BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN SETTLER SOCIAL WORKER ALLYSHIP AND INDIGENOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE

By

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ABSTRACT

The topic of social justice has been heavily discussed as of late. For decades, Indigenous Peoples have been at the forefront, fighting for resurgence, human rights and self-sovereignty. They are the true voices of their cause. As such, there have been many non-Indigenous groups who have decided to show their solidarity by engaging in allyship work. Non-Indigenous allyship work has, however, often times been misguided and oppressive to Indigenous communities. One group in particular, settler social workers, have engaged in many misguided and often oppressive forms of allyship through their work with Indigenous communities. This study aims to discuss the gaps in allyship work within the social work field, and how social workers can become better, more useful allies to Indigenous social justice. Based on a literature review of allyship work, a thematic analysis was conducted, analyzing various Indigenous academic works and Indigenous news reports surrounding the gaps in social work allyship. This study focused on three main areas of social work: the child and family services sector, social work academia and frontline social work. Analysis of these works demonstrated that the key themes surrounding social work allyship revolve around pushing for self-sovereignty, funding, the Indigenization of academia, the centering of Indigenous voices and action, and family reunification. On this basis, social workers should strive to learn, and engage in critical thinking, push for self, organizational, and structural accountability, self-education, and power-sharing.

Keywords: Indigenous social work, allyship, self-sovereignty, accountability, code of ethics

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of social justice is particularly prevalent during today's time of turmoil. Many social activist groups are taking to the streets, fighting for their rights to equality, ecological justice, reproductive justice, recognition, respect and in some cases, self-sovereignty. Although many individuals from the general population believe that these activist groups are exaggerating their struggles, or overly sensitive (Southcott, 2015), fighting for social justice is imperative to social change (Morley, 2016; Harris, 2006).

Indigenous communities in particular continuously engage in social justice, as a means to fight colonialism, and focus on Indigenous resurgence and self-sovereignty (Elliot, 2017). To ensure their voices are heard, many other non-Indigenous communities have banded together to provide solidarity and support (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005). Together, when allyship is done right, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples have managed to create incredible societal impacts that will hopefully progress the land we now call Canada towards a more peaceful relationship with Indigenous Peoples (e.g., ending birth alerts in hospitals, mandatory high school curriculums to include residential schools, etc.). Although these victories are significant, the entirety of the work is not done yet, and many Indigenous communities are calling upon others to do the work and show their support in meaningful ways (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005).

This paper will discuss allyship with Indigenous communities, starting by historically contextualizing the root of Indigenous issues (i.e., colonialism), followed by a literature review on allyship. This paper will then use a thematic analysis to analyze allyship and will present its findings as well as a discussion afterwards.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To contextualize the issues that contributed to the harms of Indigenous Peoples, it is useful to understand colonialism and colonization, and how it destroyed many of the reciprocal relations Indigenous people had to their culture, land and each other. The process of colonization overall required an attempt to eliminate Indigenous people (Paquet, 2016), their culture, identity and ways of traditional governance; "[…] colonialism and colonization led to the forceful disruption of traditional Aboriginal culture. Settler colonial laws, policies, practices, and structures systematically eroded socio-cultural practices that for generations had defined Aboriginal peoples" (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012). Eradication policies first included use of biological warfare against Indigenous people to eradicate the majority of the population (such as smallpox blankets). It then shifted to land theft and displacement, and forcing Indigenous Peoples off their traditional territory land into reserve systems, some of which have undrinkable water (Paquet, 2016; Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research, 2004). When elimination was not successful, colonization tactics moved more to assimilation and eradication of practices that made Indigenous people who they were. This included the outlawing of practices including "feasting and gifting rituals… singing, dancing, drumming, weaving, basket making, and carving" (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012), all of which were "simultaneously art, creative expression, religious practice, ritual models and markers of governance structures and territorial heritage, as well as maps of individual and community identity and lineage" (Muirhead & Leeuw, 2012). This was further advanced as residential schools were created by the Canadian government in partnership with Christianity and other Eurocentric systemic structures/ideologies to "kill the Indian out of the child" **(**Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research, 2004). Furthermore, by building residential schools, settlers eradicated accessibility to language, which is known to be vital within the

context of culture. Overall, this created a ripple effect, where values, culture, tradition, parenting, and language were not passed on to younger generations (Bear, 2010; Chambers, 2009). Furthermore, during the 1960s another form of cultural genocide presented itself as the 60s scoop (McGuire & Denis, 2019). This kickstarted a movement whereby Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes to be adopted by white families, often times illegally (McGuire & Denis, 2019). By doing this, many youth were stripped of their identities, and were further subjected to abuse (McGuire & Denis, 2019). Despite, however, countless attempts from the state to eradicate Indigenous existence, communities still stand strong, and still advocate and fight hard for their rights. Yet, such macro-level efforts of eradication leave scars, and are still being perpetuated today.

Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo (2003), noticed that high rates of mental health problems were present in many Aboriginal communities, most likely linked to colonialism, and government interventions (e.g., residential schools or the foster-care system), but governmental oppression has other impacts that stem beyond mental health.

Samson (2017), Simpson (2011) and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (2010) mention how Indigenous epistemology views bodies as connected to land; in other words, what happens to the land and the environment around us also affects our bodies and our communities. This means that the health of the land correlates to the health of Indigenous nations. Land provides sustenance, shelter, but also holds creation stories, spirits and language (Simpson, 2011; Simpson, 2001). Therefore, environmental violence perpetuated to the land further perpetuates violence to Indigenous Peoples and causes severe long-term negative effects such as lung disease, developmental delays, miscarriages, stillbirths, cancer and more (Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2010).

Furthermore, as a result of increased environmental violence, there are often many chronic social stressors from industry, mining and development. In fact, the introduction of extractive industries has resulted in increased sexual violence and sexual exploitation of Indigenous women and girls in many communities, missing and murdered Indigenous women (Zingel, 2019), higher rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, increased alcohol and drug abuse, and Indigenous youth suicide (Comack, 2018; Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2010).

The ways that industries and government carry out negotiations (or fail to), create disastrous conditions for Indigenous Peoples, which violate the right to health and reproductive justice. Environmental violence violates the rights of Indigenous Peoples to subsistence, spiritual and cultural survival, self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (Comack, 2018; Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2010). Indigenous Peoples, as the defenders of future generations, continue to vocalize opposition to many forms of contamination to their homelands, air and waters. However, consent and choice are almost never an option and attempts to discontinue said violence are too often ignored.

Therefore, a means of alleviating the effects of past and present government and colonialist devastation is by reinforcing ethnocultural identity, strengthening community integration and political empowerment (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo, 2003). As such, Indigenous communities still push and thrive despite all systemic attempts at eradication. In response to colonization and cultural genocide, multiple Indigenous grassroot social justice movements (e.g., Idle No More in 2012) have come full force to fight against colonization and protect Indigenous resurgence, over the past few decades. The topic of social justice is being heavily discussed recently, and many Indigenous Peoples are at the frontlines. Be that as it may, a common general misconception about colonization is that it is an “Indigenous problem” rather than a problem for

everyone (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Sinclair, Ashton & Bruyere, 2009; Alfred, 2005). Allyship, which will be later defined (see below), ensures that fighting colonization is viewed as a collective issue, and therefore must be addressed for the benefit of everyone.

Seeing as social justice is a "hot topic" right now, there is countless literature discussing allyship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people. The following sections of this paper will discuss allyship within Indigenous social justice movements, and their general recommendations for performing allyship duties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although Indigenous people are entirely capable of self-governance of their grassroot projects, and their lands (Mahmood, 2001), countless Indigenous and anti-oppressive scholars have commented on the impact of allyship especially within the context of Indigenous-led social justice movements. In fact, they have noted that there is strength in numbers and that only by engaging everyone, can colonialism truly be abolished (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005).

Although there have been some settlers and non-Indigenous NGOs who have expressed interest in being allies to such movements (Davis, 2010), there have been too many instances where they have inadvertently made things worse or further oppressed Indigenous people despite claiming good intentions (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Davis, Dennis & Sinclair, 2017; Davis, Hiller, James, Lloyd, Nasca & Taylor, 2017; Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Simpson, 2014; Coburn, 2013). Indigenous literature has demonstrated on numerous accounts their needs and how settlers must still understand their place within these movements as a way of ensuring they

are not further colonizing, or oppressing Indigenous Peoples, and especially that they do not adopt a white saviour mentality (DiAngelo, 2011). Being a good settler ally is more than intention, it is based on action. Davis (2010), discusses how the practice of reciprocity is vital to Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and alliances, reinforcing the notion of working together as a team rather than settlers taking the reins and doing what *they* think Indigenous Peoples need most (DiAngelo, 2011). Furthermore, as settler allies, it's important to recognize that beyond working *with* Indigenous communities and their grassroot projects, in the end Indigenous people are and should be the only ones who determine what is appropriate, and how we can ethically and respectfully engage in solidarity (Davis, Denis & Sinclair, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Dion & Dion, 2009). Dion (2010) mentions how settlers need to recognize that social justice is not a uniquely "native problem" since these necessary measures come from years of historical injustice imposed upon Indigenous Peoples. This does not mean, however, that settlers should be leading the frontlines. Rather, this means settlers need to understand their direct or indirect involvement in the problem, and then actively work with Indigenous Peoples to push back against colonial violence and injustice (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, Dennis & Sinclair, 2017; Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Coburn, 2013; Sefa Dei, 2013; Walia, 2013; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012). Carlson (2016) and Sium, Desai & Ritskes (2012), also mention that a large part of settler engagement in solidarity stems from recognizing how we benefit from colonialism and how we either directly or indirectly perpetrate it in our daily lives. That being said, recognizing this is only the first step. *Actions speak louder than words* is a popular saying which is particularly applicable in these instances where settlers need to learn to decolonize their beliefs, and ensure they remain focused on the issue at hand (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012; Dion & Dion, 2009). This means, ensuring that once that acknowledgement occurs, settlers and non-Indigenous people are not centralizing the issue around them (Carlson, 2016; Tuck & Yang,

2012). At the end of the day, this is an issue that settlers have imposed on Indigenous People, and Indigenous Peoples know exactly what their needs are given that they have been the ones targeted by colonial violence and have a deep-rooted understanding of all of its effects (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, Hiller, James, Lloyd, Nasca & Taylor, 2017; Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2014; Coburn, 2013; Sefa Dei, 2013; Walia, 2013). This is why as Sium, Desai & Ritskes (2012), state, holding a Western perspective when engaging in solidarity falls short of being useful. Settlers and colonial violence together have oppressed and disenfranchised Indigenous Peoples in ways we as settlers could never fully understand. Nevertheless, knowing and understanding this should not deter settler involvement from grassroot movements, and yet often times it does.

White fragility impacting proper allyship

Carlson (2016), Davis (2010) and Dion & Dion (2009), note how reflecting on involvement in colonial violence (even when it is indirect) has, in many cases, caused two streams of reactions: 1. white saviour engagement in grassroot projects and/or 2. denial, pushback/attack against involvement in colonial violence or of ever benefitting from colonial violence/practices.

Proulx (2018) and DiAngelo (2011) note that regardless of reaction 1 or 2, either stem from a place of white fragility which settlers must make the effort to be reflexive and critical of (Carlson, 2016). Although there is no standard definition of white fragility, many authors have discussed its components. Typically, white fragility is considered to be an aggressive or defensive response which white people have a tendency to express when confronted about issues (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017; Hines, 2016; DiAngelo, 2011). Often this defensive response implies a lack of accountability on their part, and a sense of being victimized by those who are

marginalized (Proulx, 2018; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017; Hines, 2016; DiAngelo, 2011). Proulx (2018) discusses how this sense of victimization is often what fuels such backlash in the face of policy/structural resistance; he mentions that this is because white people often do not see how their privileged position of power within a colonial society contributed to the comfort and political protection they have today (Proulx, 2018).

