Uprooting Social Work Education

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors attempt to deconstruct social work education using a metaphor of a "social work tree." Through reflective dialogue and an arts-based approach, we critically examined the past, present, and future of social work education. This collaborative art project allows us to visually express the colonial roots of social work education and the transformation that is possible when its Eurocentric stronghold is uprooted. We discuss the implications for social work education and suggest ways of moving forward with an allied approach that bridges the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work education.

Introduction

"(Up)rooting social work" is a metaphor we have used to describe a collaborative art project between a social work academic and five undergraduate social work students in Ontario, Canada. The purpose of the project was to examine how to bridge the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work to enhance social work education. Using an arts-based approach, we critically reflected upon social work's past, present, and future, looking specifically at the colonial stronghold of Euro-Western knowledge systems, which marginalize and exclude other voices and perspectives in social work education. We expressed our ideas and hope of bridging the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work in the creation of a "social work tree."

This paper builds on a poster presentation that the six authors prepared for the 2012 Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) conference held in Kitchener-Waterloo. Called *Breaking down Borders and Bridging the Gap between Mainstream and Indigenous Social Work* (CASWE, 2012), this poster presentation unearthed some insightful and thought-provoking discussions between presenters and conference attendees. For instance, it was evident from the discussions that Eurocentric knowledge continues to dominate social work education (Baskin, 2005; Dei, 2008; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Rice-Green & Dumbrill, 2005; Sinclair, Hart, & Bruyere, 2009). Further, many schools have not yet considered that bridging the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work is integral to the future of social work education in Canada. In fact, Indigenous knowledge is given little, if any, legitimate role in higher education (Sinclair, 2009).

From the positive responses to the poster presentation and our experiences in constructing it, art appears to be an effective way to stimulate dialogue among students, practitioners, and educators about the past, present, and future of social work education. The creation of a "social work tree" gave us an opportunity to critically examine the linkages between theory and practice, disrupt Eurocentric dominance in the academy, and create space for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in social work education (Baskin, 2008, 2009; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Hart, 2009; Sinclair et al., 2009). As we constructed the tree, we furthered our understanding of social work's history and objectives of social change. Our collaboration was fuelled by creativity and the telling of a "marginalized story … one that undermines and destabilizes the oppressive, contradicting the insinuation of hierarchal and self-preserving meaning over contextual and anomalous meaning" (Rolling, 2011, p. 100).

We drew upon John-Steiner's (2006) study with doctoral students to inform our creative collaboration. In her book, *Creative Collaboration*, she notes that:

> [i]n universities, some of the closest bonds are between professors and … students. In this relationship, we experience the temporary inequality between expert and novice…. The mentor learns new ideas and approaches from his apprentice; he adds to what he learns and transforms it. (pp. 163–164)

At different moments and on different aspects of the project, we were learners and experts collaborating on a project that we believed would help to transform social work education. We remained vigilant to the power dynamics in the collaborative process, and worked to build our partnership upon mutual trust, respect, and shared power.

This article focuses on an arts-based teaching and learning experience in a school of social work. As a pedagogical approach, it opened up new possibilities for us to understand the tensions, contradictions, and opportunities for transformative learning (Feller et al., 2004; O'Sullivan, 2008) and unlearning (Macdonald, 2002) in social work education. Transformative learning offers new ways of thinking, acting, and feeling in order to challenge and resist the forces of domination and inequities in society. Transformative learning has much in common with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1992; Giroux, 1988), anti-oppressive (Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007), feminists (hooks, 1994), antiracist (Dei, 2008b; James, 2001) and anti-colonial (Baskin, 2008, 2009; Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Graveline, 1998; Hart, 2009; Sinclair et al., 2009) approaches to teaching and learning. As a form of emancipatory practice, transformative learning focuses on dynamics of power, privilege and oppression that shape how social differences are experienced and understood (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000; Dei, 2008a; hooks, 1994; O'Sullivan, 2008). It also offers new insights by disrupting the Eurocentric academic space and unsettling educators' and learners' ways of knowing; challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and dominant discourses in social work education (Baskin, 2008; Fook, 2002; Foucault, 1978, 1980; Kincheloe, 2004; Macdonald & MacDonnell, 2008; MacDonnell, 2009; Rossiter, 2005).

