justice (Models & Allies)
Just Therapy - New Zealand model http://www.familycentre.org.nz/Areas_of_Work/Family_Therapy/
Just Therapy - a Journey: A Collection of Papers from the Just Therapy Team, New Zealand by Charles Waldegrave (Author)
http://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Just-Therapy.pdf

Narrative practice discussion group- international (Facebook group)

MESJ- Manitoba Educators for Social Justice (meets monthly- for teachers) also a Facebook group.