However, the literature notes that it is within our white fragile moments that we must learn to sit with the discomfort that is presented to us (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, Dennis & Sinclair, 2017; Davis, Hiller, James, Lloyd, Nasca & Taylor, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2014; Walia, 2013; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012; DiAngelo, 2011). Settlers have the privilege to choose when they are uncomfortable; meanwhile Indigenous Peoples do not (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2014). This means that as settlers trying to be allies, we must learn from Indigenous Peoples, as they are the ones who truly hold the knowledge as to how to decolonize their lands (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009). At any rate, it is not Indigenous Peoples' responsibility to teach us; this we must do ourselves, like reading literature *from* Indigenous scholars written *for* Indigenous people, and asking Indigenous Peoples if they need us and what they need from us, rather than assuming (Fortier, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Despite countless resources and literature explaining how to be an ally and why it is vital to Indigenous resurgence, people are still refusing to believe or to acknowledge these issues. Not only are reactions displayed as denial of Indigenous issues, but often times cross that boundary into becoming violent or threatening especially in the face of social justice movements. Those who focus on their white fragility, and those who remain silent about governments and corporate greed violating land and human rights, are complacent within the pillars of colonial society, and perpetrate colonial violence whether or not they choose to believe so.

Literature surrounding social work allyship

As social workers, we are mandated to engage in social justice for the benefit of those we serve (CASW, 2005). However, there are still gaps even within that mandate and within practice which put into question social work accountability. There has been an abundance of literature written by Indigenous scholars who have mentioned how the realm of social work research, although holding the intention of helping Indigenous literature to push for decolonization, often perpetuates it by continuing to define sovereignty and are studied through a Western lens (Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Simpson, 2014; Coburn, 2013; Sefa Dei, 2013). An example of this can be by centralizing the role of settlers within decolonizing practices or actions (Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014). Doing this can further perpetuate colonialist narratives and perspectives, and further both the white saviour complex many settlers adopt and the focus of white guilt as a means of retribution which steers away from learning how to sit with discomfort (DiAngelo, 2011). Although acknowledging discomfort and privilege are absolutely vital, Frontier (2017) and Smith (2014) mention that too often, settler research is focused on the theoretical practice of acknowledging privilege, which in turn becomes the political projects which can be used to absolve settlers from recognizing the relationship between theory and action (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012). In other words, rather than simply sit with the discomfort of privilege and focus research on this, research should be directed on actions *with* Indigenous people to dismantle and eradicate colonial violence, using platforms of privilege no matter how uncomfortable the task at hand may be (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, Dennis & Sinclair, 2017; Davis, Hiller, James, Lloyd, Nasca & Taylor, 2017).

There seems to be a gap in the literature in regard to turning allyship work into action especially within the realm of social work. Social work is a field that was developed by colonizers (Carlson, 2016) who have been (and in many ways still are) directly involved in

perpetuating colonial violence upon Indigenous Peoples (Carlson, 2016). Recognizing this, it is then difficult to uphold the ethical responsibility outlined in the Code of Ethics (2005), to support and partake in social justice which aims to dismantle oppressive systems. Furthermore, this is in addition to being a settler, whose very existence is proof of historical and ongoing colonial violence. Therefore, as a settler social worker, who wishes to unlearn colonial violence, and be an ally to Indigenous Peoples, I bear in mind this research question: How can settler social workers strive towards being better, more respectful and more useful allies to Indigenous communities in the face of Indigenous social justice?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this paper will draw upon the Ally model by P. A. Gibson (2014). Although the conception of the term ally had been previously discussed and recognized in various social justice settings, P.A. Gibson's Ally model extends this to the realm of social work. Although there are many definitions of what an ally is, Gibson (2014) uses two previous definitions. First, Gibson emphasizes Reason et al. (2005) definition that "Allies are members of dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based upon their social group membership". Second, Gibson (2014) emphasizes Anderson & Middleton (2011) definition that "an ally as encompassing anti-oppression action and valuing difference. Becoming an ally involves working toward ending oppression through a proactive and transforming experience of self-examination and critical thinking about one's social identities as they relate to multiple

memberships in minority and majority groups". As such, overall allyship titles include introspective work, and recognition of privilege.

The author takes inspiration from other works that discuss allyship in a way that categorizes it into three sections: (1) awareness and knowledge, (2) attitude/beliefs/feelings, and (3) action/skills (Gibson, 2014).

First, awareness and knowledge. This pertains to introspection put into action. Not only does one have to be aware of their own selves as individuals, but they must be aware of their social standing and how benefiting from one oppressive group automatically harms groups that do not benefit from the privileged group. The author extends this to the realm of social work by acknowledging that social workers have both a personal and professional obligation to work through their own personal biases in order to better serve individuals who identify with marginalized communities, when engaging with them professionally. This also means that we cannot separate the professional from the personal. If we do not sort through our own "inner demons" so to speak, our subconscious biases will find a way to overlap and present themselves within social work interventions.

Second, attitudes, beliefs and feelings. Gibson (2014) connects the fact that personal beliefs and feelings surrounding a social workers' individual/personal identity is vital to use for professional responsibility to understand culture and human behaviour. By doing this, social workers remain ethical in their line of work as it aims to focus on empathy and professional education of other cultures that may differ from their own.

Finally, action and skills are the last categorization for the ally model. Gibson (2014) argues that this last category is vital to allyship, as it puts awareness and feelings into action. Gibson (2014) argues that this is important for social work seeing that as a profession, it is established to be an action-oriented career. This means engaging in advocacy and prompting

systemic change in alliances with marginalized communities. This is significant because as Foster (2011) argues, social justice is a dichotomy – either we are working with it, or against it. Complacency in the face of social injustice inherently and automatically positions us to working against social justice. Furthermore, Edwards (2006) proclaims that allyship work and conceptualization is a process, arguing that intent behind allyship work always begins through self-interest (i.e., to protect loved ones), and then is moved to being motivated by guilt to finally reach the last phase of intent by true commitment to justice.

The ally model, in this case, is extremely pertinent to my subject and research question. Although social work ethics mandate us to engage in social justice, the process of allyship is both long-lasting and vital to the profession, seeing as Gibson (2014) earlier mentioned that social work in its own right is an action-oriented profession. Indigenous allyship work especially requires a lot of internal self-awareness, acceptance of living uncomfortably with our feelings (due to the fact that as settlers we are always benefiting from colonialism) and to utilize our awareness and feelings by taking action. Drawing from the Gibson (2014) ally model will be interesting to understand how social work can further take to action allyship work outlined by Indigenous people, to repair and rebuild the broken trust that has been brewed since colonialism's inception in the land that is now called Canada.

METHODS

The choice of methods for research is a critical step in the research process, as they are the tools which will truly help uncover solutions to the research question (Opoku, Ahmed, & Akotia, 2016). For this research project, I chose to conduct a qualitative thematic analysis of the

gaps inhibiting true social work solidarity with Indigenous populations and bridging them to allyship guidelines outlined by Anishinaabe communities.

Qualitative research is defined as the "collection and examination of nonnumerical data for the purpose of discovering underlying significance and patterns of relationships" (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010). Qualitative research is considered to be an inductive approach to research that aims to make sense of variables in their contexts (Lietz, & Zayas, 2010; Neuman, & Robson, 2017).

Qualitative studies are particularly valuable for researching poorly or unstudied themes and provide a flexibility to research and its participants in a way that is not possible in quantitative studies (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2012). For example, participants can share their own interpretations and analyses of their experiences seeing as they are not constrained by the fixed categorizations that are present within quantitative studies (Neuman et al., 2017; Babbie et al., 2010). As such, qualitative research allows the researcher to explicitly demonstrate the personalized understanding and perspective of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Thyer, 2012).

One of the most common ways to analyze qualitative research is through the use of a thematic analysis. "Thematic analyses serve to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes or key features of large data sets, which forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report" (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). The thematic analysis is considered flexible, accessible and easily modifiable to the needs of any study due to its theoretical freedom and limited prescriptions and procedures (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Once the data is collected, it can be assessed for similarities, themes, discrepancies, and convergences (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Thyer, 2012). This information can then allow the researcher to generate hypotheses, to be tackled more

thoroughly in order to develop generalized conclusions (Thyer, 2012). All in all, thematic analyses can help dive deeper into research questions pertaining to specific populations, spaces, or areas of practice, which can pave the way for future research in said domains (Thyer, 2012). In conclusion, qualitative data has the potential to better explore social activism, allyship and policy mobilization, than quantitative data collection (Thyer, 2012).

Why a thematic analysis?

As mentioned earlier, thematic analyses are flexible not only within their ability to be used in multiple research settings, but also since it allows researchers to use a variety of texts or data sets (which will be useful for me as I plan on using a variety of data). Furthermore, a thematic analysis is also flexible within its coding (Braun & Clarke, 2012). When coding, the researcher can not only compare themes but also establish relationships between those themes. As such, thematic analyses allow the researcher to construct theories that stem from grounded data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Moreover, one of the key reasons why thematic analyses are so beneficial to this research study is its given importance to participants' perceptions, experiences and feelings (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Although this study will not have any direct contact with participants, using a thematic analysis on predetermined texts related to my topic of allyship, will allow me to account for any publicly shared testimonies – a factor that is imperative when discussing Indigenous Peoples' perceptions and feelings towards Indigenous – non-Indigenous allyship relationships.

Finally, thematic analyses allow the researcher to have access to a vast set of data within a reasonably short period of time, which would not be the case should the research have been conducted with active participants. Given that the time frame for this research paper was only a

few months, a thematic analysis was the most viable option, given how large scale the themes and topics are within this paper.

Types of documents used, and coding

To realize the qualitative thematic analysis for this project, a systematic search was conducted of 2 major Indigenous news outlets (notably APTN National News and The Tyee), of which 15 news coverage content was analyzed. The news coverage content used ranged from podcasts, to public conference videos (found on YouTube and Vimeo) and written news articles. One document in particular (i.e., allyship guidelines), however, was found through a general Google search, and was not affiliated with any news source.

Furthermore, the use of ProQuest enhanced this research project by searching for literature which discussed topics outlined in the news coverages. The literature and the news coverage content are then used together to have a more holistic approach to the topic (i.e., relying on direct Indigenous testimony and on Indigenous Social Work and anti-oppressive literature). While using ProQuest's "advance search", keywords were used to discover appropriate literature to use.

Keywords used were the following:

- Indigenous allyship OR allyship AND
- social work OR case worker OR intervention AND
- Indigenous social work AND
- Indigenous social justice AND
- Indigenous child welfare AND
- Frontline Indigenous social work AND
- Social work allyship OR social work protests

A particular emphasis on Indigenous literature was used, as a means to ensure this paper centralizes the voices of Indigenous Peoples. Academic literature in this case consisted of academic journals and books.

When researching news coverage, the key word criteria were a little more flexible. The selection of coverage was often chosen through the title of the report, focusing on words that correspond with key themes of this paper such as: accountability, birth alerts, child welfare, Indigenous Social Work, social justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, self-sovereignty, funding and allyship.

Finally, for one section of the paper, public university websites were used to collect mission statements, program information and course titles/descriptions. While reading through these websites, key words being searched for were: social justice, Indigenous, and Indigenization.