Through our arts-based collaboration, we interrogated some of the core concepts, theories, ideologies, values, and practice approaches upon which social work education was built. We contend that an arts-based project can create spaces and opportunities for critical inquiry and creativity that allows students and educators to attend to the complex relations of power, informing whose voices and knowledge are authorized and legitimized in the academy and whose are marginalized or excluded (Cervero, 2001). We drew upon our teaching and learning experiences to illustrate how an arts-based project can transform social work education. The article begins with a brief discussion on arts-based approach in social work, and then takes a brief conceptual detour before moving to a critical examination of social work's past, present, and future, through a visual representation of a metaphoric "social work tree." The article concludes with implications for social work education.

Arts-based Teaching and Learning in Social Work

The field of arts-based education is characterized by an interdisciplinary scholarship. Various academic disciplines, including social work, currently confer notable interest in creativity. In their study of creativity in education, Buckingham and Jones (2001) describe a "cultural turn"—a shift in thinking where creativity is a key ingredient for learners in the knowledge economy. As such, educators and students

are expected to engage in creative teaching and learning methods within the knowledge economy (Craft 2005, 2008; Jones, 2003; Young, 2008).

Like many scholars, we believe that art is a way of knowing, a form of cultural expression that communicates emotions, skills, and insights (Janesick, 2004; Sullivan, 2005). Art is a method of teaching and learning that promotes creativity and knowledge construction that can lead to social change (Janesick, 2004; Sullivan, 2005). Wyman (2004) argues that "at their simplest level, the arts . . . bring aesthetic pleasure and gaiety to our lives. We must never forget that essence of absolute joy, unjustified by any other reason other than its existence" (p.14). Diamond and Mullen (1999) concede that arts-based learning also needs to be about "thinking imaginatively, performing artistically, and taking a risk" (p. 152). A study by Weitz (1996) reveals that the arts "offer opportunities for children and youth to learn new skills, expand their horizons and develop a sense of self, well-being and belonging" (p. 6). Rolling (2011) describes art-based learning as a journey of discovery, free of "walls, barriers or false fronts" (p. 100).

Debates continue about arts' progressive pedagogy, value, and effectiveness in teaching, developing students' skills, or addressing social issues and social change (Craft, 2005, 2008; Chang, Lim, & Kim, 2012; Claxton, 2007; Costello, 1995; Gallagher, 1995; Jones, 2010b; MacNeil & Krensky, 1996; Pope, 2005; Sawyer, 2004; Weitz, 1996; Wositsky, 1998). There is also reluctance among some educators to engage in arts-based education. This may be due to limited experience with the arts or with alternative methods of learning. Mont (2009) argues that there is a preoccupation with logical and linguistic-based teaching, failing to acknowledge the similarities between the arts and rational thinking, or how art education may promote advanced thinking and inquiry. Further, Hanna (1994) posits that there is a lack of evidence that arts-based education actually accomplish what it intends. Scholars' mixed perspectives on arts-based education may also be linked to conservative views of creative learning as inferior to traditional teaching approaches or a lack of commitment to standards (Jones, 2003). Such challenges keep arts-based education on the margins in higher education.

The "Social Work Tree": Past, Present, and Future

We used the metaphor of a "social work tree" to represent our critical examination of the past, present, and future of social work education. A tree appeared most appropriate because its roots, trunk, and leaves can metaphorically illustrate social work's past, present, and future. Further, because the profession has mostly followed

a bottom-up, grassroots approach, we can effectively guide the reader through a visual representation of social work beginning at its roots, and continuing through the trunk and up to the leaves. The "social work tree" is discussed below in three main sections: roots, trunk, and leaves (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1: "Social work tree"

A Short Detour

Before beginning a critical examination of social work's past, present, and future as represented in our "social work tree" above, we take a short conceptual detour to discuss what we mean by the terms "Aboriginal" and "mainstream social work" as used throughout this article.