Throughout all collected data, key themes were noted and recorded on a separate document and then analyzed for thematic patterns and relationships.

Presentation of my analysis

As it pertains to my research, using a qualitative thematic analysis, I was able to identify commonalities and discrepancies, and generate hypotheses pertaining to allyship between Indigenous communities and social work, within an Indigenous social justice context. My paper shall present my analysis of key themes found within the variety of literature, separated into three main sections: allyship within Child and Family Services (CFS), allyship within social work academia, and allyship within frontline social work. Once the findings have been presented, a discussion is introduced.

Limitations

Although a thematic analysis has many advantages within the context of this paper, it should be of note that, as with any method selection, there are limitations that should be addressed. The first, and main, limitation regarding a thematic analysis involves reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Seeing as the data collection involves a vast variety of data, its interpretation is heavily dependent on the researcher. Seeing as researchers have their own inner perspectives and biases, interpretation of data may differ from one researcher to another which may call into question the reliability of the interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The second limitation is in reference to the fact that thematic analyses may miss variating data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). What this means is that thematic analyses tend to focus on the common themes at hand, which in turn may force the researcher to discard or miss less common themes found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The third limitation pertains to the fact that since thematic analyses can be so flexible, focus within the data can be difficult, causing ideas or relationships between variables to be unclear (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Finally, the fourth limitation of a thematic analysis, pertains to the fact that it does not allow the researcher to make claims about language use within the data, ultimately leaving the analysis to focus on the context and deeper meaning of the data (Neuman et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Furthermore, limitations surrounding my research study can and should be noted beyond an academic level, and into a personal level. Seeing as I am a soon-to-be graduate student, regardless of the amount of academic preparation and research time I have spent on this project, there is always a gap between application of practice, and true practice (i.e., field work). Seeing as I am not yet out in the field (outside of practicums) I recognize that I am still learning and that no matter how much I may believe I fully understand the scope of the issues at hand, I am limited in this way. I tried to account for this by focusing on the accounted or published experiences of

families and individuals who have directly engaged with, or have experiences with, social work and its case workers, however, as always there are two sides to every story and I recognize that I am not fully able to account for all policies or human intent. Rather, the aim of this study is to spark a conversation for better allyship practice with Indigenous communities and families in the hopes of shedding light that whatever the reason for current practice may be, clearly there are still gaps in application that should be reconsidered with those communities/families/individuals, so that better practices can come out of it.

Finally, another personal limitation must be accounted for. I recognize myself as being a settler who directly benefits from the system and I am in no way a spokesperson or expert on the diverse and complex needs of a settler-Indigenous relationship, especially not in a Social Work context. As such, I recognize that not only being an outsider limits my understanding of what communities need or want in terms of settler social worker-Indigenous community relationships, but that seeing as communities are not homogenous, the information I have found may not apply to every community's needs or expectations.

RESULTS

Seeing as social work is such a vast field, attempting to discuss allyship within Social Work cannot be done unless discussed within specific contexts. To accommodate this, this paper will be divided into three main sections: allyship within the Child and Family Services sector, allyship within social work academia, and allyship within frontline social work. The aim of this section is to present the gaps that Indigenous Peoples have mentioned within social work, and to outline how they demonstrate lack of proper allyship.

Allyship in Children and Family Services

It is without a doubt that one of the main interactions between social workers and Indigenous communities is through the Child and Family Services (CFS) sector. Indigenous youth and families are disproportionately represented within this area of social work (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020), seeing as throughout the land that is now called Canada the Indigenous population accounts for 3.4% of the population meanwhile it accounts for at least 20% within the foster care and adoption system (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020). In Ontario alone, Indigenous youth are documented to be represented in CFS ten times higher than in the general population. However it has been noted that many youth are neglected within the system and therefore go either undocumented or unreported which means that this number might be under-representative of the true rate of Indigenous youth within the system (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020; APTN News, 2019; Hyslop, 2018).

Often times, when literature contemplates or acknowledges discrimination within the CFS sector, it is in reference to the 60s scoop (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005). Many Indigenous families have noted that discrimination and colonialism within the CFS sector are still alive and well today, except that now it is now known as the Millennium Scoop (APTN News, 2019). The reason for this is that many families have reported that they are still being discriminated against and are having their children forcibly removed from their families during this current millennium era. Although there have been some strides to try and address these issues, there is still much room for improvement.

Birth alerts, for example, in some parts of the land now called Canada are still in effect. Birth alerts are a colonial practice that Social Work and hospitals have used in so many cases to alert CFS when an Indigenous mother/family has given birth to a new child (Harris, 2020; APTN

News, 2019; Arce, 2019). The practice is not only detrimental to both the family and the child, it is also in many cases discriminatory as the rates of child apprehensions through the use of birth alerts are disproportionately affecting Indigenous families, compared to any other racial identity (Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020). Although the intent is to rehome the child as a means of "protecting" them from harm from the family, often times, these birth alerts are in responses to previous or outdated familial contexts and penalize women especially, for conditions that were either out of her control or are no longer relevant. Many examples of this exist, but two prominent examples from an APTN News broadcast (2019) come to mind:

In 2019, a woman in Manitoba lost custody of her child hours after giving birth, due to the fact that she was previously in an abusive relationship. Her current partner has children from a previous partnership, and the couple have access to partial custody of his children without any involvement with CFS. Yet, their son was taken away from them mere hours after she gave birth. Whenever the couple have reached out to try and find out fully, the reasons why they cannot gain back custody of their child, the case workers claim they can't reveal that information due to privacy policies. Rather, their only access to their child is through weekly visitations. Understandably upset, the partner expressed his anger to the agency via email, by requesting clarification in regard to the apprehension, and by naming the situation as equivalent to a kidnapping. Following this, the agency decided to revoke both of their visitation rights, claiming that the partner is uncooperative and resistant. This is all despite the fact that the mother has demonstrated that she is responsible (given that she has direct access to the father's children from a previous partnership), and this is despite the fact that she has removed herself from the previous abusive relationship, 7 years prior. The battle for custody is still ongoing (APTN News, 2019).

In a different case involving CFS, a woman in BC lost custody of her children in 2017 through a birth alert, because child protection workers claimed she was neglectful after having been bedridden in the hospital during her pregnancy. Despite the children being in the care of a trusted family member, they claimed that she put her children in harm's way by not being present physically with them. Approximately ten years prior to her most recent pregnancy, she too had been in an abusive relationship, however, she is no longer tied or involved with him in any way. Pregnant with twins, she experienced pregnancy complications (i.e., why she was bedridden in the hospital for a month). Unfortunately, one of the twins died in the womb and the agency ended up blaming her for the stillborn (claiming that stress or environment killed him). An autopsy report, however, proves this claim to be wrong. Medical files note that the baby died naturally, and that it was by no means the fault of the mother. Despite this, the agency has still not allowed her to gain back custody of her children, claiming her to be an unfit mother. This battle for custody is also still ongoing (APTN News, 2019).

These examples are only a sample of a long list of rehoming children based on what appears to be unfounded claims and reasoning, using birth alerts. Although Ontario has very recently (July 2020) banned birth alerts from taking effect within hospitals (Harris, 2020), there is still no clear determination what this will mean for families who have been affected by birth alerts in the past. Families have noted that tactics for birth alerts have been manipulative, and in many cases lead to children getting ripped away from their families when the child is only a few days (or sometimes only a few hours) old. This is especially distressing for mothers, especially if there is no true perceived threat to the baby's health or safety (APTN News, 2019; Auger, 2012). Beyond the fact that this is distressing to Indigenous families, it is also a direct reflection of how social workers' involvement in child apprehensions are a direct representation of how social work is used to push neoliberalist ideals and upkeep a settler state (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

Paralleling child apprehensions to the extractive resources industry, Preston (2017) coins the term "racial extractivism" which is used to portray how the racialization of apprehensions is directly engaged with the forcible removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands to make way for capitalist projects, while simultaneously perpetuating harmful stereotypes (e.g., lazy, wasteful, etc.) to validate their actions. Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) further explore this by noting that social workers play an active role in perpetuating the settler state by serving a dual purpose. On the one hand, social workers serve:

> "to delegitimize Indigenous practices of caring and social support through the imposition of a professional class of social service providers to 'help' the community adjust to the new economic context and as an agent of removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities under the guise of a humane (and perhaps benevolent) activity for those people who bear the brunt of the social consequences of increasing industrial development in their communities. These actions are often framed as a response to crises that Indigenous communities are facing due to dispossession and colonial violence, because their home territories are desired by Canada's resource extraction industries" (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019, p. 443).

Although many social workers most likely do not consciously act out of a mindful desire to pave way to extractive resources, it does not dismiss the fact that social work as a profession when regarding Indigenous relations is inherently violent and merits scrutiny and reform.

Furthermore, as noted within the first birth alert case, privacy policies add another layer of distress for families, especially those still struggling for custody following a birth alert, or a flag from the CFS ministry. Although privacy policies were originally put in place to protect children in custody from their abusive contexts, many families have noted that there is a gap in the use of these policies (APTN News, 2019). Many families noted they are penalized when they ask too many questions, get tone policed and usually end up being determined as non-compliant or resistant to cooperation with their case workers (APTN News, 2019; Hyslop, 2018). The use of privacy policies to keep families in the dark is often times explained as a way of upkeeping

safety, however, as Auger (2012) notes, forcibly removing and rehoming children into unfamiliar families who are often not of the same cultural background, can be detrimental to both the child and the mother. In fact, recommendations surrounding placing children into the homes of extended family is actually deemed beneficial to all involved, and is culturally sensitive to many Indigenous communities who view extended family as being equally important to the process of raising a child (Auger, 2012; Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). However, in order to ensure care and support to families, pre- and post-natal support would be incredibly useful (APTN News, 2019).

As with many Indigenous programs with CFS services, there is a lack of pre- and post-natal support programs that help Indigenous families have access to culturally specific care. This means that more children end up being put in the system rather than staying within their families due to social workers' inherent beliefs that Indigenous families are unable to support their children (Hyslop, 2018). By implementing Indigenous run services that would help women and families ensure proper care and protection of their children, before apprehension was executed, the number of Indigenous children being unrightfully put in the system would lower (Hyslop, 2018). In this case, this would be a question of focusing funding on preventative measures rather than on post-apprehension services. Although there is talk about shifting the focus on preventative services, and family reunification, little to no action has been taken in any province (APTN News, 2019; Hyslop, 2018; Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009).

Ironically, in the spirit of transparency, Indigenous families now are being advised to document actions or any type of "proof" of good parenting, in some cases, even before they give birth (APTN News, 2019). What qualifies as "good parenting" often lies within Eurocentric qualifications such as taking specific parenting classes, and asking their families and peers to write recommendation letters (APTN News, 2019). Colonial perspectives regarding what

qualifies as good parenting is what started cultural genocide, the implementation of residential schools and the loss of status in the first place, and demonstrate further gaps within the child welfare system that must be addressed (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011).

Gaps like these are further demonstrated by the countless accounts of Indigenous youth facing abuse within their foster, group or adoptive homes (APTN News, 2019; Hyslop, 2018). In the spirit of wanting to value child protection, many Indigenous youth still end up being unsafe. Of course, that is not always the case; there are many non-Indigenous families that treat their adopted or foster child with love. However, many Indigenous families have advocated for so long that there should be put more emphasis on keeping children within families when the child's mother is not yet ready to support her child (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011). Not only does this increase the well-being of Indigenous families who value family support from members outside of the immediate family (i.e., mother and father), but it also ensures that the child in question is not thrown into a broken system that has far too often neglected to protect them and support their needs (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). Although lately some CFS services within Ontario have started to take note of this, there are still many children within the system that have not been reunited with their families (Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020).

In Ontario CFS uses a local needs-based funding approach, meaning that funding is based on the local needs of the area and the number of children in care. They have, however, allocated a separate Aboriginal fund for Indigenous youth who are engaged in the system, but this comes with its own gaps in practice. For example, Indigenous youth's needs differ from white youth.

> "The Commission's visits to CASs across the province substantiated the view that mainstream CASs providing services to Aboriginal children and youth face several

> additional costs. Some of these costs stem from requirements in the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) relating to notification of bands and other matters. Some of these costs arise from the importance of ensuring appropriate cultural awareness of staff and providing enriched cultural programs for Aboriginal children and youth. Other requirements relate to the complexity of stresses and circumstances facing Aboriginal families." (Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare, 2011, p. 26).

As previously mentioned, numbers for Indigenous youth involved in the system are underrepresented (Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020). Therefore, it seems difficult to implement this type of funding when we cannot account for who is agency engaged and where agency-engaged youth are located within the system. This is a serious issue of neglect which needs to be addressed as this means that insufficient levels of care and support is given to them (Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2020), This issue is also represented within a context of Indigenous children being rehomed to white families or other non-Indigenous families. In these cases, many Indigenous children tend to get raised by the culture of those who have adopted or fostered them and may not be qualifying for the Aboriginal local-based funding despite the fact that many still encounter racism, throughout their life. This means that these cases where rehomed youth may not directly identify as Indigenous due to being raised in a non-Indigenous home, are not being given access to culturally specific resources that helps them navigate and work through their experiences as being seen as Indigenous by society despite not necessarily having been raised as Indigenous (Forester, 2020).

Even more shocking is the fact that a 2016 Canadian Human Rights tribunal report found that the land that is now called Canada has been purposefully underfunding on-reserve child welfare services. 93% of the Ontario child welfare funding comes from the federal government. This means that according to the report, approximately 400 million dollars has been lacking in

northern-Ontario alone (Forester, 2020). Although the federal government has taken on a promise of being called into action and has therefore created Bill C-92 in January 2020, there is still a lack of understanding as to how this exactly will change the way things are run now (Forester, 2020). Bill C-92 claims that there shall be Indigenous jurisdiction of child welfare in Indigenous services (Forester, 2020). Although there is some positive feedback in response to this bill, claiming that this is a step in the right direction, it is unclear in many areas including funding and how they will choose to make up for the lost funding in the past, and how this will be implemented for family reunification (APTN News, 2020). Furthermore, the new legislation uses vague terms such as the "child's best interest", yet not actually acknowledging or claiming what that truly means (Forester, 2020; Hyslop, 2018). As one news report mentioned, often times judges and social workers determine what a child's "best interest" is on their own upbringing, and undermine cultural differences in child welfare (APTN News, 2020). This means that this bill does not, once again, address the underlying issue surrounding child apprehension in the first place (i.e., colonialism). Furthermore, many social workers have claimed that they do not actually know how to implement the new legislation into practice, meaning that there is a lack of education surrounding it (Forester, 2020). Untrained staff are a large issue in many of the cases surrounding on-reserve CFS incidences (Harris, 2006). Harris (2006) notes, for example, that many social workers do not feel prepared to deal with crisis situations on reserves, as their training never fully accounted for the full complexity of the effects of colonialism, and how to best support an Indigenous person using more holistic approaches. Therefore, the fact that this is not addressed does not positively contribute to the current situation. Beyond this, the fate of Indigenous youth who are not involved with Indigenous CFS agencies, still remain in question. By these standards, this means that the federal and provincial government still have jurisdiction

over those particular youth and their families, who have, in many cases, been subjected to abuse and neglect within the system.

> "The bill fails to affirm exclusive First Nation jurisdiction over our children and implies that non-Indigenous governments can determine outcomes for Indigenous children," Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says in a February press release. "This legislation does recognize the need for children in care to maintain strong connections to their communities, but ultimately it continues to enforce a status quo system that can override First Nation jurisdiction." (APTN News, 2020).

Another concern is that this bill is just another way of legally being able to claim neglect on Indigenous services and those involved with the services (Blackstock, 2020). Despite it being passed as a jurisdiction, the actual implementation of such jurisdiction, and funding are not properly defined nor outlined (APTN News, 2020). The land now called Canada is still an imperial colonial state. Although giving jurisdiction over is a step in the right direction, it still does not take accountability for all the past and current wrongdoings (Forester, 2020).

Pon, Gosine & Phillips (2011) mention that part of the problem when discussing child welfare is the lack of contextualization of historical (and current pervasive) trauma of Indigenous Peoples. When social workers forget the history and reality of racism and colonialism, perspectives are thus skewed to view the land now known as Canada as being one that is fair, tolerant and just, despite the reality of racism (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011). By promoting reminders of this reality, social workers are better equipped to challenge and criticize the disproportionality of Indigenous youth engaged in CFS services. This would especially be true because discussions would then not only be pinpointing the existence of discrimination within CFS, but also be pinpointing the concrete tools in which discrimination and colonialism persist (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011).

Furthermore, Pon, Gosine & Phillips (2011) note that another issue involves the lack of power-sharing within CFS agencies. "The notion of power-sharing encompasses further the idea

of creating democratic agencies and organizations where service users play a key role in programming and making administrative decisions" (p. 398). By allowing service users to play a more active role within CFS agencies, power imbalances are levelled out, and true support is promoted. This is because, by doing so, service users are considered trusted experts about their personal situations and are able to affirm their culturally sensitive needs, which may not be considered or known to the assigned social worker. The gap in power-sharing is further demonstrated through the privacy policies, mentioned earlier. By abusing privacy policies, social workers not only deepen the power imbalance that is present between them and the agency engaged families, but it is also used as a weapon to keep families in the dark, unable to have an active role in the reunification process. The idea of power-sharing, however, is not limited to within agency encounters. Rather, Auger (2012) discusses the role that Indigenous communities should play when reviewing policies and programs, noting that Indigenous Peoples know what is best for their communities no matter what colonialism has tried to teach otherwise. This would also mean that relationships would be built as it is the foundation for collaboration (Auger, 2012), and these relationships would improve the quality of child care at every level (i.e., macro, meso, micro levels) since it would require recognition of privilege, historical and cultural awareness and self-reflection (Auger, 2012).

Finally, Pon, Gosine & Phillips (2011) note the importance of self-reflexivity when working with CFS, and notes that this too seems to be a lacking key component of ethical social work. "Self-reflexivity demands of practitioners an ongoing consideration of how values, biases, social differences, and power relations affect their relationships with service users as well as interactions between service users and the organization" (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011). By doing so, social workers are forced to reflect upon how they engage in daily colonial practices, and to reflect on their own actions and why they practise social work the way they do. Although

it is difficult to properly account how often or persistent lack of self-reflexivity in social work practice may be, many families who are engaged with CFS services have testified that this is a consistent issue (APTN News, 2019; Hyslop, 2018).

Allyship in social work academia

Academia is one of the most influential systems, as it directly relates to distribution and interpretation of knowledge. For the realm of social work, the execution and content of material, directly affects how future social workers engage with their service users. Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) mention that pedagogy and its academic institutions are one of the main perpetrators of colonialism.

Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) and Harris (2006) note that one of the main issues surrounding social work education is that the emphasis on Eurocentric perspectives is still entirely prominent within academia. This means that once social work students have graduated, their main training and understanding of their professional identities and responsibilities surrounding care, and engagement with any community (including Indigenous communities) is based on colonial perspectives. As well, there is either less or no focus on decolonization, social justice and Indigenous perspectives and self-sovereignty (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009; Harris, 2006). Although many Schools of Social Work do incorporate some classes surrounding the specific Indigenous issues within the field, their focus of the majority of course content relies exclusively on colonial perspectives. By doing so, schools effectively otherize Indigenous Social Work as a subsection of Eurocentric Social Work, despite it being an entirely legitimate social work practice and doctrine (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). In the book written by Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009), Baikie (2009) noted that by doing so, it still promotes hierarchies of

supremacy, because it presents Indigenous Social Work as a subsection of Eurocentric Social Work.

> "Indigenous-centred social work moves Indigenous practices out of the localized and disconnected while still accounting for both the global diversity of Indigenous peoples and their distinct ways of social helping. It considers collectively shared experiences among Indigenous populations, along with knowledges and practices that are either similar and or at least transferable across and between Indigenous population. […]. From an Indigenous-centred perspective, whether or not a knowledge or skill is authentic is largely irrelevant. What is more important is that a nation is open to the exchange of ideas and experiences and makes critical and conscious choices about what is locally relevant, culturally consistent and politically empowering". (Baikie, p. 50)

This means that Indigenous Social Work is at its core, made by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people and is also in many regards focused on social justice (but not exclusively) (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). By othering Indigenous knowledge or tokenizing Indigenous Social Work knowledge within a Eurocentric curriculum, it enforces the ideas that it does not have as much value or practical validity for application (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009).

Even more so, the question surrounding the organizational practice of academia within this new Indigenization of Social Work is a topic meriting discussion. The University of Ottawa has academic requirements for evaluating and teaching its students; however, these requirements stem from a colonial academic perspective. Harris (2006) mentions that one of the key recommendations surrounding decolonizing academia is to think outside of the box and promote more Indigenous practices regarding teaching (e.g., practices of teaching which do not reinforce hierarchies of power between teacher and student, or single/linear ways of teaching like lecturing).

Schools of Social Work are various across the land now called Canada. In Ontario specifically, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service workers records 14

schools that they acknowledge as holding a Social Work degree of some kind (i.e., ranging from BSW to a PhD in Social Work). Out of the 14 schools, 3 schools offered a Bachelors of Social Work (BSW) only (Algoma University, Trent University and Laurentian University which holds in itself two separate schools of Social Work), 5 schools offered a BSW and Masters of Social Work (MSW) option (Lakehead University, Ryerson University, University of Waterloo, Western University and Wilfrid Laurier University), 5 offered BSW, MSW and PhD in Social Work (Carleton University, McMaster University, University of Windsor, York University and University of Ottawa although the BSW is viewed as an attached specialization to a Social Services degree), and 1 offered MSW and PhD only (University of Toronto).

Upon looking up the general information about the programs, it is clear that all programs have their own unique strengths and are most likely deemed fine schools to attend. However, as Davis (2010) and Dion & Dion (2009) mentioned, Social Work began soon after colonization began. As I discovered in one of my classes, the School of Social Work at the University of Ottawa was in fact one of the schools that trained the oblates for residential schools. Although many schools of Social Work across Ontario have begun to attempt to take steps at reconciliation, there is still much left to do.

By looking into the social work curriculums offered within Ontario, it was clear that although some schools based their programs on Indigenous Social Work (or are at least in the process of doing so), the majority either tokenized Indigenous knowledge by providing one or two classes (which are not always mandatory), or did not mention Indigenous populations and knowledge whatsoever within their curriculum[1].

[1] It should be of note that York University's web page was both exceedingly private and also dysfunctional (i.e., some sections of the website were under maintenance), therefore I cannot account for how York University engages with Indigenous material/knowledge. For this purpose I will not be including York for this section.