We use "Aboriginal" as an inclusive term to include Status and Non-status First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Turtle Island. The terms "Aboriginal," "Native," and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably in the literature (Sinclair, 2009; Smith, 2005), and will be used similarly in this article. However, we acknowledge that significant diversity exists in terms of language, culture, tradition, and philosophical belief (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Fire, 2006). As non-Aboriginal scholars, we recognize that in Canada the term Aboriginal is a legal, cultural, and political term, a label given to the Indigenous peoples of this land by the Canadian government (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). As social workers and educators, we also recognize the dangers of using terms that homogenize Indigenous people despite their diversity.

We follow Baines' (2007) assertion that "mainstream" social work takes "politics and political awareness out of issues in order to control the issues and those seeking to make social change" (p. 5). Hence mainstream social work refers to perspectives, policies, procedures and practice approaches that maintain rather than challenge the status quo. Baines distinguishes "mainstream social work" from "critical social work," arguing that in mainstream social work "[i]nterventions are aimed largely at the individual with little or no analysis of or intent to challenge power, structures, social relations, culture, or economic forces" (p. 4). The focus is on individual shortcomings, pathology, and inadequacy with much emphasis on medical and psychiatric diagnoses and little concern for social change and transformation.

Bearing in mind that mainstream social work is constructed on Eurocentric knowledge, and Aboriginal perspectives are not often present in the academy, we set out to make visible the historical and ongoing colonial influence that are at the roots of social work education.

(Up) rooting Social Work: Revealing the Hidden to Advance the Future

A tree is dependent on its roots for nourishment (see Figure 2). The health of the roots determines the health of the tree. The concepts displayed along the roots of our "social work tree" symbolize the origins of the profession, and the historical legacy that continue to influence it today. In this section, we discuss the history of social work through the roots of the tree.

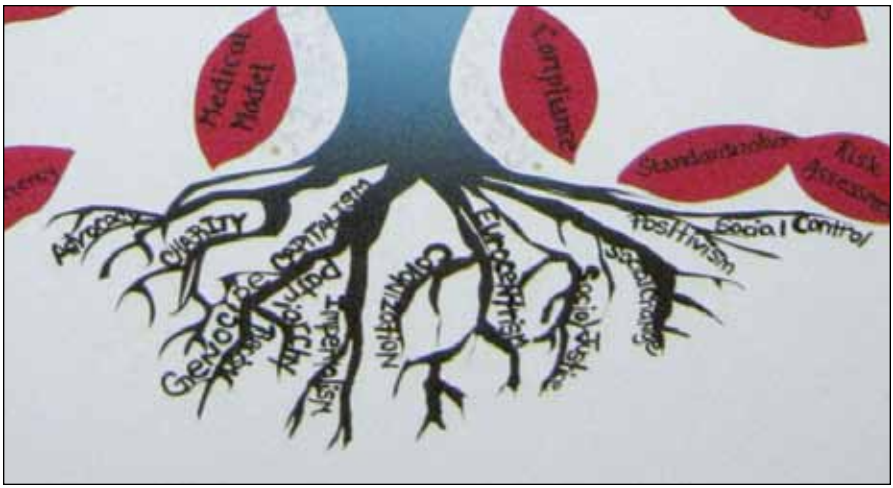

Fig. 2: "Social work tree – roots"

Since its early beginnings in the 19th Century, primarily in the United States and England, social work as a profession has its roots in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the problems associated with it (Elliott, 1997; Healy, 2001; Hokenstad, Khinduka, & Midgley, 1992; Jones, 2002; Weiss-Gal, Benyamini, Ginzburg, Savaya, & Peled, 2009). Historically, social work assisted individuals, families, groups, and communities mainly through charity work (Altman & Goldberg, 2008). From the 1800s, social work in Canada meant relief for the poor, whose poverty was believed to result from weakness of character. However, the rise of the Industrial Revolution left many in poverty. The state viewed the poor as a direct threat to social order, and created a system to support them (Jacoby, 1984). While the system had good intentions, an underlying motive was social control (Piven & Cloward, 1993; Margolin, 1997).

With the rise of charity movements like Mary Richmond's Charity Organization Society (Altman & Goldberg, 2008) and Jane Addams' Settlement House Movement (Lundblad, 1995), social work began to gain more recognition. After World War II, the profession grew with the expansion of the welfare state and the development of public services such as health and social welfare, in which social workers were often employed (Rice & Prince, 2000). The profession grew dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s, as social entitlement to government services became a right to Canadian citizens (Rice & Prince, 2000).