BSW level

At the BSW level, Algoma University, Laurentian University and Lakehead University were the only Ontario schools of Social Work who outlined that they possessed an Indigenized version of their School of Social Work explicitly. It is in this way unsurprising that each of these universities are located in Northern Ontario, where there is a higher concentration of Indigenous communities (notably Anishinaabe, Métis, and Cree communities, to name a few). Being a student of the University of Ottawa however, I am aware that Indigenizing the School of Social work is currently in the works. Interestingly, McMaster University had a main generalist BSW program that offered an option to specialize in its "Indigenous pathways", in addition to their usual curriculum, offering in this way a sort of middle ground between Eurocentric perspectives and Indigenous perspectives. This means that approximately five out of twelve Ontario bachelors of social work programs offer (or will offer) some kind of Indigenized social work curriculum.

As such, four out of twelve Ontario social work programs (i.e., Carleton University, Trent University, Ryerson University and University of Waterloo) mentioned or included one or two classes, but focused primarily on traditional Eurocentric perspectives of social work. It should be of note, however, that three out of these four Universities outlined in their mission statement that they ensure putting a particular focus on social justice within their courses. Therefore Indigenous experience may be included within those courses, however, they are once again seen as an alternative to other perspectives.

Finally, the three remaining schools (i.e., Western University, University of Windsor, and Wilfrid Laurier University) have no mention of Indigenous perspectives or knowledge being introduced or discussed within any classroom setting. It is perhaps unsurprising that each of these universities are located at some of the most southern regions of the province.

MSW level

At the MSW level, the University of Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier University are the only two Schools of Social Work that offer an Indigenized social work curriculum. This means that 2/11 schools who offer an MSW program, are focusing on Indigenous social work knowledge and practice within the province of Ontario.

As such, 4/11 schools currently offer a variation between 1-3 classes (most of which are electives) at the MSW level: Carleton University, Ryerson University, University of Ottawa, and Lakehead University. It is ironic that Lakehead University does not seem to offer an Indigenized master's program despite offering this at the bachelor's level. It is of note, however, that nearly all of the remaining schools of Social Work that do not have any mention of Indigenous social work knowledge or practice, do outline some classes that focus on social justice and therefore may include Indigenous perspectives there, although this is not specifically outlined in their course descriptions. The University of Waterloo remains as the only MSW program that does not mention any Indigenous nor social justice focused course work; rather its program is health related exclusively (which is unique in its own right).

PhD level

Finally, at the PhD level, there are no Indigenized Schools of Social Work programs in Ontario, nor are there any schools that offer classes focusing on Indigenous issues or perspectives. This, however, may be due to the fact that PhDs tend to be more research focused and do not offer a wide variety of courses for participation within the first years of PhD. That being, the themes still remain whereby we are faced with the fact that the standard is in itself heavily colonially influenced.

This means that as we go up the educational ladder, the less Indigenous focused we become: 5/13 schools offer an Indigenized program at some level, and Western and Windsor are the only two schools in Ontario that have absolutely no mention of Indigenous focused work within their programs at any level. Although this may be due to where the schools are located, it is important to note that Indigenous individuals are not exclusive to the north of Ontario. Tyendinaga for example is a Mohawk reserve close to Belleville, and many Indigenous Peoples live in urban city centers such as Ottawa. By not having any form of inclusive social work programs for Indigenous Peoples in the south, we are limiting accessibility to those students and we are not engaging in the fight to recognize that Eurocentric perspectives are not and should not be seen as the foundation or the standard of social work practice. I recognize that issues surrounding funding and registration may arise; however, I have not found any tell-tale signs that action attempts or discussions have begun.

Morley (2016) mentions that one way to begin focusing on Indigenous centred issues within social work academia would be to ensure that there is strong focus within social work programs on social activism, even if discussed more broadly. Morley (2016) discusses how this would include broad topics such as neoliberalism as well as more practical or micro-level topics such as grassroot projects that focus on resisting dominant social forces. With this in mind, in order to ensure full retention and understanding of the way to better professionally engage with Indigenous individuals after graduation, the Social Work field needs to wholeheartedly value Indigenous Social Work (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009).

Indigenizing social work academia is one of the main ways that pedagogy can be an active social justice ally to Indigenous communities, seeing as it would practise decolonization, Indigenous resurgence and promote self-determination (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011). Harris (2006), for example, notes how typical classroom settings within pedagogy reinforce colonial

ideals by pushing for a hierarchy between teachers and students (i.e., by having one person who is in charge of lecturing their course material and having the rest of the class listen quietly). They note that instead what would be more beneficial would be to allow classrooms to have more of an interactive method of teaching where students would be equally responsible to teach and to learn from each other, as well as the teacher to learn from the students. The author notes that by doing so, schools would already be in the process of moving towards are more decolonized model of pedagogy, which could perhaps open discussions for Indigenizing schools.

That being said, even the creation of Indigenized schools of social work can pose its own challenges. In my own experience, when I was participating in the Indigenizing of the University of Ottawa's Social Work Program Committee, it was noticed that the University would sometimes impose criteria that limit accessibility to the hiring of Indigenous faculty. For example, in order to be eligible to be hired as a faculty member, the position required the individual to hold a PhD in their own respective research. Although this is not to say that there are no Indigenous PhD scholars, it does limit the hiring pool and effectively leaves out many qualified and knowledgeable individuals who may not have had the means or the opportunity to acquire a PhD, for various reasons many of which can be by direct or indirect result of colonial violence.

Although Indigenizing schools of social work is vital to the decolonization process, due to the fact that it engages in the revitalization of Indigenous methods for care, another author points out a key gap within social work pedagogy.

> "Education, in its intent, must create spaces to inspire the student to become a critical thinker facing a volume of knowledge and invites the process of evaluation and analysis of this knowledge in order to create a desire to be representative of change and transformation. To reproduce knowledge without question brings a dangerous conformity to past practices and is the ideology that maintains colonialism in education which transpires in society. This is no more evident than in the past epidemic of Indigenous children coming into care. Layers of

> colonialism need to be understood before the process of decolonization can begin" (DeGrace & McBain, 2019: p. 35).

It is without a doubt that one of the main goals of university is to teach its students how to become critical thinkers. However, critical thinking within the context of the perpetuation of colonial violence within social work education and its practical engagement with Indigenous communities is often times left out (DeGrace & McBain, 2019). As noted earlier, most social work schools within the Ontario region do not put a large focus on Indigenous Social Work, nor the particular complexities involving social work with Indigenous communities. Critical thinking is vital not only to all areas of life, but particularly within this profession and within social justice (DeGrace & McBain, 2019). The particular emphasis without question on Eurocentric training and practices avoid in this way critical thinking about why it is viewed as the ultimate foundation rather than as an equal option to Indigenous Social Work. Furthermore, by not pushing for critical thinking in regard to settler social worker-Indigenous community relationships, key social work responsibilities can go by unnoticed. Many schools and textbooks, for example, discuss the history of social work in an incomplete way (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Many schools don't discuss how in 1951, during the revision of the *Indian Act*, social workers were allotted the key responsibilities previously allocated to Indigenous agents such as child welfare, general welfare, adult education and so on (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

> "From this point on, the profession of social work has become a central player in the settler colonial policies of Canada, adapting and reformulating its role in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their territories through a series of strategic shifts in policy and protocols, including in the most recent shift towards a politics of liberal recognition and reconciliation" (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019: p. 442).

Omitting such knowledge from curriculums further perpetuates the passivity that many settler social workers adopt, complacent within the system which still continues to push for a

settler state (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Without the push for critical thinking of the field, and of settler history, it is thus more difficult to advocate to social workers, why pushing for Indigenous self-sovereignty and social justice is absolutely imperative.

As DeGrace & McBain (2019) noted earlier, by failing to push for critical thinking of our pedagogy (and all other social work domains), room is left for good intentioned practices that end up being more harmful than beneficial. A good example of this is pan-indigenizing social work and cultural appropriation of Indigenous Social Work within existing programs. Baikie (2009) mentions that one of the ways that colonial violence still remains complicit within all aspects of our work (but especially academia) is the fact that so many institutions lump "Indigenous" as one whole identity, rather than seeing it for what it truly is: diverse. Examples like the medicine wheel or the use of the term Turtle Island are not culturally shared amongst all communities (Baikie, 2009). As Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) note, by pan-Indigenizing curriculums and practices we are failing to recognize that Indigenous communities are not homogenous and their needs and traditions vary. Indigenizing social work may seem like it is promoting pan-Indigenization, however, it does the exact opposite.

> "Furthermore, an Indigenous-centred perspective challenges the notion that culture is static and restricted to what was known or practised prior to European colonization. Instead, this orientation incorporates all historical and contemporary experiences, including current innovations emerging from Indigenous social workers practising in the complexity of their environments. The practice reality is comprised of a complex array of devastating social problems and tangled networks of inter-jurisdictional social welfare environments that have emerged as a direct result of colonization (Shewell, 2004). The specific and unique nature of practice within these environments is a core characteristic of Indigenous-centred social work. However, it is also an environment of potential and possibility due to the inherent resiliency of indigenous peoples and nations as evidenced by their increasing political autonomy and their success in reclaiming and revitalizing their cultures" (Baikie, p. 50-51).

In regards to cultural appropriation, Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) mention that this is the new form of colonization. Terms now being used within social work practice or academia such as “ecospiritual” are a direct appropriation from many Indigenous cultures (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). As such, it is required that academia remain mindful of the origins of social work practices and tools, and should therefore always give recognition and credit to its rightful roots (Baikie, 2009). All in all, having a lack of proper understanding and tools to work with Indigenous communities, settler social workers are in this way unprepared to engage in Indigenous allyship work. This means that regardless of their educational background, settler social workers are responsible for self-educating on what it means to be a good ally, and how best to support Indigenous Peoples (Carlson, 2016; Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012).

Allyship in frontline social work

One of the key themes I found while researching settler-Indigenous relationships in front line social work is the gap in culturally sensitive training and intervention skills (based from Eurocentric training as noted previously). This is not to say that no Indigenous individual will never benefit from Eurocentric practice methods, however, often times, it has been noted that a healthy mix of both (as requested by the service user), is beneficial (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). That being said, settler social workers are not in a position where attempts to engage in culturally specific interventions are always appropriate (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). This is not only because as settlers, there is lack of true knowledge and understanding of traditions, but it would also be a form of appropriation (see above). Furthermore, as agents of a colonial state, it would be inappropriate to engage in traditional intervention methods, given that historically (and currently) settlers are actively involved in the cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples. As such, Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong

(2019) note that a gap in frontline social work is pushing for self-sovereignty within grassroot community resources and its funding. Allocation of funds is in fact one of the key ways that this settler state enforces colonial violence.

"Professional designations like those bestowed by the Canadian Association of Social Workers are used as a tool to monopolize state funds in the hands of people constrained by the limits of their professional code of conduct" (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019), discuss how funding allocation have in fact become a private rather than public oversight, which promotes fund competition and encourages the delegitimization of grassroot community-based initiatives. Given the emphasis that the state places on social work programs, grassroot Indigenous programs and community initiatives often have much less access to funding which would encourage self-sovereignty and address culturally specific ways to support individuals within the community and tackle issues of trauma, poverty, etc. (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). With that in mind, not all Indigenous people will necessarily request or require only culturally sensitive services. Good rapport especially can be extremely beneficial.

Rapport with individuals seems to be one of the biggest themes when discussing settler-Indigenous relationships in frontline social work. Cindy Baskin (2009), an Indigenous social worker, notes that if someone has come to her voluntarily, she makes an active case to remind them that they do not need to keep her as a practitioner if they feel that the chemistry or relationship between them is not right, as a means of ensuring they maintain their personal power (see power-sharing in section one of this analysis). She also noted that when it comes to rapport, main issues surrounding it includes lack of holistic perspectives on the settler social worker's part, and too strict professional boundaries.