Social work is also rooted in social change and upholding the values of social justice and equity, as well as advocacy for the poor and the oppressed (Healy, 2008). However, the profession is not free of flaws and criticisms (Piven & Cloward, 1993).

The history of Canada is the history of the colonization of Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2007). Colonialism involves the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of its resources and the attempt to govern the Indigenous peoples of the occupied lands (Boehmer, 1995). As such, social control by a dominant class takes place through political, economic, and ideological means (Mullaly, 1993). Social work played a significant role in the colonization process. First, mainstream social work was, and continues to be, rooted in Eurocentric/Anglo-American values (Gordon, 1994; Katz, 1986; Mink, 1995; Platt, 1969). These values promote capitalism, imperialism and positivism. Eurocentricism is a practice of viewing the world from a European perspective (Shohat & Stam, 1994). This includes viewing European practices as superior to others, and being largely unaccepting of other ways of knowing.

Colonialism and imperialism have exploited and dispossessed Indigenous peoples everywhere for hundreds of years (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). The powerful colonial institutions, whether they are educational, social, or economic, have also colonized people's minds. This has led to internalized colonialism and the acquisition of "white lenses" (hooks, 1992), based on Western values, ways of thinking, and worldviews. These subtle forms of colonization have led many Indigenous individuals to devalue their own culture and anything connected to it (Alfred, 2007).

Social workers have helped to maintain the colonization of Indigenous peoples, largely through the residential school system and the "sixties scoop" (Alston-O'Connor, 2010). Thousands of Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools with the stated objective of cultural assimilation into the wider Canadian society (Blackstock, 2007). Aboriginal children placed in these schools often lost all meaningful contact with their families and community. The legacy of the residential school system, which was inherently a form of cultural genocide, continues to negatively impact Aboriginal peoples (Alston-O'Connor, 2010).

As residential schools failed to meet the goals of assimilation, the child welfare system became the new agent of assimilation and colonization (Alston-O'Connor, 2010). The "sixties scoop," which began in the 1950s, continues (Ball, 2008). A significant proportion of Aboriginal children were and continue to be placed in non-Aboriginal foster and adoptive homes by provincial child welfare agencies (Ball, 2008), which largely employ social workers. Forced relocation of entire villages, dispersal of clans, and urbanization have further disconnected Aboriginal children and families from their communities, languages, livelihoods, and cultures (Sinha et al., 2011). Moreover, "There are more First Nations children in child welfare care today than at the height of the residential schools by a factor of three" (Blackstock, 2007, p. 74). Therefore, while

social work espouses the values of advocacy, human rights, social justice, and equity, it continues to be a colonial tool of the Canadian state (Healy, 2008).

The roots of the tree illustrate the differing, yet interconnected social work ideologies and values upon which social work was built (Murdach, 2011). Empowering values such as charity, advocacy, social change, and social justice co-exist with oppressive ideologies of capitalism, colonization, Eurocentricism, imperialism, positivism, racism, and social control (Healy, 2008). These deeply rooted values and ideologies continue to influence social work education today.

(Up) rooting Social Work: Breaking Down Borders and Bridging the Gap

The concepts of respect, reciprocity, reflexivity, and resistance were selected to frame the trunk of our "social work tree" because of their importance in helping to bridge the gap between mainstream and Aboriginal social work (Fook, 2002; Green & Baldry, 2008). The applicability of these concepts to both Euro-Western and Aboriginal perspectives makes these central pillars to hold up the trunk of our tree. Like Briskman (2007), we believe that critical and progressive social work has some relevance to Aboriginal social work, particularly in challenging Eurocentric knowledge systems in the academy (See Figure 3). The four concepts of critical and Aboriginal social work that frame the trunk of our "social work tree" are discussed as follows.

Fig. 3: "Social work tree – trunk"

Respect is a core social work value and an important principle in Aboriginal worldview (Baskin, 2006; International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2001). We view respect as a central principle in helping to bridge the colonial divide between Eurocentric and Aboriginal worldviews. To that end, we propose a respectful inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of helping into social work curricula. This is not simply an add-on but a disruption of Eurocentric dominance to make space for Aboriginal knowledges and approaches in social work (Fire, 2006). For instance, entire curricula should be infused with content that examines the history of colonization in Canada, the profession's role in various state colonial projects, and an emphasis on decolonization (Baskin, 2006; Fire, 2006; Gair, Thomson, Miles, & Harris, 2002; Lynn, 2001; Weaver, 1999, 2000a, 2000b).

A respectful integration would ensure that Aboriginal peoples and their diverse knowledge and ways of helping are valued in the academy. A respectful integration should not lead to Aboriginal peoples losing control and ownership of their knowledge systems. However, it should help Aboriginal students feel more welcome in an environment which for too long has disrespected, marginalized, and excluded them (Baskin, 2006; Dei et al., 2000; Fire, 2006). Having respect as a core value and principle in mainstream social work can help safeguard against appropriation and misappropriation of Aboriginal knowledge in the academy.

Reciprocity is a guiding ethical principle within Aboriginal worldview (Lawless, 1992). Reciprocity refers to an exchange; a two-way process of "consistently giving and receiving" (Baskin, 2009, p. 140; Lassiter, 2001, Lawless, 1992). We believe this concept is useful in bridging the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work education. For example, reciprocity disrupts the mainstream discourse of faculty member as the "expert" and "creator" of knowledge who dispenses information to "passive" and "unknowing" students (Freire, 1983, 1995; Scollon, 1981). It challenges faculty members to be open; to being vulnerable and experience the ambiguities, uncertainties, and complexities of the real world (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000a; 2000b).
In reciprocal relationships, educators, researchers, and practitioners share knowledge, control, and power in the teaching, learning, research, and helping processes so that everyone learns and grows from the exchange (Lassiter, 2001; Lawless, 1992; Scarangella, 2002). The principle of reciprocity requires faculty members to be open to collaborating and co-creating knowledge with students, and involve them in tasks that build their own knowledge and skills (Barnhardt, 1986). When relationships are built on reciprocity, they are empowering, and mutual trust and respect are easily developed (Baskin, 2009).

Reflexivity is a multidisciplinary term with varied meanings and interpretations in the literature, and is often confused with reflectivity and reflection; and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007; Fook, 2002; Fook & Askeland, 2006; Mosca & Yost, 2001; Rea, 2000; Payne, 2005; Ryan & Golden, 2006). Jones (2010a) defines reflection as "a process of critically examining one's past and present practice as a means of building one's knowledge and understanding in order to improve practice" (p. 593). Fook (2002) refers to reflexivity as a critical "stance of being able to locate oneself in the picture, to appreciate how one's own self influences the research act" (p. 43). Other scholars argue that "[r]eflexivity involves the capacity to develop critical awareness of the assumptions that underlie practice" (Edwards, Ranson, & Strain, 2002, p. 533) and an interrogation of our role and contribution to the construction of knowledge and meaning making (Campbell, 2004; Taylor, 2006). Importantly, reflexivity entails a critical examination of our own subjectivities and social locations (Ali, 2006; Golombisky, 2006; Gray, 2008; Mauthner, 2000; Suki, 2006), and the role that emotions play in the work we do with people (D'Cruz et al., 2007; Miehls & Moffat, 2000). Thus while both reflection and reflectivity allow for the casting of a critical gaze upon practice through reflection in and on action (Fook, 2002; Schon, 1983, 1987), reflexivity is much more complex because it implicates individuals in the work they do (D'Cruz et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2002; Ruch, 2002).

Reflexivity was selected for the trunk of the tree because it shares similarities with an Aboriginal perspective of exploring the self—of turning inwards to continuously find meaning to enrich our lives and the work we do with people (Baskin, 2006; Ermine, 1995; Fook, 2002). In Aboriginal worldview, there is an acceptance of introspection, of journeying inward to find meaning through prayer, fasting, ceremonies, silence, and so on (Baskin, 2006). As Willie Ermine (1995) states, "Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie no further than the self" (p. 108). As a critical approach to practice, reflexivity requires the social worker to situate the self in the work, recognize the influence of self on people and contexts, question and acknowledge power relations, and challenge and resist various forms of domination to bring about social change (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Fook, White, & Gardner, 2006; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000a; Ruch, 2002; Schon, 1983, 1987; Sheppard, Newstead, Di Caccavo, & Ryan, 2000; Speer, 2002; Taylor & White, 2000). Thus reflexivity is central to bridging the gap between mainstream and Aboriginal social work.