> "One of the main problems when non-Indigenous helpers work with Indigenous adults is that they overlook the Indigenous persons' culturally held beliefs and values, instead using an approach to social work they assume to be universal. The

> role that worldviews and cultures can play in problem identification, manifestations and causes, and ideas around solutions to problems, tends to be disregarded by helpers of non-Indigenous descent (Weaver, 2004). Approaches within western ways of helping that may not fit with Indigenous worldviews include the following:
> - individualistic rather than a community-based;
> - offering counselling services to an abused partner while leaving the abusive partner out;
> - strictly talk therapy instead of holistic methods, which deal with all the parts of a person;
> - adhering to strict professional boundaries rather than more flexible ones;
> - ignoring spirituality instead of seeing it as a strength." (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, p. 136).

As mentioned, lack of understanding about how Indigenous service users relate and rely on family and community for healing, or have a lack of understanding of more holistic approaches to intervention, can affect rapport. This is a direct reflection of the emphasis on Eurocentric intervention methods (see previous section).

Something to note, especially, is the fact that as settler social workers our training often strongly reinforces the idea of upholding professional boundaries and being incredibly stern and inflexible around them. This has, however, in many cases, been deemed counterintuitive. Many accounts of Indigenous service users do not trust social workers because of the fact that they are viewed as more machinelike rather than human (APTN News, 2019; Burke, 2018; Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). Interestingly enough, the Social Work Code of Ethics mentions the absoluteness of professional boundaries, however, it seems to be mostly inferring that sexual relationships or any relationship that go beyond a professional setting, are absolutely prohibited. Although this is for good reason, it still seems that there is a gap in implementation of professional boundaries (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). On one end of the spectrum, we are either taking advantage of the ones we are engaged with professionally (i.e., when we have no professional boundaries) and, on the other hand of the spectrum, we incite feelings of distrust and

lack of safety and are seen as cold and more machine than human (i.e., when we enforce too strictly our professional boundaries).

Even more interesting is the fact that many accounts of community social workers who engage with Indigenous adults in more rural areas have claimed that they seem to find a grey area in between, since it's simply not possible nor helpful to either party to remain strict and cold when engaging with a service user (Burke, 2018). This makes sense given that building relationships with individuals and communities is a key component to allyship work (discussed in the next section).

Finally, Morley (2016) addresses how frontline responsibilities can come influence social worker's passion and radicalization of social justice within the field. The author notes how factors such as managerial practices, paperwork, auditing, emphasis on outcomes and other daily responsibilities can pose a risk to the realm of social justice within social work, as workers often become angry, overworked, demoralized and burnt out (Morley, 2016). This means that critical analysis of social work, and formulating responses to ideological attacks on the practice of social justice within the discipline is imperative (Morley, 2016). "Without a critical analysis, social work is at risk of becoming little more than a functionary of the state to protect the most powerful and privileged groups and is therefore in danger of becoming something quite different from the social justice and emancipatory-oriented profession that it can be" (Morley, 2016). This means that despite the fact that it is crucial for social work pedagogy to be Indigenized and to properly train staff prior to frontline work, it is the social worker's responsibility to continue learning, thinking critically, and to self-care in order to uphold allyship standards of practice.

DISCUSSION

There are countless blogs, posts and other online resources that recount how to be a good ally to Indigenous social justice movements as a Canadian citizen. One resource (Gehl, 2017) mentions a guideline in regard to allyship for any settler who wishes to be useful to Indigenous communities. These guidelines were developed by an Algonquin woman, and have the specific aim of expressing what it takes to be considered an ally. They also aim to comment on how to fight for the dismantling and eradication of colonial pillars that are still present within our government and our society. These guidelines are applicable to anyone regardless of profession, however, the aim of presenting these guidelines will be to demonstrate concrete personal allyship action, and then see how they can be applied practically to the social work profession. Although allyship action and opinion varies per community, this guideline was chosen because a large part of Ontario occupies unceded Algonquin land. Below, are the guidelines that Gehl (2017) has written out:

> "a) All people not indigenous to North America who are living on this continent are settlers on stolen land. We acknowledge that Canada, the United States of America, Mexico, and Central & South America were founded through genocide and colonization of indigenous peoples which continues today and from which settlers directly benefit.
>
> b) All settlers do not benefit equally from the settler-colonial state, nor did all settlers emigrate here of their own free will. Specifically, we see slavery, hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, market imperialism, and capitalist class structures as among the primary tools of colonization. These tools divide communities and determine peoples' relative access to power. Therefore, anti-oppression solidarity between settler communities is necessary for decolonization. We work to build anti-colonial movements that actively combat all forms of oppression.
>
> c) We acknowledge that settlers are not entitled to live on this land. We accept that decolonization means the revitalization of indigenous sovereignty, and an end to settler domination of life, lands, and peoples in all territories of the so-called "Americas." All decisions regarding human interaction with this land base, including who lives on it, are rightfully those of the indigenous nations.

> d) As settlers and non-native people (by which we mean non-indigenous to this hemisphere) acting in solidarity, it is our responsibility to proactively challenge and dismantle colonialist thought and behaviour in the communities we identify ourselves to be part of. As people within communities that maintain and benefit from colonization, we are intimately positioned to do this work.
>
> e) We understand that allies cannot be self-defined; they must be claimed by the people they seek to ally with. We organize our solidarity efforts around direct communication, responsiveness, and accountability to indigenous people fighting for decolonization and liberation.
>
> f) We are committed to dismantling all systems of oppression, whether they are found in institutional power structures, interpersonal relationships, or within ourselves. Individually and as a collective, we work compassionately to support each other through these processes. Participation in struggle requires each of us to engage in both solidarity and our own liberation: to be accountable for all privileges carried, while also struggling for liberation from internalized and experienced oppression. We seek to build a healthy culture of resistance, accountability, and sustenance." (Gehl, 2017)

Furthermore, these guidelines are followed by an allyship bill of responsibility:

1. "Do not act out of guilt, but rather out of a genuine interest in challenging the larger oppressive power structures;
2. Understand that they are secondary to the Indigenous people that they are working with and that they seek to serve. They and their needs must take a back seat;
3. Are fully grounded in their own ancestral history and culture. Effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride; otherwise the "wannabe syndrome" could merely undermine the Indigenous people's efforts;
4. Are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them. This action will also serve to challenge larger oppressive power structures;
5. Reflect on and embrace their ignorance of the group's oppression and always hold this ignorance in the forefront of their minds. Otherwise, a lack of awareness of their ignorance could merely perpetuate the Indigenous people's oppression;
6. Are aware of and understand the larger oppressive power structures that serve to hold certain groups and people down. One way to do this is to draw parallels through critically reflecting on their own experiences with oppressive power structures. Reflecting on their subjectivity in this way, they ensure critical thought or what others call objectivity. In taking this approach, these parallels will serve to ensure that non-Indigenous allies are not perpetuating the oppression;
7. Constantly listen and reflect through the medium of subjectivity and critical thought versus merely their subjectivity. This will serve to ensure that they avoid the trap that they or their personal friends know what is best. This act will also serve to avoid the trap of naively following a leader or for that matter a group of leaders;
8. Strive to remain critical thinkers and seek out the knowledge and wisdom of the critical thinkers in the group. Allies cannot assume that all people are critical thinkers and have a good understanding of the larger power structures of oppression;

9. Ensure that a community consensus, or understanding, has been established in terms of their role as allies. Otherwise, the efforts of the people will be undermined due to a lack of consultation and agreement;
10. Ensure that the needs of the most oppressed – women, children, elderly, young teenage girls and boys, and the disabled – are served in the effort or movement that they are supporting. Otherwise, they may be engaging in a process that is inadequate and thus merely serving to fortify the larger power structures of oppression. Alternatively, their good intentions may not serve those who need the effort most. Rather, they may be making the oppression worse;
11. Understand and reflect on the prevalence and dynamics of lateral oppression and horizontal violence on and within oppressed groups and components of the group, such as women, and seek to ensure that their actions do not encourage it;
12. Ensure that they are supporting a leader's, group of leaders', or a movement's efforts that serve the needs of the people. For example, do the community people find this leader's efforts useful, interesting, engaging, and thus empowering? If not, allies should consider whether the efforts are moving in a questionable or possibly an inadequate direction, or worse yet that their efforts are being manipulated and thus undermined, possibly for economic and political reasons;
13. Understand that sometimes allies are merely manipulatively chosen to further a leader's agenda versus the Indigenous Nations', communities', or organizations' concerns, and when this situation occurs act accordingly;
14. Do not take up the space and resources, physical and financial, of the oppressed group;
15. Do not take up time at community meetings and community events. This is not their place. They must listen more than speak. Allies cannot perceive all the larger oppressive power structures as clearly as members of the oppressed group can;
16. And finally, Accept the responsibility of learning and reading more about their role as effective allies." (Gehl, 2017).

It is important to note that perspectives on what it means to be a good ally can and often do change per community. However, the general baseline seems to be fairly similar across the board. Other Indigenous scholars further note allyship guidelines. Davis (2010) for example, discusses how the practice of reciprocity is vital to Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and alliances, reinforcing the notion of working together as a team rather than settlers taking the reins and doing what *they* think Indigenous people need most (DiAngelo, 2011) (similar to Gehl's (2017) responsibility #9). Furthermore, as settler allies, it's important to recognize that beyond working *with* Indigenous communities and their grassroot projects, in the end, Indigenous people are and should be the only ones who determine what is appropriate, and how we can ethically and respectfully engage in solidarity (Davis, Denis & Sinclair, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Dion &

Dion, 2009). This is similar to Gehl's (2017) responsibility #2, #9 and #12, and guideline *e*. Dion (2010) mentions how settlers and non-Indigenous people need to recognize that social justice is not a uniquely "native problem" since these necessary measures come from years of historical injustice imposed upon Indigenous Peoples (similar to guideline *b* and responsibility #3, #6, #7 and #11). This does not mean, however, that settlers should be leading the frontlines. Rather, what this means is that settlers need to understand their direct or indirect involvement in the problem (as per responsibility #6), and then actively work with Indigenous Peoples to push back against colonial violence and injustice (guideline *b*) (McGuire & Denis, 2019; Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, Dennis & Sinclair, 2017; Fortier, 2017; Carlson, 2016; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2014; Walia, 2013). Similarly, Carlson (2016) and Sium, Desai & Ritskes (2012), also mention that a large part of settler engagement in solidarity stems from recognizing how we benefit from colonialism and how we either directly or indirectly perpetrate it in our daily lives.

Implementation within social work practice

Although there is immense literature on how settlers can be better and responsible allies to Indigenous communities, there is very little discussion surrounding how this can be implemented as social workers. This seems rather odd given that as social workers we are in a position of authority and privilege that has often times created more harm than good to countless Indigenous communities, and that despite this, we are still mandated to be engaged in allyship work (McGuire & Denis, 2019). Furthermore, as settler social workers, there underlies two intersecting identities of privilege that can disassociate us from understanding our responsibilities towards allyship work, within an Indigenous context especially, rendering this all the more vital. In a video of a speech given by Sakej Ward (2015), a Mi'kmaw Warrior, he mentions to the audience the importance of looking back to our ancestral roots, before an imperial state was

formed, and to understand how we were traditionally functioning. He claimed that only after we can understand the value of this, can we truly begin our own personal process of decolonization (Ward, 2015). This is but one example. However many communities have countless beliefs surrounding how to go about decolonizing ourselves such as education, acknowledgement of privilege, relationship building with communities and accountability, all of which have been previously mentioned above. Decolonization of ourselves is important for social work because our biases and our perspectives, no matter how much we try to remain neutral, will always show up in some shape or form within the quality of our service and our practice. The way we engage with service users, listen actively to them and understand their needs, and the resources and intervention tactics we educate ourselves on and offer are all dependent on our own professional identities (McGuire & Denis, 2019). Although it is important to engage in individual allyship work, I believe (as well as countless other Indigenous scholars believe (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005)) that responsible allyship should not be stopped at the individual level within our social work practice. Part of our allyship education involves recognizing how Social Work as a practice has been and continues to be directly perpetuating or complacent within a colonial state (Gehl, 2017). Often times, when we try to recognize Social Work's involvement with colonization, we stick to topics such as residential schools or the 60s scoop. Although it is absolutely important to recognize and acknowledge these colonial pasts (especially when engaging with adult Indigenous service users who may have direct or indirect experience with this), colonial pillars exist even today and in many facets of our social work domain (see analysis section).