Resistance is an important concept in both mainstream and Aboriginal social work (Baskin, 2006; Fook, 2002; Lynn, 2001; Turiel, 2003). It can simply be understood

as an act of rule breaking, non-compliance or an oppositional act that contests institutional power and dominant cultural norms to uncover and confront issues (Darts, 2004; Singh & Cowden, 2009). Acts of resistance may vary from clients refusing treatment to progressive social workers forming alliances with Aboriginal people or social and political movements such as anti-capitalist and anti-globalization activists to bring about social transformation (Baines, 2007; Mullaly, 1997).

Aboriginal peoples have and continue to resist colonization and domination, often by refusing to participate in the Euro-Canadian education system and in Westernized social services (Baskin, 2006; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair et al., 2009). By not participating, Aboriginal peoples demonstrate their resistance to state control, a process that is unacceptable for the ways it negates the sharing of power and inclusion of Aboriginal values and knowledge (Simpson, 2001). As social workers and allies with Aboriginal people, we know our participation is essential in the struggles for re-claiming Aboriginal land, languages, and politics (Dei, 2002).

The creation of a "social work tree" was itself an act of resistance to mainstream social work, which continues to marginalize Aboriginal people and their worldviews. We recognize that very little attention is given to Indigenous knowledges in mainstream social work education. Our aims as allies are to challenge this invisibility and marginality, further develop our understanding, and help to advance Aboriginal social work in Canada. We believe that resistance can sharpen our collective understanding of the ways individuals and groups challenge dominant cultural material and social determinants (Dimitriadis, 2011).

We believe that resistance can uproot social work's colonial history and challenge Eurocentric practices that have become routinized and standardized in social work (Baines, 2008). The very act of selecting concepts for inclusion and removal from our "social work tree" was an act of resistance. Through critical de-construction and reflexivity, we engaged in a process of "meditating upon blindness, the invisible, the unseen, the unseeable, [and] the overlooked"—a "visual culture resistance" (Darts, 2004, p. 319).

(Up) rooting Social Work: Creating Space and Building Hope for the Future

We have considered the roots, trunk and now we focus on the leaves of our "social work tree" (see Figure 4). The leaves depict the current approaches in social work education and our vision of the future. The leaves reflect the colours of the Medicine Wheel: red, white, black, and yellow. As Thomas and Green (2007) explain:

> the red quadrant, focusing on spirituality and new beginnings; the black being the direction of the physical being, sharing of knowledge and strengthening of community; the white representing the mentality, focused on change, re-thinking, re-evaluating; and finally the yellow quadrant the direction of the emotional being, a time of learning, warmth, and growth. (pp. 92–93)

Many Aboriginal people approach health and wellness through the four quadrants, the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual, to maintain balance between the self, other living things, and Mother Earth (Lavallee, 2007).

Our project follows a similar philosophical aspiration as the Wheel—that all aspects of social work, regardless of differences, are interrelated. As Thomas and Green (2007) argue, the Wheel "has no beginning and no end and teaches us that all things are interrelated" (p. 2). The Wheel suggests a continuum, unlike the linear thinking of mainstream social work which often proceeds in separate and disconnected ways.

Fig. 4: "Social work tree – leaves"

The leaves of the "social work tree" represent the diverse elements of both mainstream and Indigenous social work. The red leaves represent the current concepts, values, theories, and practice approaches that are prevalent in mainstream social work. Some of these are anti-oppression and empowerment, postmodernism/poststructuralism, identity/discourse. Due to space limitation, only a few are discussed here. The mainstream concepts that we suggest be removed from social work education are cultural competency, neo-liberalism, standardization, diagnosis, and the medical model. These are depicted by the falling leaves from the tree.