This section aims to discuss the findings previously outlined, and to link those findings to the allyship guidelines (above). Similarly to the previous section, it will focus on the three

domains of social work (i.e., the child welfare system, social work academia and frontline social work), followed by a note on accountability within the code of ethics, and a personal note.

CFS Sector

As noted earlier, the gaps within the child welfare system are immense and therefore breed tension between Indigenous communities, individuals, social workers and the child welfare system as a whole. Although the child welfare system is not the only way social workers have contact with Indigenous Peoples, it is a very significant and prominent way.

> "#13. Understand that sometimes allies are merely manipulatively chosen to further a leader's agenda versus the Indigenous Nations', communities', or organizations' concerns, and when this situation occurs act accordingly;" (Gehl, 2017).

Within the realm of CFS, there are countless examples as to where this would be applicable for reform. Using privacy policies, for example, to omit reasons or explanations as to why there is concern or why a child has been rehomed should be deemed unethical. Using such tactics without understanding how contextually similar these situations are to residential schools or the 60s scoop is detrimental to relationships between social workers and Indigenous communities. It seems then, counterintuitive to proceed in ways that lack transparency and cooperation. In a report by APTN news (2019), an ex-social worker who worked within the CFS sector mentioned that riling up parents and speaking to them in ways which promote parents lashing out is not only accepted but also a commonly used tactic to build up a case against families to stop them from reunification with their children. This gross misuse of power, only further exemplifies the need for social work reform, and pushing for self-sovereignty of child welfare within Indigenous communities.

According to the allyship guidelines one of the most important aspects of being an ally is recognizing that there is a problem at all (see responsibility #3, #4, #6, and #11). By doing nothing or denying that the system needs reform, is to remain complacent within the system and thereby promoting it (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Second, educating ourselves not only about the past (i.e., residential schools, 60s scoop, starvation policies, etc.) but also on the current issues and opinions of the community we are directly engaging with, is a must. By doing this, we are also valuing building relationships with the community (see responsibility #9). The overall trust in social workers continues to lessen for so many, and rightfully so. As Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) mentioned, by building a reciprocal relationship with Indigenous communities we learn the ways in which we are needed and the ways in which we are not (see responsibility #9 and #12). As social workers, our hierarchical positions give us authoritative power.

As per responsibility #4: "Are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them. This action will also serve to challenge larger oppressive power structures"; and #5: "Reflect on and embrace their ignorance of the group's oppression and always hold this ignorance in the forefront of their minds. Otherwise, a lack of awareness of their ignorance could merely perpetuate the Indigenous people's oppression" (Gehl, 2017); Recognizing our privilege becomes vital to ensuring we are always aware of when we begin to adopt those behaviours, no matter how well intentioned they may seem. What this means, is that in the end, by acknowledging our privilege and educating ourselves on the current situation, and building reciprocal and long-lasting relationships with the community, we understand that we don't always know what's best for the individuals or families we engage with.

Furthermore, accountability is another big theme within the allyship guidelines and has been countlessly outlined within the literature (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Davis, 2010; Dion & Dion, 2009; Alfred, 2005). As stated earlier, many times harmful actions inflicted upon

Indigenous communities are approved directly from supervisors and in fact encouraged by the settler state (APTN News, 2019; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Within a CFS context especially, instances where accountability is not enforced, and neglect is encouraged (be it intentionally or not), Indigenous youth get hurt. Therefore, it is a social worker's responsibility to engage in the push for within and between-agency policy reforms and self-sovereignty seeing as Indigenous communities know best their child welfare needs. This must, however, be done in accordance with local Indigenous communities to ensure the full complexity of the issue at hand is addressed. Bill C-92 is a systemic example of an incomplete solution to a very serious and prominent problem. At an organizational level, useful and respectful relationships with Indigenous communities ensure that we can push for internal changes, as requested by the community. This ensures that our policy reforms include them, and centralize their needs rather than what we believe their needs are.

Finally, advocating for funding for family reunification and for pre- and post-natal services that are Indigenous developed is vital to begin rebuilding trust (Forester, 2020). It is one thing to try and build better policies for the future, but part of accountability work is also fixing past mistakes (see responsibility #13). As Elliott (2017) mentions, reunification of families plays an active role in Indigenous resurgence.

Moreover, pushing for services which are client-focused, that promote Indigenous community involvement and that are requested by the community itself benefit all who are involved. Pushing for funding in these cases should be addressed to the provincial and federal ministries involved: steps leading towards self-sovereignty.

Although all these allyship behaviours should be considered, there should be no larger consideration than that of encouraging and pushing for settler social workers to tackle the colonial system as whole (i.e., at the highest level). Guideline *b* states:

> "All settlers do not benefit equally from the settler-colonial state, nor did all settlers emigrate here of their own free will. Specifically, we see slavery, hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, market imperialism, and capitalist class structures as among the primary tools of colonization. These tools divide communities and determine peoples' relative access to power. Therefore, anti-oppression solidarity between settler communities is necessary for decolonization. We work to build anti-colonial movements that actively combat all forms of oppression" (Gehl, 2017).

As settlers and as social workers, it is our responsibility to accompany and support movements to dismantle the pillars of oppression ingrained in our society. This is vital seeing as all the gaps previously mentioned stem from its original source: colonialism. Although it is important to address the immediate crises which present themselves every day in our line work (i.e., trauma, abuse, mental health, addictions, family relations, etc.), all social work is in this way a Band-Aid solution, if there is no macro-level (i.e., settler state) reform.

Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) noted that in their research, even when they reached out to Indigenous youth that were rehomed into loving white families, still ended up facing trauma not because of the home environment, but because of microaggressions or blatant racism that they had experienced in other life contexts (e.g., school, work, social events, etc.). The fact that they didn't hold their own identity as being Indigenous, yet were faced with others negatively labelling them as Indigenous meant that many people who were engaged with the system still ended up facing negative effects from being rehomed (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). This was especially the case when their foster or adoptive families did not discuss with them racism and how to overcome it (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, 2009). For this reason, even if we were to somehow find a way to completely eradicate our own internal colonialism and eradicate colonialism within our professional organizations, without fighting this at the systemic level, the problem is still very much there. This isn't to say, however, that we must be centering ourselves at the frontlines and speaking on behalf of Indigenous Peoples. As guideline #2 states,

we must “Understand that [settlers] are secondary to the Indigenous people that they are working with and that they seek to serve. They and their needs must take a back seat” (Gehl, 2017).

Engaging in advocacy when called upon us, and focusing our efforts on decolonizing ourselves are only the beginning steps to useful allyship work. As social workers, it seems to be the expectation that we have an inherent higher “moral fiber” than most, despite countless literature (see previous section) that proves otherwise. That being said, it seems like not much emphasis in schooling truly discuss this idea of unpacking our biases, and decolonizing ourselves (beyond mentioning this in passing during classes). By engaging in allyship work from the start, and fighting the system at large, we begin to see the ways in which we benefit from the system, and begin to learn the ways in which even good intentions can and often do produce more harm than good.

Social Work Academia

When it comes to social work academia, allyship expectations seem to be similar to those outlined previously. First and foremost, by centering Indigenous voices within University faculties, research and pedagogy, only then can true reform begin. This includes pushing for education of other non-Indigenous faculty members and recognizing how our academic institutions have either directly assisted colonial violence (e.g., training oblates, continuing to centralize Eurocentric perspectives within teaching, pan-Indigenizing curriculums, culturally appropriating research or intervention practices, etc.), or indirectly by remaining complacent (e.g., not pushing for funding of Indigenization of social work faculties). By doing so, we hold ourselves accountable to our actions, which directly helps rebuild and incorporate relationships of trust with local communities (and its future Indigenous students). These relationships should be regarded as valuable and it is up to us to remain respectful and useful to them in the ways they

need us to be. This means meeting up with them and valuing their active part of reform and sticking true to our word when we are called out to action.

A key theme found within the realm of academia is the particular focus social work puts on Eurocentric perspectives as a baseline or foundation to all social work. By putting emphasis on Western evidence-based practices, settler social work not only alludes to a higher social order of expertise but it also frames Eurocentric practices as permanent and universal (Crampton, 2015). Rather, what Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) suggest is to move away from academic notions of permanence and rather value Indigenous perspectives of impermanence. Not only will this shift have positive effects on social work practice (notably within the realm of relationships, discussed below), but would also shift pedagogy's focus on universality towards best practices of local communities.

As such, guideline #7 states:

> "Constantly listen and reflect through the medium of subjectivity and critical thought versus merely their subjectivity. This will serve to ensure that they avoid the trap that they or their personal friends know what is best. This act will also serve to avoid the trap of naively following a leader or for that matter a group of leaders" (Gehl, 2017).

Critical thinking is imperative to allyship work. As previously mentioned, the use of critical thinking within social work pedagogy ensures that both accountability and education of privilege and harmful practices are being emphasized. It is through complacency and lack of critical thinking that some of the most horrific crimes upon Indigenous Peoples ensued. Therefore, putting emphasis on accurate and comprehensive sources of education and seeking out other critical thinkers to refine our knowledge (Gehl, 2017) is a good start.

Furthermore, ensuring that as social workers fighting for reform we focus on listening to the voices of Indigenous scholars, communities, students, faculties and activists, so that we do

not continue to push for reforms which may end up further marginalizing the community we strive to work with. Allyship guideline *d*, says:

Within the realm of academia, although some may find this uncomfortable, part of allyship work involves recognizing that we will most likely also need to push back against the University itself especially if/when funding allocation is halted, and/or future Indigenous faculty/program criteria that have been recommended by the local community aren't being considered or honoured. This is in line with the fact that we must challenge those who are within our own communities, given that not only are we intimately involved in the community's practices and beliefs, but also because change requires everyone involved to participate (Gehl, 2017; Sinclair, Anthony, & Bruyere, 2009).

Frontline Social Work

When it comes to engaging in allyship as frontline social workers, the key themes seem to stem especially around relationships. One of the main ways to better social work allyship to Indigenous communities is by rethinking the standards laid out to us, about professional relationships. Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) discuss how within a social work context, relationships with service users tend to be top-down, distant and unidirectional, with the aim of maintaining a dynamic of expertise and provide a position of knowledge/service providers while allocating Indigenous Peoples with the title of a beneficiary. The authors note that in order to truly engage with Indigenous Peoples, we must call upon our profession to relinquish our "expert" status, seeing as the root of this title stems for the state's allocation of responsibilities from Indigenous agents to settlers in power, with the abilities to fully manage Indigenous welfare and education. Furthermore, the basis on which social workers are deemed experts is based on a settler state's own neoliberal beliefs and opinions as to what it means to be a "functioning" and

"efficient" member of society (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). This means that by continuously engaging in top-down relationships, we perpetuate colonial violence.