Anti-oppressive practice refers to a framework which addresses structural and systemic inequalities and social divisions in the work with clients (Healy, 2005). It is a "person-centered philosophy, an egalitarian value system and a focus on process and outcome" (p. 179). Anti-oppressive practice has a significant impact on social work education, research, and practice, allowing opportunities for major societal and structural change (Burke & Harrison, 1998; Dalrymple & Burke, 1995; Dominelli, 2002; Lynn, 1999; Mullaly, 2002; Payne, 1997; Razack, 1999). Holding true to its empowerment model, an anti-oppressive approach is crucial in eradicating oppression and bridging the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work.

The perspectives of poststructuralism and postmodernism also hold importance in mainstream social work education. Postmodernism "involves a critique of totalising theories and structures, boundaries and hierarchies which maintain and enact them" (Fook, 2002, p. 12). It holds the ideological perspective that there is no neutrality and no one truth; rather there are multiple realities and ways of knowing (Fook, 2002). Poststructuralism is linked to postmodernism, and posits that multiple meanings and interpretations always exist (Fook, 2002). Postmodernist and poststructuralist perspectives recognize power as the major contributor to inequality and challenge the colonial teachings that govern social work education. As Foucault (1980) describes, "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p. 93).

Other perspectives that also contribute to the growth of our "social work tree" are strengths theory, constructivism, task-centered practice, crisis intervention, and the solution-focused perspective. As social work continues to pull away from its colonial past, it needs to question, challenge, and uproot dominant mainstream perspectives to make way for Indigenous and Other ways of knowing in social work education.

Having discussed the mainstream concepts represented by the red leaves, we now discuss the concepts that support an allied approach. These are social justice, social action and self-reflection (to name a few), as represented by the black leaves. We believe an allied approach can help to bridge the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work education.

Social justice is described as an "organizing value of social work" (Swenson, 1998, p. 527). Importantly, the value of social justice "requires that practitioners pay careful attention to their own experiences of oppression and of privilege or domination" (p. 532). Van Soest (1995) argues that social justice involves three components: "legal justice, which is concerned with what a person owes to society; commutative justice, which is concerned with what people owe each other; and distributive justice, which is what society owes a person" (p. 1811). As a central value of social work education, social justice can help to inform an allied approach.

As discussed earlier, the process of self-reflection is "underpinned by a reflexive stance" (Fook, 2002, p. 43). "Critical reflection focuses on change in individuals and has been linked to an agenda for social change through collective action" (D'Cruz et al., 2007, p. 87). The purpose of reflective practice is to "close the gap between what is espoused and what is enacted" (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p. 24). In this way, self-reflection can be utilized to bridge the gap between theory and practice; between mainstream and Indigenous social work by transforming our social justice values into social action. This firm link between social justice, self-reflection, and action is useful in developing an allied approach.

Fook and Gardner (2007) also stress the importance of context within reflective practice, stating that "there needs to be a readiness to respond to what might be new or different about these contexts" (p. 25). They also suggest an "awareness of different perspectives…[and] an emphasis on a holistic approach…and the sorts of knowledge that support relevant practice in complex and unpredictable situations" (p. 26). An allied approach between Indigenous and mainstream social work now exists in some schools of social work but further challenge is needed to push the boundaries to a framework of decolonization.

The yellow leaves represent Aboriginal values that are beginning to be incorporated into social work curricula. These leaves represent concepts such as storytelling, sharing circles, wholism, and holistic methods of healing. The use of sharing circles in Indigenous cultures is a rich form of communicating and capturing an individual's experiences (Lavallée, 2009). Sharing circles demonstrate the power of

storytelling and has influenced mainstream practices such as narrative and art-based therapy. A healing journey may capture the benefits of being close to nature and elements which heal: "connecting to the land and earth, and using symbolism, such as holding a rock and or being close to soothing water" (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 137). The cultural practice of smudging, which involves the burning of sacred plants such as sage and sweetgrass, can also aid in cleansing a room, people, and/or objects (Lavallée, 2009). Such practices are empowering, and allow for "expressing oneself, establishing a connection with nature, engaging in traditions and participating in ceremonies demonstrates the resilience of Aboriginal people and resilience of Indigenous culture" (Sinclair et al., 2009, p. 138).