Moreover, the use of professional distance is to produce social workers who are task-focused and puts particular emphasis on formality. As previously mentioned, many Indigenous families have a hard time connecting with social workers, as they are often viewed as robotic or mechanic. Settler social workers often fail to focus on the person, their complexities and their needs. By doing this, settler social workers effectively inhibit their ability to connect to the local community, and instead take on a managerial position of the community (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

> "This focus on the establishment of an 'appropriate' client-worker relationship leads to challenges in connecting with the local community and achieving goals of community development due to the tendency towards managerialism over the practice of relationality. Managerialism entails an emphasis on bureaucratic procedures and policies, marked by a focus on competency-based practices and efficiency" (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019: p. 450).

This is further marginalizing communities, seeing as Dominelli (1996) explains, that it fails to recognize the structural problems that perpetuate the idea that needs are beyond a doubt known, and infallible, and that resources are always adequate to address the needs and tasks at hand. Furthermore, by relinquishing expert status, social workers can focus more on learning, and becoming listeners. The allyship bill of responsibility #9 states: "Ensure that a community consensus, or understanding, has been established in terms of their role as allies. Otherwise, the efforts of the people will be undermined due to a lack of consultation and agreement"; and, #15 states: "Do not take up time at community meetings and community events. This is not their place. They must listen more than speak. Allies cannot perceive all the larger oppressive power structures as clearly as members of the oppressed group can" (Gehl, 2017). In this case, it is then

vital that listening and understanding the needs and wants of a community, ensures that social workers are in fact, better equipped to address acute issues pertaining to the community (e.g., trauma).

As Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019), the only true way for social workers to do this, is through deprofessionalization, and, furthermore, through the use of power-sharing (Pon, Gosine & Phillips, 2011). That being said, allyship work does not stop there.

Recognizing privilege, and understanding our place as settlers within social work is vital too. Guideline *a* states:

> "All people not indigenous to North America who are living on this continent are settlers on stolen land. We acknowledge that Canada, the United States of America, Mexico, and Central & South America were founded through genocide and colonization of indigenous peoples which continues today and from which settlers directly benefit" (Gehl, 2017);

and, responsibility #4 states: "Are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them. This action will also serve to challenge larger oppressive power structures" (Gehl, 2017).

By acknowledging we do not come from the same upbringing or cultural views (i.e., self-reflection) as Indigenous Peoples, we must then educate ourselves around specific local needs and focus on critically thinking about the social work profession and its history. No amount of empathy will ever give us the full grasp of understanding Indigenous experience, however, by holding ourselves accountable to self-learning we can begin to try to understand.

This would also be coupled with the fact that our education should not be limited to the benefit we can get from more holistic approaches but also to educate ourselves on other resources that may provide additional culturally sensitive resources that truly add to the holism of intervention and push for their funding. Furthermore, as is the case with all realms of social work, engaging in frontline social justice for Indigenous communities, in ways that they ask of us

(rather than what we believe is required of us) will not only help address the acute problems that Indigenous communities face, but also ensure that the root of the problem is addressed. All in all, this discussion only mentioned a few of the ways that social work should engage in social justice allyship. However there are still so many more, and it is the responsibility of the social worker to educate themselves on them. At the baseline of it all, pushing for full social work reform, and fighting to dismantle colonialism within our settler state is imperative no matter how long, grueling or exhaustive this process might be. It is what is necessary.

A note on accountability within our Code of Ethics

Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) wrote:

> "Postcolonialism, along with critical theoretical perspectives, help bring to the forefront the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination. The social work profession, mandated by codes of ethics to attend to social justice and human rights, has played a limited role in supporting the autonomous nature of Indigenous nations generally and of Indigenous social work practice and social welfare systems specifically. As previously pointed out, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW 1994), in its brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP 1996), proclaimed support for Aboriginal self-government. In addition, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW 2004) released a policy paper in support of the collective right of Indigenous peoples throughout the world to be self-determining. Unfortunately, neither the CASW nor the IFSW has adequately considered the implications of self-determining Indigenous nations on either social work education or the regulation of the profession. This is evident in the latest iteration of the CASW Code of Ethics (2005), which is completely mute on the issue of Indigenous autonomy" (p.52)

Although the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethics and the Ontario Social Work Code of Ethics note the responsibility for social workers to engage in allyship work (discussed below), a question of accountability and push for Indigenous self-sovereignty seems to be lacking.

For example, the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethic discloses this point: "Social workers uphold the human rights of individuals and groups as expressed in The Canadian Charter

of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)" (Code of Ethics, 2005). Many Indigenous communities not only live in conditions that are a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (e.g., access to drinkable water), but as noted previously, have been to this day, subjected to discriminatory acts at the hands of Social Work as a whole. Despite this, no clear accountability measures at the systemic and organizational level, have truly been addressed (both within the code and in practice).

The code also mentions the following: under the header "pursuit of social justice":

(a) Social workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity and to afford them protection from harm. Social workers promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs. Social workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups; and,

(b) Social workers advocate for fair and equitable access to public services and benefits; and,

(c) Social workers advocate for equal treatment and protection under the law and challenge injustices, especially injustices that affect the vulnerable and disadvantaged; and,

(d) The social work profession upholds service in the interests of others, consistent with social justice, as a core professional objective. In professional practice, social workers balance individual needs, and rights and freedoms with collective interests in the

> service of humanity. When acting in a professional capacity, social workers place professional service Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005) before personal goals or advantage, and use their power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society. The social work profession contributes to knowledge and skills that assist in the management of conflicts and the wide-ranging consequences of conflict.

The language used here by the Canadian Social Work Code of Ethics, leaves much room for interpretation. It is, interesting that as Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere (2009) mentioned, although it does push for social justice in a way, it does so using a language that is vague enough to still retain jurisdiction, hierarchy of power, and does not reference the specific social justice needs of Indigenous peoples and communities. Although it is clearly mandated of us to be active in social justice, the ways in which implementation of social justice, and whom they involve is unclear (especially when regarding point d).

Meanwhile the code of ethics of Ontario discloses these points:

(a) A social worker or social service worker shall advocate change in the best interest of the client, and for the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community; and,

(b) Advocacy is defined as 1. The act of directly representing or defending others. 2. Championing the rights of individuals, groups or communities through direct intervention or through empowerment. It is a basic obligation of the professions and its members; and,

(c) College members promote social justice and advocate for social change on behalf of their clients. College members are knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural and ethnic

> diversity and to forms of social injustice such as poverty, discrimination and imbalances of power that exist in the culture and that affects clients. College members strive to enhance the capacity of clients to address their own needs […]. (added as a footnote) where the client is competent and able to give instruction, advocacy should be on direction of the client.

It is interesting that although the Ontario Code of Ethics still does not outright mention obligations to fight for self-sovereignty, these mandates are a little more in line with Indigenous allyship practises (i.e., ensuring that advocacy and social justice are directed by those central to the fight). With this in mind, the Ontario Code of Ethics refers to individuals purely as "client". Does this mean then that we exclude those who do not seek our practice directly? Does this mean our advocacy in this way stays at the individual level? This may be misleading given how social justice does not purely include going out to the frontlines and directly fighting for the rights of Indigenous peoples (and other marginalized communities). It requires individual, organizational and systemic work, but it also requires acknowledging that allyship needs change per community (and individual). And yet, beyond this, where is the enforcement? Although we are mandated, so to speak, to fight for change that will benefit those we work with, there is little to no mention as to how this can be practically enforced. Rather, it is left up to those who are active players in the system to actively choose to do this, sometimes with limited knowledge on what allyship work is (or requires). It is clear that there is still much to do within the discipline of social work to push for better allyship practises.

Engaging in internal self-decolonization work, before attempting to do this for others, is vital to ensure that we understand fully the ways in which we benefit directly from colonialism

(and any other oppressive systems within society). This self-work is also vital so that we can better understand and listen to Indigenous peoples when they speak of their advocacy.

Acknowledging myself

> "A statement on solidarity by activist Harsha Walia calls for replacing a 'politics of solidarity' with Indigenous peoples with a 'practice of decolonization'. She argues that:
> Non-natives must be able to position ourselves as active and integral participants in a decolonization movement for political liberation, social transformation, renewed cultural kinships and the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet. Decolonization is as much a process as a goal. It requires a profound recentering on Indigenous worldviews…Decolonization is a dramatic reimagining of relationships with land, people and the state. Much of this requires study. It requires conversation. It is a practice; it is an unlearning." (Sinclair, Anthony & Bruyere, p. 458).

All in all, my previous analysis on allyship work within a settler social work context was based on various resources that outlined how to perform allyship as a social work practitioner. Not only should we be considering how to be allies, but we should also be fighting for the equity and value of Indigenous Social Work within our organizations and our Social Work education, starting by noting the gaps that still remain that enforce distrust and tension between Social Work and many Indigenous communities. With this in mind, I am a soon-to-be social work graduate and I am a settler. As much as I can try and preach and push for reform within Social Work, I acknowledge that I am myself still learning (and unlearning) both the practice and my own inherent bias. I still have much work to do to take action regarding my complacency and benefit of an imperial colonial system, at all (individual, professional and societal) levels. As such, it is my responsibility to ensure that I continue to educate myself both on the issues at hand, on my own perspectives, and on Social Work as a practice. This will be a lifelong battle. It is also my responsibility to engage in allyship work by doing my best to remain transparent within my practice and to engage in building trust and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities

that surround me (and all over the land we now call Canada). I must also ensure I am always doing my best to center my allyship work around Indigenous voices, and take action by educating and having tough conversations with others within my personal and professional community. I have and will make mistakes, and it is my responsibility to acknowledge them as I come across them, and then further take action by learning from them and correcting my behaviour. This does not merit praise nor validation. As the guidelines mentioned, we must engage in decolonizing work not because it helps our appearance or raises our own ego-narratives of morality and self-righteousness, but rather because by remaining complacent within the system, we are perpetuating colonial violence. Rather than continuously discussing and contemplating it, it is time for us to listen to what Indigenous Peoples have been advocating for centuries, and to actually take action in ways that are appropriate, respectful and useful to them. Not only is it our professional responsibility to do so, it is also what is right.

CONCLUSION

The topic of allyship is diverse, and complex, yet nonetheless important, especially within a social work context. Discussions surrounding possible and useful courses of action on being better allies to Indigenous Peoples could be discussed over hundreds of times, and it should. Allyship is not a title we can claim or aim to achieve as a means to an end, rather it is lifelong work, and it is determined by those we are engaging with. Opinions on allyship, much like Indigenous communities are not homogenous and therefore should not be treated as such. However common themes of fighting for self-sovereignty, accountability, reciprocal relationships, education and acknowledgment span communities and settler-Indigenous issues.

Although it is not up to us as settler social workers to lead the fight, it is our responsibility to show up and learn for ourselves how we can be useful, and engage in our own individual fight with colonization by looking inwards at our own biases and complacency, and challenging colonialism, racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy in our community's space, be it personal or professional spaces. Although our code of ethics mentions our mandate to engage in dismantling oppressive pillars in our society, a discussion surrounding accountability and enforcement of allyship should be considered. Colonialism is not and never has been an Indigenous issue, it is, by all accounts, a settler issue, and therefore it is time we listen, and take action in ways that are asked of us, and ensure that along the way we build long-lasting reciprocal relationships that value trust, and that centralize the voices and the needs of Indigenous Peoples everywhere across the land we now call Canada.

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