Our "social work tree" was created to uproot the colonial stronghold of Euro-Western perspective in mainstream social work and to make space for Aboriginal knowledge in the academy. As allies with Aboriginal people, what we strive for in institutions of education is a "synthesis" of knowledges, which Dei (2002) describes as:

> shifting to a restructured and re-constituted space where issues of knowledge content and physical representation are addressed in ways to acknowledge the multiplicity of human ideas [and] [a]n educational practice that leads to systemic change rather than a remedial patchwork of unsustained efforts. (p. 9)

We must continually be mindful that our role as allies is to work with Aboriginal people but ultimately, "Indigenous peoples must own their past, culture and traditions … and use Indigenous knowledge as a basis for contributing to the universal knowledge system" (p. 10). We can support a decolonizing framework in our classrooms by integrating critical, anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and anti-colonial perspectives in our curricula and programs until they become a way of life (Thomas & Green, 2007). As we let go of colonial frameworks in education, and embrace marginalized voices and perspectives, the social work profession will grow and flourish.

"(Up) rooting Social Work": Implications for Social Work Education

In this article, we discussed a collaborative arts-based project, which we have called a "social work tree." Through this metaphor, we have shown social work's past, present, and future, paying special attention to the colonial stronghold of Euro-Western knowledge systems in social work education, and suggest ways of moving forward with an allied approach that bridges the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work education.

Using art and the metaphor of a "social work tree," we have visually shown how social work education was deconstructed from its historical roots, powerful trunk, to the flourishing leaves of the tree. This arts-based approach allowed us to engage creatively and critically with the tensions, contradictions and complexities of social work history. The aim was to show how mainstream social work education has been influenced by colonialism and Euro-Western knowledge systems, to the exclusion of other voices and perspectives. A further aim was to make visible how mainstream social work education could benefit from integrating Aboriginal and other diverse perspectives into its curricula and program. Social work educators can play a critical role in challenging Eurocentric knowledge systems and create space for Aboriginal and Other knowledges to be integrated into social work curricula (Thomas & Green, 2007). Creating space for marginalized voices and perspectives is a challenge for the academy.

We resisted using dominant modalities of plain text for our critical deconstruction of social work education, and instead utilized shapes, colours, pictures, and textures to illustrate our ideas and vision of social work. Through our visual and critical analysis, we have shown the colonial stronghold of Euro-Western knowledge systems in social work education. We have also shown that the legacy of colonization continues to be a reality for Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Weaver, 1999; Thomas & Green, 2007; Sinclair et al., 2009), emphasizing a need for ongoing advocacy and resistance by Aboriginal people and allies. By making visible the roots of social work, we hope to uproot the colonial perspectives upon which social work education was built.

The concepts of respect, reciprocity, reflexivity, and resistance that are represented in the trunk of our "social work tree" illustrate our attempt to bridge the gap between mainstream and Indigenous social work education. These concepts can help us engage in a process of "decolonizing education" (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002). They can also be utilized as strategies for uprooting and resisting Eurocentric dominance in the academy and make way for marginalized and excluded voices and perspectives.

Having respect as a core value and principle in mainstream social work education can help to advance the profession's position against colonialism and safeguard against appropriation and misappropriation of Aboriginal knowledge in the academy. Reciprocity disrupts the mainstream discourse of "expert knowledge" (Freire, 1983) in social work education so that marginalized voices are acknowledge and valued. Both reflexivity and resistance aim to challenge social work education by requiring social workers to implicate the self in the work they do with people

(D'Cruz et al., 2007; Fook, 2002) and resist colonization and Eurocentric dominance in Western social service practices (Baskin, 2006; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair et al., 2009).

The leaves of our "social work tree" reflect our critiques, ideas and hope for the future of social work education. We used red leaves to represent mainstream social work, black leaves to support an allied approach, and yellow leaves to represent Aboriginal values that have begun to be incorporated into social work education. By letting go of certain concepts, theories, and practice approaches, we envision a future where Aboriginal and Other knowledges are acknowledged, respected, and valued in social work education.

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